Back-to-School Meet and Greet

Woof! Woof! The focus of this lesson is to welcome children into a new learning environment through reading and age-appropriate activities that help relieve the anxiety of beginning school in a new place and with new friends.

Clifford's Big Idea: Be a Good Friend

When children enter school for the first day, it can be an awakening experience for everyone! Welcome children with activities that encourage friendship, kindness, and fun interaction with new friends.

The following activities nurture essential:

- social and emotional skills
- pre-reading skills
- cognitive thinking skills
- fine motor skills

Materials

- *Clifford's First School Day* by Norman Bridwell
- Assorted Clifford the Big Red Dog books, at least one per student

Make Play Clay Activity

- 3 cups of water
- 3 cups of flour
- 2 tablespoons of baby oil or vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon of cream of tartar
- 1 cup of salt
- Plastic, resealable baggies
- **Optional:** Assorted food coloring

Stars in a Bottle Activity

- Empty plastic soda bottles and caps
- Glitter
- Water
- Hot glue gun
- **Optional:** Assorted food coloring

Buckets of Colors Activity

- Small buckets

- Assorted crayons or chalk pieces

Welcoming Friends Activity

- Friendship bracelets or materials to make them (string or yarn, beads, etc.)

Directions

The First Day: Walk-About!

Step 1: Start the day by having a "camp meeting." Hand each child a Clifford the Big Red Dog book (use our Clifford book list to find titles at the right reading levels for your students).

Step 2: Model how to properly handle and turn pages.

Step 3: Give children time to share thoughts on illustrations and characters with each other or the whole class.

Step 4: Gather up books and focus students' attention on listening to a read-aloud of *Clifford's First School Day* by Norman Bridwell.

Step 5: Review the events of Clifford's first day of school. Encourage children to make connections with their own perceptions and feelings about coming to school.

Step 6: Ask children if school seems like a scary place, a safe place, or a place like they've never seen before. Take notice of what they are most curious about in the classroom and encourage discussion.

Step 7: Take the class on a "walk-about" campus tour. Locate and identify important places: library, cafeteria, playground, drink fountain, and restroom.

Step 8: Along the tour, introduce the class to important people like the principal, counselors, nurses, librarians, and custodians.

Step 9: When you return to the classroom, walk through daily classroom routines including school dismissal, safety rules regarding running, and after-school transportation.

Step 10: Have a special treat to end the "walk-about" tour to celebrate each child's arrival into a world of exciting learning and new friends.

First Assignment...Have Fun!

Relieve the stress that some children bring with them to school by using these fun activities to break the ice:

Make Play Clay
Mix together 3 cups of water and 3 cups of flour. Add 2 tablespoons of baby oil or vegetable oil; 1 tablespoon of cream of tartar; and 1 cup of salt. To make the play clay colorful, simply add food coloring. Store the play clay in baggies. The clay can be refrigerated.

Stars in a Bottle
Fill empty plastic soda bottles with glitter and water. Add food color if you'd like. Hot glue the bottle top onto the bottle so it cannot be reopened. These shimmering bottles are great to use during quiet time, as they

may help children relax.

Buckets of Colors
Ask children to help fill small buckets of assorted crayons or chalk to use for art centers or sidewalk play. Sorting the crayons or chalk pieces allows students to use their hands while contributing to the classroom.

Welcoming Friends
Assign a greeter, either a student or a parent volunteer, to hand out friendship bracelets as children enter the classroom.

Lesson Extensions

When we learn about ourselves, we also learn to appreciate how special others are!

- Have each student's parents or caretakers write a short paragraph describing the child. Read these aloud to the class one at a time. Have the children guess which child is being described.

- Find examples of families in books and magazines. Cut out, organize, and glue together the photos to create a "family collage." Next, have children bring photocopies of family pictures from home to make their own family collage. Display the collages in a classroom gallery and discuss how each family is unique in its own way.

Teaching Tip

Thematic units integrate concepts and themes in a meaningful way for children. By using a topic of study, children can focus on a larger purpose for learning many underlying concepts that support a particular theme. It's a natural, effective way to combine subject areas. If you have a topic, then you have a theme, which means the sky is the limit on inspiring children to connect concepts among multiple subject areas as they learn!

Clifford's Library

These books support Clifford's Big Ideas and reinforce valuable early literacy skills:

- *Clifford's ABC* by Norman Bridwell
- *Clifford's Best Friend: A Story About Emily Elizabeth* by Norman Bridwell
- *Going to School* (a First Time book) by Melinda Beth Radabaugh

Also check out the Clifford the Big Red Dog Book List.

- Part of Collection:

  Clifford the Big Red Dog

- Subjects:

  Changes and New Experiences, Cooperation and Teamwork, Main Idea and Details, Listening Comprehension, Arts and Creativity, Early Reading, Early Social Skills, Back-to-School Experiences, Sorting, Back to School, Friends and Friendship, First Day of School, Social and Emotional Development, Teacher Tips and Strategies

- Skills:

  Development of Reading Comprehension, Main Idea and Details, Listening Comprehension