



# Survival Guide for New Teachers

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## 2025-2026



## Dear Graduate,

Congratulations! You set a goal for yourself and followed through! You made it! Give yourself a round of applause.

Do you remember all of the support that you received in your conference group? Don't you wish that conference group still continued? This handout is created, with you in mind, by a group of recent graduates who is gratefully appreciative to participate in our college's *New Teacher Support Group* that was formed in September 2022. This alumni conference group includes dedicated teachers, from Bank Street College teacher preparation programs, who are currently practicing in a variety of school settings. In this diverse group, we had opportunities to bounce ideas around, share our practices, validate each other's struggles, celebrate one another's successes, share resources, provide suggestions and offer actionable feedback.

As you head from Bank Street into your next chapter as an educator, here are some ideas and tips that we have found helpful in our own teaching practices, while recognizing that each person brings their own unique teaching experiences, voice and style. We hope that you will use the *Survival Guide for New Teachers* as a jumping off point, customizing it to your own needs, school and teaching philosophy.

We wish you well on this next phase of your journey and invite you to join us at future *New Teacher Support Group* sessions.

Cheering you on,

Asia, Emily, Galit, Ilana, Nica, Padmini, Paula, Shardae, and Nesta (faculty facilitator)



# New Teacher Support Group Members | 2024-25

NAME	PROGRAM	PRE-BANK STREET BACKGROUND	CURRENT TEACHING ROLE	CURRENT SETTING	GRADE
Asia Kaul	Early Childhood Special Education	Studied Early Childhood Education in college; has been working in a preschool for 8 years.	Assistant teacher, general education, (2 years)	Private school	Preschool-age 2
Emily Eidler	Early Childhood Special and General Education Dual Certification	Lead teacher (1 year); Specialist teacher (1 year); Assistant teacher (2 years); Student teacher (1 year); Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education teaching certification in Massachusetts	Lead teacher, general education (1 year)	Private religious school	Grade 1
Gallit Lopatin Bordereau	Early Childhood Special and General Education Dual Certification	Student-taught throughout graduate school; came into the classroom as part of a team during Covid; Career changer	Teacher/Director general education (4 years)	Independent school Religious school	Ages 2 - 5 years old
Ilana Weisz	Teaching Literacy, Early Childhood Special and General Education Dual Certification	Studied Education (non-teaching track) and Linguistics in college; Americorps tutor and assistant teacher; 1 year of long-term subbing post-graduation prior to lead teacher position	Lead teacher, general education, (4 years)	Public school Private school	Grade 3 Combined Grades 1-2

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# New Teacher Support Group Members | 2024-25

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NAME	PROGRAM	PRE-BANK STREET BACKGROUND	CURRENT TEACHING ROLE	CURRENT SETTING	GRADE
Nica Delbourgo	Childhood Special and General Education Dual Certification	Obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Education; 5 years of associate teaching experiences in NYC private schools	ICT special education co-teacher (1 year)	Public school	Grade 2
Padmini Persaud-Obasi	Early Childhood Special and General Education Dual Certification	Career changer	Assistant teacher, general education (1 year )	Independent school	Kinder-garten
			ICT Special education co-teacher (1 year)	Charter school	Kinder-garten
			ICT Special education co-teacher (7 months)	Public school	Grade 2
Paula Flores-Viscovich	Dual Language/Bilingual Early Childhood General Education	Career changer	Associate teacher (starting in Sept. 2025)	Independent pre-school	Age 3 years
Shardae Sales	Infant and Family Development and Early Intervention/ Early Childhood Special and General Education Dual Certification	Head Start teacher	Special education teacher, ICT (1 year)	Public school	Grade 2

For more information about the New Teacher Support Group, please contact Nesta Marshall at [nmarshall@bankstreet.edu](mailto:nmarshall@bankstreet.edu)





# Ideas and Tips to Help You


## General Tips

- Create/build a network of people to reach out to when you do not know what to do or when you get stuck.
- Try to identify at least one person in the building whom you can approach to ask questions – remember that everyone started out fresh at some point!
- Find helpers in the alumni community or classroom next to you etc.
- Attend to your self-care.
- Inquire about what was done in the past and make copies of these materials or create your own. (Save time; there's no need to reinvent the wheel, unless you really want to.)
- Before September, write yourself a note/letter of encouragement or positive statements (e.g., "You got this"; "You're well-prepared") and read it again especially in November
- Pre-written notes of encouragement are helpful during days when you feel like "I don't have this", "I'm not prepared for this."
- At the end of each day, write down one thing that you're proud of
- It can be so easy to want to try out a million things all at once, and then be frustrated that it's hard to keep up with all of those ideas – keep the expectations for yourself high, but realistic depth over breadth is really important so that you can feel the growth!
- Remember that not everything is going to work the first time; sometimes it takes a month or so before you see a change/ an improvement. Don't stop just because it didn't work right away!
- Share bits about yourself with the students (e.g., hobbies, etc.) – they love knowing that you're a "person" beyond your teacher hat.
- Do not compare yourself to other teachers.
- Stay curious. Be inspired. Be a lifelong learner.
- Have a self care kit at work with fidgets, lotions, etc–things that help you feel calm!
- Don't be afraid to ask for help! This is your first time being a master teacher; you're not supposed to know everything!
- Ask if you can observe teachers whose teaching you admire.
- Meet with other new teachers for support.




# Ideas and Tips to Help You

## Activities Related to Holidays and Special Events

- Do not impose birthday celebrations on children. If your school permits celebrations, ask student's/ family's permission to sing to them etc. Some students are not comfortable with this form of attention. You can celebrate summer birthdays on half birthdays during the year (e.g., celebrating an August birthday in February).
- Remember that not everyone celebrates everything. 
- Invite families to come in and share a holiday tradition with the class (if your school allows).
- Celebrate summer birthdays by having a party on the last week of school, recognizing the students whose birthdays will be in the summer.
- To make birthday celebrations more equitable you can bake the birthday treats at school and have that be a cooking activity, rather than have families send in a treat.

## Assessment Documentation

- Find out what your school expects you to use. Look at what has previously been done. Review a timeline—when and how often to assess (formative/summative); assess in real time (e.g., while reading a story, etc...) 
- Set aside time to review the assessment in order to help your work going forward; think of leading/ proficient and lagging skills and how to work on each.
- Create a system for setting up student pairs, small groups and whole group work.
- In a school with narrative reports that use a student's own words for documentation, develop a system so you can easily write down the child's words—have note cards/notebook and a pen handy, or even tape your conversation if you want to transcribe a longer conversation more accurately.

## Building Relationships with Students

- Chat with students during lunch and snack.
- Have lunch dates with students who need extra time to build relationship with teacher.
- Have spreadsheet to keep track of information you learn about students.
- Incorporate students' interests into learning.
- Have daily morning meetings where students share about their lives.
- Ask them about their weekends, this could be part of a morning circle share on a Monday morning.
- Play icebreaker games (not just at the beginning of the year, you can do them any time).
- Bring up what you heard students share during future conversations to demonstrate you're listening.



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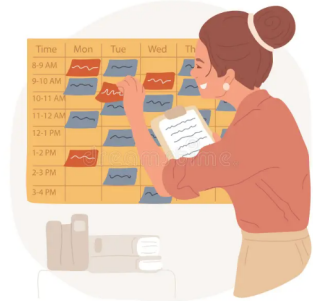
# Ideas and Tips to Help You

## Building Relationships with Students *continued from prior page*

- Observe and join play at recess but only if students give you permission to join their play.
- Show the students your own personality and share tidbits from your life.
- Greet students at the door by name each morning during arrival.
- Send home positive communication (e.g., email, phone call, verbally during dismissal) to highlight celebratory moments for that student from the day – behavioral or academic.
- Build a rapport with students that enables students to learn more about you.
- Center voice and humanity of each individual student.

## Curriculum Night

- Have examples of curriculum work out for families to look at.
- Make a slideshow so that families can see what the curriculum will be.
- Ask your teacher friends how they do curriculum night!
- Give parents a taste of the curriculum by teaching them a brief lesson of how you would teach the kids so they can see how their kids will be taught and can support them at home (e.g. use manipulatives–concrete representation for the abstract etc.)



## First Day/Week of School

- Learn students' names.
- Co-construct or introduce classroom norms. (Norms can be words only or pictures with words.)
- Establish classroom jobs (rotate these weekly; a pocket chart with the student's name in a sleeve of the chart works well; have one job be "day off".)
- Help students to learn each other's names during student-led morning meetings. Have students ask, "What is your name?" when they call on the next person to speak.
- Routines! (See below-mentioned section for ideas.)
- Activities that are selected can go beyond the first week of school (i.e., they can be integrated throughout the first month or two of school).

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# Ideas and Tips to Help You



## First Day/Week of School continued from prior page

- The first week is hard. It can feel overwhelming, but it's okay; it gets easier as everyone settles into a routine.
- Make transitions easier for students by using games or songs that you will sing the rest of the year.
- Model making a mistake and learning from it to make students feel safe and to encourage them to have fun and be curious.

## Identity Building

- Incorporate community games ( e.g. *That's Me*, *A Warm Wind Blows*, *4 Corners* (like a 'would you rather...')
- Introduce books where students can see characters like themselves.
- Bring in or invite families to the classroom, if they can and if you can.
- Provide student-created name tags for their desks and/or the door; include drawings and words about aspects of themselves that they want to share with the class.
- Have children create '*All About Me/Family Books*' that they can share with you and their classmates; these books should remain in the classroom.

## Organizational Ideas

- Make notes, however it works best for you. It could be that you keep a binder with sheets of paper in it, one for every student and you jot down notes at the end of the day or during the day or you could write it down on a Post-it. Think about what would be accessible for you and how you can maintain it.
- Label materials (e.g., use photos of items in front of where they're located in the classroom).
- Color coding can be helpful; lesson plans for Monday can go in a blue folder, Tuesday can be red, whatever works for you.
- Color code student folders by subject; have a finished and unfinished side in the folder.
- Have a finished work bin for each subject.
- Create a spreadsheet with a tab to record observational notes, the date, and the subject for each student.

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# Ideas and Tips to Help You

## Organizational Ideas *continued from prior page*

- Create a rolling document of lesson plans on a Word document or Powerpoint. (An addition to the rolling Google doc): If you change the font type from normal text to “heading” it will show up in the sidebar and then you can have a clickable table of contents by date, lesson number, etc.
- Jot down important dates for the entire school year in your own paper or digital calendar/book in advance once you receive the school’s schedule.
- Have a manila folder/binder for each student per subject to keep accumulating important documents (assessment papers, other work samples, etc.) throughout the year.

## Orientation Night

- This happens before the school year kicks off; pull out big ideas from the parent handbook to highlight.
- Present a typical day as well as ways to communicate, meet with each other and contact teachers
- Share bullet points of what you want to make sure that you mention. If you’re working with a team, assign parts so that everyone knows what they’re doing and what they’re talking about.
- Have examples of student work on display for families to look at; put the schedule up so that they can see the rollout of the day.
- Have morning work or choices out on the tables for them to look at when they come in.
- Make a little brochure for families to take with them about absences, illness, typical day etc. and you can put your school’s email on it in case they need to contact you.
- Share a little bit about yourself.



# Ideas and Tips to Help You

## Parent Teacher/Family Conferences

- Have samples of student work ready to discuss. If older students, have them lead the conference and talk about their progress.
- Always lead with glows then go into grows or areas that need support.
- Suggest ways families can help support their students at home.
- Be mindful of the family's schedule and lifestyle when coordinating time/place of conference.
- Be mindful that sometimes families aren't ready to hear some 'hard' news (i.e, their child needs support), but plant the seeds (e.g., I wonder...We've noticed...) so that they'll have it in the back of their minds as the year goes on.
- Arrange to have a translator if families do not speak English.
- Prepare important documents in the language that the family speaks in the home, whenever necessary.
- Ask the family if there is anything they want to talk about (maybe send out a pre-conference questionnaire that families can fill out in advance if they want to, so that you can prepare information for them and know their concerns and questions ahead of time).
- Nothing serious about the student should be new to families at conferences. (This should always be discussed on the phone or preferably in-person beforehand.)
- If you have a concern about a particular conference, invite an administrator to join you.
- Repeat back what you hear families say to validate their comments and feelings.
- Treat parents as experts too, especially in a difficult conversation.
- Make sure parents leave feeling positive, knowing that you value their child, and that they are important members of the classroom community.



## Returning From Holidays/Breaks

- Do read-alouds before leaving for a school break or upon returning to school (e.g., *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson, validating the experiences of those students who stay home as opposed to going on vacations).
- Reset/re-model routines like it's the first day of school. Remember that they had a week or two weeks off; they need a reminder.
- Expect some regression (this is normal and it's okay, expect some tears, maybe).
- Reteach and practice routines.



# Ideas and Tips to Help You



## Routines in the Classroom

- Break down the day into individual routines (e.g., arrival, snack time, using math whiteboards) and break down each routine into individual steps.
- Plan for different categories of routines: academic, housekeeping, transitions, etc.
- Model each routine; coach each step; have students apply it from the beginning of the year.
- Use visuals as well as print (especially for the younger kids).
- Routines are especially critical from Day 1, but require maintenance throughout the year.
- Routines can be tweaked and new ones can be added at any point; continue to follow “model, coach, apply.”
- Preview expectations, especially before transitions - before asking a question, remind students to raise hands instead of calling out, etc.
- Use visuals as reminders, like a voice level chart.
- In early childhood, SING, make up songs that will help kids internalize the routines.

## Teacher Voice

- Sometimes you need a firm teacher voice and that’s okay.
- It can take time to develop your teacher voice.
- Sometimes the best way to get kids to be quiet is to be quiet as the teacher.
- Honor your voice; do not try to sound or act like another teacher. Be your authentic self.
- Incorporating some personal passions of yours into the classroom can help you build your teacher voice and also build classroom community (e.g., bring in your instrument and play/sing with the class!).
- Your teacher voice is also how you organize your classroom! Is students’ work displayed? Can they get materials independently? Is taking care of each other’s feelings emphasized in the classroom? All this will make them feel valued, encourage positive behavior and is part of your teacher voice.

# Ideas and Tips to Help You

## Working in Classroom/School Setting (That Isn't Progressive or Constructivist)

- You can't change everything overnight. Some things that you want might happen and they might not. Though it might just be the policy and nature of the school, you can advocate for your students, but keep in mind that sometimes change might not happen. It doesn't mean to give up; maybe try another way.
- Present/try out small "doable", easy-to-implement ideas first and incrementally add other ideas.
- Be prepared for initial push-back, but don't lose hope. Find opportune moments to make recommendations.
- Ground your recommendations in language that centers what's best for the students.
- You can also ground your suggestions using educational articles, backing them up with research.
- Refer to the student's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) as a vehicle and, or as leverage for integrating strategies.
- Acknowledge your colleagues' knowledge, skills and experiences while embracing your own as equally worthy of implementing even if on a trial basis.
- Have an open mind towards what you are capable of doing while still following the school's rules.

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*Special thanks to our former Dean, Cecelia Traugh, and Valentine Burr, our Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, for initiating the launch of the New Teacher Support Group.*





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