

First Day Jitters

By Julie Danneberg

Everyone knows the jumble of feelings as the first day of school approaches -- especially if it's the first day at a new school. Children and adults delight in the surprise ending! This is also a great opportunity to discuss feelings and emotions related to changes and transitions, as well as some wonderful coping skills to manage the "first day jitters."

Video:

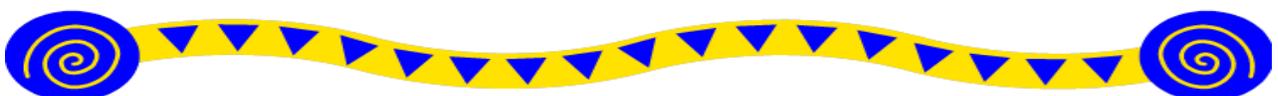
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2oBdX3H2Rg>

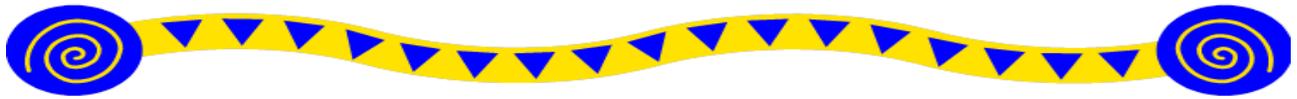
Teacher Curriculum

Reading the Story

Important talking points to cover before reading the book:

- As you introduce the book and title, ask the children if they know what the word "Jitters" means? Do they have other words that describe that same feeling (scared, nervous, etc.)?
- Go on to ask the children if they have ever felt nervous or "Jittery?" Have them give you specific examples from their life experiences.
- Ask the children what types of things make them nervous and how they usually handle or cope with the feeling or activity? Do they talk to someone? Do they cry? Do they hide?
- Explain to the children that everyone gets anxious/ nervous. Tell the children what makes you nervous and what you do when you are feeling nervous or scared.
- Continue by explaining that everyone expresses anxiety/ nervousness in different ways. Ask the children how they know if someone else is nervous.





- Discuss with the children that transitions or changes in life often make people nervous. Introduce the fact that starting to school, changing schools, and even being promoted to a higher grade in school (transition from Pre-K to KK) can cause anxiety. Have the children openly discuss their feelings about this new transition.

Circle Time: During circle time/ morning meeting is a great opportunity to start the curriculum and introduction of the book. Use circle time to discuss the talking points provided above and to read the book to the children. After completing the talking points and reading the book, allow the children to discuss how they were feeling earlier today on the way to school. Ask them if they were excited? Scared? As the children are giving you their answers post it on a dry erase board. How many children felt the same way? Point this out to the children. Many people feel the same way during transitions and feeling anxious is a normal emotion.

Video and Audio Group work: There are many great on-line tools and tips for assisting teachers with discussing transitions. Look at this wonderful tool by Macmillan from the busyteachercafe.com website:

(<http://activities.macmillanmh.com/OralLanguageActivities/main1.php?selectionID=71>).

This is an excellent slide show that uses audio discussions about the different kinds of life transitions, and shows wonderfully vivid pictures of children to enhance the conversations. The slide show is set up so that the topic is introduced, discussed, and then allows time for partner and small group discussions among the children.

All About Me Activity: Play a game to help break the ice and to decrease the first day jitters! Ask each child (one on one) to identify one really interesting or “Cool” thing about them that other children may not know (“I am a swimmer,” “I have a dog,” “I am a dancer” “My favorite color is red.” ...). You may have to help the children come up with things that set them apart. Place the child’s name on one side of a slip of paper, and the identified “special skill” or “cool thing” they mentioned on the other side. Place all the slips of paper in a bag and shake. Tell the children you are going to play an “All About Me” Guessing Game. Pull out a slip of paper and read the special gift or cool thing aloud to everyone. Have the children take turns guessing who it is. Once the child has been identified offer them an opportunity to share this further with their new friends, and allow the new friends to ask up to 3 questions related to the child or their identified skill. Then continue the game so that everyone has a turn to be special!

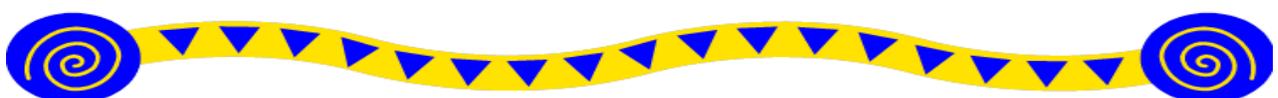
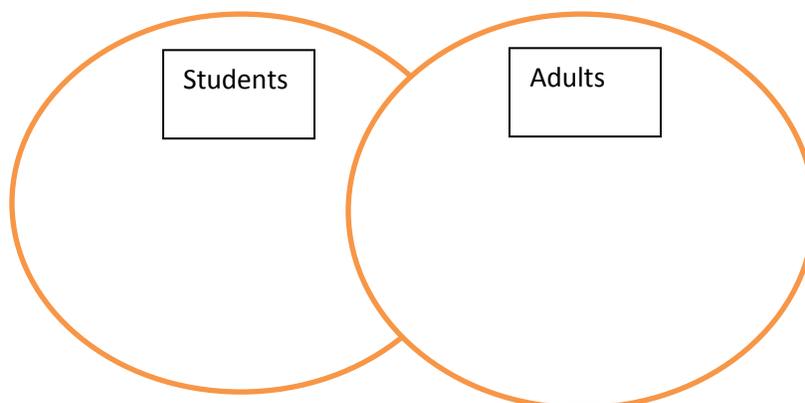
Writing/ Language Centers: Allow the children to make their very own book about their school experience. Provide the children with a drawing/ writing journal. On the first page of the book give the children a directed writing/ drawing prompt to draw a picture





of the first day of school....what they did the first day of school, what they thought it would be like, their favorite activity, their least favorite activity, things they were worried about, etc. The children should be able to draw some, but may need additional prompts to get started. After they complete the artwork in their journal have each child tell classmates about their picture. Identify one part of the picture (maybe the child drew a picture of recess time), and have the children try to identify what letter makes the beginning sound “Rrrrr” like in “RECESS.” Once they have identified the letter have the children practice writing an “R” -with your assistance (dotted lines may be required)- on the journal page. Keep adding to the journal throughout the year. This will be a great memory book for the year, but you will also have a great permanent product of the child’s educational and developmental growth for the year (academically, artistically, and emotionally).

Empathy Activity: Do a compare and contract activity to show the children how similar they all are. Discuss how they all participated in certain things earlier in the day to get ready for school. Discuss how you too had to do certain things before you came to school. Draw two large circles on the board that are connected in the middle (see below example). In one circle draw pictures or write the comments children make about what they did earlier in day to prepare for school (ate cereal, got dressed, fed their dog, put on their backpack, rode a bus, etc.), and then in the other circle write down the things you (and other adults in the classroom) participated in earlier in the day to prepare for school (eat breakfast, take a bath, get dressed, drove to school, etc.). Discuss the differences and similarities between the teachers and the students, but also discuss the difference and similarities among the student responses.





This Book Curriculum was developed by Dr. Susan Elswick. Dr. Elswick is a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University Of Memphis Department Of Social Work. She received her master's in social work from the University of Tennessee in 2006, and her doctorate in Special Education with a specialty in Applied Behavior Analysis from the University of Memphis in 2011. She is a Licensed School Social Worker in Tennessee, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, and she runs a small private practice that provides in home social work and behavior analytic programming for families in the surrounding area. Prior to joining the faculty at the University Of Memphis Department Of Social Work she was a school-based social work clinician for 10 years. One of her research interests includes the use of early intervention programming to enhance emotional literacy in order to curb child maladaptive behaviors to improve social and educational outcomes.

