

LAUNCHING A CAREER IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

YOUR ACTION PLAN FOR SUCCESS



Elizabeth A. Potts
Lori A. Howard

Foreword by Kristin L. Sayeski

Launching a Career in Special Education

Your Action Plan for Success

by

Elizabeth A. Potts, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Special Education
Missouri Western State University
St. Joseph, Missouri

and

Lori A. Howard, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Special Education
Marshall University
Charleston, West Virginia

· P A U L · H ·
BROOKES
PUBLISHING CO.®

Baltimore • London • Sydney



Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Post Office Box 10624
Baltimore, Maryland 21285-0624
USA

www.brookespublishing.com

Copyright © 2019 by Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.
All rights reserved.

“Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.” is a registered trademark of
Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.

Typeset by Progressive Publishing Services, York, Pennsylvania.
Manufactured in the United States of America by
Sheridan Books, Chelsea, Michigan.

The individuals described in this book are composites or real people whose situations are masked and are based on the authors’ experiences. In all instances, names and identifying details have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Purchasers of *Launching a Career in Special Education: Your Action Plan for Success* are granted permission to download, print, and photocopy the handouts and forms in the text for educational purposes. These materials may not be reproduced to generate revenue for any program or individual. Photocopies may only be made from an original book. *Unauthorized use beyond this privilege may be prosecutable under federal law.* You will see the copyright protection notice at the bottom of each photocopyable page.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Potts, Elizabeth A., author. | Howard, Lori A., 1961– author.
Title: Launching a career in special education : your action plan for success /
Elizabeth A. Potts, Lori A. Howard.
Description: Baltimore : Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., [2019] | Includes
bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2018047323 (print) | LCCN 2019005711 (ebook) | ISBN
9781681253374 (epub) | ISBN 9781681253381 (pdf) | ISBN 9781681251936 (pbk.)
Subjects: LCSH: Special education teachers—Training of—United States. |
Special education teachers—Vocational guidance. | Special
education—Study and teaching—United States.
Classification: LCC LC3969.45 (ebook) | LCC LC3969.45 .P68 2019 (print) |
DDC 371.9—dc23
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018047323>

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data are available from the British Library.

2023 2022 2021 2020 2019

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

About the Authors	vii
Foreword <i>Kristin L. Sayeski</i>	ix
Preface	xi
Section I Introduction	
Chapter 1 Getting Started	3
Book Setup	3
Create Your Own Planning Timeline	6
Beginning Your Journey	8
Section II The Daily Work of a Teacher	
Chapter 2 Understanding Inclusion	13
Special Educator's Role in Inclusion	16
Universal Design for Learning and Differentiation	17
Special Educator's Role During Identification	22
Chapter 3 Lesson Planning	25
Parts of a Lesson Plan	26
Designing a Lesson and Unit	35
Experience and Lesson Plans	37
Chapter 4 Research-Based Interventions	41
Research Based or Evidence Based?	42
Finding Research-Based Practices	43
Is My Research-Based Practice Working?	45
Examples of Research-Based Practices	47
Chapter 5 Classroom Assessment	55
Measuring Student Knowledge	56
Homework and Grading Issues	65
High-Stakes Assessments and Students With Disabilities	67
Chapter 6 Classroom Management	71
Learning About Your Class	71
Finding Your Flow	73
Routines	77
Rules	79

Chapter 7	Behavior Management	83
	Whole-Class Behavior Management	83
	Managing Individual Behaviors	86
	Choosing Motivators	88
	Managing Your Behavior	90
	Functional Behavioral Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans	92
 Section III Beyond Instruction		
Chapter 8	IEP: The Legal Document	97
	Parts of the IEP	98
	Running the Meeting	108
Chapter 9	Classroom Observations	111
	Planning for Observations	112
	Preparing Your Students	113
	Preparing Your Environment for Observation	114
	Feedback	114
	Conducting Your Own Observations	118
 Section IV Working as a Professional Within a School		
Chapter 10	Cooperating Teacher: Your New Best Friend and Mentor	123
	Cooperating Teacher’s Role	124
	First Meet and Greet	126
	Respecting the Cooperating Teacher	127
	Troubleshooting	128
Chapter 11	Professionalism	131
	Managing Absences	132
	Managing Paperwork	138
	Professional Dress	140
	Avoiding Negativity	142
	Professionalism Online	143
	Ethics	143
Chapter 12	Co-Teaching	149
	What Is Co-Teaching?	150
	Strategies for Success	155
Chapter 13	Communicating With Others	161
	Other Teachers	162
	Related Services Personnel	164
	Paraprofessionals	166
	Parents, Families, and Guardians	170
	Administrators	174
	Support Staff	175

Chapter 14	Teaching as a Career	179
	Getting the Job	179
	Licensing and Certification	189
	Professional Development and Continuous Improvement.	190
	Evaluation.	192
	Avoiding Burnout.	194
Appendix A	High-Leverage Practices.	199
Appendix B	Book List	207
References	209
Index	213

About the Authors

Elizabeth A. Potts, Ph.D., earned a bachelor of science degree in liberal studies and a master's degree in education, with an emphasis on special education, from Longwood College in Virginia. She earned a doctoral degree with an emphasis on mild disabilities from the University of Virginia. Dr. Potts is an assistant professor of special education at Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph, Missouri.

Lori A. Howard, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of special education at Marshall University and a recipient of the 2015 Pickens-Queen Award for Teaching Excellence. Dr. Howard teaches courses related to introduction to special education, reading and math strategies for students with disabilities, inclusion, and disability perspectives. She earned a master's degree in educational audiology from the University of Northern Colorado. She began her career in special education working with students who are deaf and the hearing impaired. Subsequently, she earned a doctoral degree from the University of Virginia in educational psychology. Her current interests include accessibility, Threshold Concepts, and how institutions of higher education can support the education of college students with disabilities.

Foreword

The initial dive into teaching, whether it be student teaching or your first year, represents a critical juncture between aspiration and perspiration. As such, it can be a roller coaster of highs and lows. Highs come in the form of making meaningful connections with students, deepening your professional identity, developing a network of support, and receiving recognition for knowing your craft. Lows come when the reality of just how *big* this job really is hits you. In this book, Elizabeth A. Potts and Lori A. Howard serve as mentors, guides, and confidants as you make your way through this challenging but ultimately rewarding initiation into teaching.

Potts and Howard have a long history of mentoring and supporting beginning teachers. The information, guidance, and tools within this book reflect the wisdom they have accumulated as practitioners, supervisors, and scholars. As such, the book reflects a soup-to-nuts overview of all things special education. In each chapter, Potts and Howard use accessible language to present key ideas related to the delivery of special education services such as the difference between research-based and evidence-based practices, elements of positive behavior support, and components of effective and appropriate present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) statements. To accompany these descriptions, they provide anecdotes from student and beginning teachers, checklists and planning tools, and practical tips and strategies to help beginning special educators understand, navigate, and deliver effective special education services.

As you work through the chapters in this book, consider the power of small wins. Rather than imagining a compilation video in which your students speak to the powerful influence you have had on their lives or your teacher-of-the-year speech, focus on the small details of the day, the things you got right. A small win is a specific task of moderate importance that has been completed successfully. Students entering your classroom in a calm manner, a colleague asking to borrow your lesson materials, students performing well on a skill that you just taught them, asking a question in such a way that it solicits a response from a reluctant learner, finishing your lesson planning for the following week on Friday afternoon rather than Sunday night, or sending a positive e-mail home to a parent all constitute small wins. Some days, merely providing a friendly, warm greeting to students might be all you can muster in terms of goal setting, but recognizing your small wins serves to reinforce and strengthen those behaviors. When the bigness of what you want to accomplish overwhelms you, your small wins whisper encouragement. In this book, Potts and Howard have delineated many teaching behaviors that can serve as small wins. In each chapter, identify a behavior or task that can be your small win for the day—teaching your students the SLANT technique (Chapter 2), developing and implementing a teaching routine (Chapter 3), collecting assessment data to plan for instruction (Chapter 5), or conducting a motivation assessment with students (Chapter 7).

Finally, getting better at anything requires attention to several key elements: knowing what to do, planning for implementation, implementation (i.e., practice), feedback, reflection, and further practice applying the new or enhanced skill that came about as a result of feedback and reflection. Thankfully for special educators, many researchers and skilled teachers have codified what to do. These practices are variously labeled evidence based, effective, high leverage, or high yield. The tools and materials within this book reflect those highly effective practices and techniques. Potts and Howard connect readers to the research and standards that inform effective practice and provide excellent planning tools to ensure their integration within teaching. But, improvements—learning, growing, changing—only occur with feedback and reflection. For better or worse, feedback on teaching is frequently immediate. Students failing an assessment, the paper airplane soaring in front of your face as you attempt to teach (this actually happened to me once when I was working as a substitute teacher), blank faces after you pose a question to the class, or an e-mail from an upset parent can serve as an immediate reminder that something needs to change. But seeking the input of others can create the opportunity for more nuanced feedback. Specifically, supervisors and mentors can play a vital role in providing the type of feedback that dives deeper than the immediate feedback of failure. Observers can see things you might otherwise miss, such as the students you fail to call on consistently, a tone of voice that betrays your frustration, or the muddled manner in which you provide directions. Potts and Howard provide strategies for engaging cooperating teachers, supervisors, and mentors in proactive ways in order to solicit productive, useful feedback. Finally, feedback is not an end unto itself. Feedback is only helpful if you reflect on the feedback and practice applying the feedback to your teaching. In each chapter, Potts and Howard provide reflection prompts to help you translate reflection into action.

Although this book was designed for beginning special educators, it can serve as a great resource for special educators as they move further into their careers. Given the varied roles of the special educator, educators will find the need to revisit concepts as their students, instructional situations, and needs change. A new group of students may bring new challenges in terms of classroom management or a new co-teacher may provide a unique opportunity to implement a different evidence-based practice. Regardless of when and how you use this book, I am confident you will make good use of the content.

Some people were born to teach, some stumble into it, and others, the great deniers, find themselves here after much kicking and screaming. Regardless of why you find yourself standing in front of an empty classroom of desks wondering what the day, week, or year might bring, you should know that you can do this, and you can do this extraordinarily well. As a matter of fact, we are counting on you to do just that.

Kristin L. Sayeski
University of Georgia

Preface

As authors, we want you to *love this book!* We are practical people, and our focus is always on how we can make the lives of teachers easier and how we can help teachers like you increase the positive impact you have on your students. Because that's who you are now—the teacher. And being a good teacher takes resources and tips and tricks. We are honored to be part of the village supporting you as you go out into the classroom, and we know you will find valuable shortcuts, reminders, and advice in this tome.

As you consider how this book relates to your professional life, it may be helpful to know our perspective and point of view. It has been a while since we had our first day as teachers, but we have worked with hundreds of novice special educators and noticed a number of themes. With very few exceptions, the new teachers were excited, overwhelmed, tired, and anxious as they entered the classroom as *the teacher*. They often focused on inconsequential things such as how they would arrange desks or what the background color would be for their first bulletin board, but they forgot about the long game. Then, often panicking that they had forgotten almost everything it took years to learn about teaching, the novice teachers needed someone to remind them that they *can* do this. They needed someone to remind them of the high points of their education, to point them toward the tools they need to use today, and to help them think beyond today to the year as a whole.

We have spent years working with teachers just like you. We've been student teacher coaches and mentors, and we understand where you are and where you can go. We want this book to remind you that you already know much of what you need, and you have probably learned how to find what you don't know. This book is designed to be a one-stop, keep-in-your-back-pocket resource. Being a special education teacher is challenging. You must differentiate your instruction for each student while also learning how to manage all of your students, not to mention keeping the paperwork on track. True confessions—we hate paperwork and meetings too! We've tried to give you tools and “hacks” to manage these day-to-day responsibilities without getting bogged down by the little details.

Although you can read this book straight through, we encourage you to think of it as a reference guide, too. Turn to a specific chapter for a quick update or recap so that you can refresh yourself about whatever your professional focus is in a particular week. We have also included some special features to help you along the way. There are textboxes on specific topics, such as how to work with your co-teacher and how to ensure that students who are English language learners (ELL) are included in your instructional choices. We've tried to include lots of practical been-there types of advice and solutions. You probably will also develop some of these for yourself, and we've included a place to jot down notes for the future.

For teacher educators working with student teachers or mentoring new teachers, this book can be a great addition to a student teaching course or book club selection. In the appendix, you will see how the high-leverage practices (HLPs) are integrated into specific chapters. This can assist students in remembering that they have learned some of this information before in their courses. We all know the importance of linking theory (our coursework) to practice (their classroom). We also know the importance of reflection in teaching, so we included a list of reflective questions and boxes in each chapter. You are encouraged to make note of what you are observing now and how you can incorporate or personalize those ideas in your future classroom.

For special education teachers of all experience levels, we understand both the really cool moments of teaching and those agonizingly frustrating ones. We want this book to be one of the tools in your bag to help you cope with both kinds of days. You will have them, and they are the wonderful messiness of teaching. Teaching is committed in classrooms, where chaos can always happen. Teaching is not a sterile classroom or lab where every student sits waiting patiently for knowledge to be transferred, but a cauldron where true magic can be made.

Whatever metaphor you use, most important of all, is that you find a way to make your teaching journey your own. Some of you may want to envision Luke Skywalker learning to be a Jedi Master. (We've always thought Yoda was a great special ed teacher!) Some of you may be inspired by Professor Dumbledore or Professor McGonagall while hoping your school will be as amazing as Hogwarts. Or you may have seen *The Miracle Worker* and thought Annie Sullivan was a real-world hero for teaching Helen Keller. You may simply remember a personal favorite teacher or person who inspired you to start down the path of teaching students with disabilities. Think of this book as the "layers" function on Google Maps. It is designed to help you along your path, providing advice that is sure to make the journey smoother, no matter how you think of it.

Welcome to the adventure!

I

Introduction

1

Getting Started

I just found out where I'm doing my student teaching, and I'm both excited and so nervous I'm almost sick! I've spent the last 3½ years learning so much, but how do I remember it all? And what about the other pieces, like getting along with my cooperating teacher? And the little things like parking and buying lunch?

—*New student teacher*

Beginning something new can be scary. Whether you are a new student teacher or a first-year teacher embarking on the next step in your career, this book is designed to be your field guide. You can read it all at once, use it as a refresher just before beginning a new school year, or use it as a reference tool as you spend more time in your classroom. Given how teaching life is intertwined, we suggest that, time permitting, you do both: read the entire book and refer back to it as needed.

BOOK SETUP

Modeling how you should teach, we have set up our chapters in a predictable format. There are certain elements that every chapter has, with the big headings in a certain order, but special topic textboxes distributed throughout based on content. Understanding these elements will help you make the most out of them.

Though we have tried to put some of the most important beginning-of-the-year pieces first (e.g., skills lesson planning in Chapter 3), important information for setting up your classroom and positioning yourself for success from the beginning are spread throughout the chapters. For instance, if you are a new teacher you want to have tips for setting up your physical space (see Chapter 6) before the school year starts. Likewise, you want to prepare for a substitute teacher (see Chapter 11 on professionalism) before you need one.

Standards

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is the premier professional association for special educators in the United States and is a good source of ideas and support. CEC advocates for individuals with disabilities and for the needs of those who support them, including teachers, families, and related services personnel. In support of that mission, CEC developed a set of standards for new teachers that are designed to guide those working with preservice and novice teachers. Each chapter begins with a CEC Standard Connection, followed by a list of standards that are covered in that chapter. The list of standards at the beginning of each chapter highlights the standards most relevant to the chapter's topics but is not exclusive because many of the standards overlap and apply to many topics.

CEC and the CEEDAR Center identified 22 high-leverage practices (HLPs) that are “best practices” within the profession of special education. In Appendix A, you will find a table showing which HLPs are discussed in each chapter. In addition, the appendix has another table that provides the definition of each HLP. More detailed information on the HLPs and their importance to classroom instruction and professional standards for special education teachers can be found through CEC or at the CEEDAR web site (<http://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/>).

Special Topic Textboxes

Each chapter contains special topic textboxes that apply to the content of that chapter; the special topic textboxes are designed to help enrich connections between chapters as well as highlight how the information in the chapter relates to the textbox topic. The special topic textboxes include Planning Timelines, Ethics Alerts, Remembering ELL Students, Co-teaching Considerations, and Reflection Prompts.

Planning Timelines As you enter student teaching or begin your first-year teaching, you may be wondering how to prioritize tasks, or when in the year it is important to do certain things. The Planning Timelines can help you with this. They highlight tasks you should complete early in the year to set yourself up for success (e.g., contacting your cooperating teacher before Day 1, setting up a substitute teacher file before school starts) and tasks you should do at other times of the year (e.g., cleaning off your desk).

If you don't have time to read the entire book now, look for those Planning Timelines that encourage you to complete tasks early in the year. We also suggest adding tasks from the Planning Timelines to your calendar (whether paper or electronic) and checking them off as you complete them. This will help you stay organized and limit your “When was I supposed to do that?” moments. In addition, add deadlines and events to the calendar as you learn about them throughout the school year, and add reminders to yourself days or weeks in advance of items that require preparation.

Ethics Alerts Although Chapter 11 includes a section on ethics, including a list of the CEC's Ethical Principles and Professional Practice Standards for Special

Educators, the idea of ethics and how ethics apply to your work as a teacher cannot be contained to a single chapter. Look for Ethics Alerts to help you understand your ethical obligations as a teacher. Topics include confidentiality, student safety, and collaboration. You may assume that you are an ethical person and will always do the right thing, but these Ethics Alerts will guide you through moments when it is hard to know what's right or when to stick up for it.

Remembering ELL Students Students who are English language learners (or “ELL students”) have needs that cross through all topics. Just as general educators need to be prepared for the inevitability of having students with disabilities in their classes, all teachers need to be prepared to have students on their caseload who both have a disability and are in the process of learning English. Having an ELL student adds an extra layer of complexity to your work and affects all aspects of how you interact with the student, from assessment to communication with the student and his or her family, to how you instruct the student. Remembering ELL Students will highlight some things to consider and resources to seek out when working with ELL students.

Co-Teaching Considerations Most of this book speaks directly to special education student teachers or new special educators. If you are co-teaching, however, you will have slightly different needs and will likely need to think about or approach challenges differently. Chapter 12 covers co-teaching exclusively, but the Co-teaching Considerations scattered throughout the book serve to make connections as to how co-teaching alters some of our advice, or how co-teachers need to think through aspects of teaching together. If you are co-teaching, we encourage you to share Chapter 12 with your co-teacher, along with the Co-teaching Considerations and other resources, so you can develop a shared vision of what your co-teaching relationship will look like.

Reflection Prompts A very important, often overlooked tool in making oneself better is reflection. As you engage in tasks, it is important for you to reflect and consider how you would improve on these tasks in the future. As you observe how others do something, you should consider how you would change (or improve) the practice to make it yours. Each chapter provides a short list of tasks to do in your instruction; activities to do in your placement or new job; or conversations to have with your cooperating teacher, mentor, or other teachers. Remember, reflection requires thinking about what you can change, not dwelling on what you cannot (e.g., student behavior, unless you consider how instruction or structure can change student behavior). Here are some examples of good reflections:

- “Mrs. C. doesn’t really have a behavior management system. She says this year’s class is the roughest she has had behaviorally, but there are no consequences and only vague verbal praise. When I take over next week, and when I start out on my own, I want to start with a specific level of consequences and with a more formal way of including positive reinforcement for appropriate behaviors.”

- “I used mnemonics in my instruction for the first time today, and *wow!* Students really connected with the material in a different way. They all remembered the facts on the exit ticket. I truly couldn’t believe it. I think the clear way I approached it, and the number of times we repeated it, helped with the success. I’m going to look for ways to work mnemonics into more of my instruction.”
- “Today I observed two co-teachers that my mentor claims are the best. They seemed to have a good rapport, but it was essentially the general education teacher lecturing and the special education teacher rotating around the room and giving help. Maybe I just caught them on a one teach–one assist day, but when I co-teach, I expect to be an active member of the pair and want to use many different models. I need to think about how I’ll approach my new co-teacher about this.”

CREATE YOUR OWN PLANNING TIMELINE

If you are pressed for time and cannot read the entire book before the school year starts, it is important to begin a timeline for what needs to be done. Get a paper-and-pencil or electronic calendar and consider organization. Will this calendar be just for school information, or will it also include social information such as Dad’s birthday and a weekend gathering? Is there a way to delineate what is school related and what is not? One method is to use different color ink or create a shared calendar between a personal and school e-mail account. Create a method for making notes about tasks that aren’t yet due but that you need to be working on before the due date shows up in your calendar. See Figure 1.1 for an example of how you might set this up on a paper calendar.

Consider adding the following tasks to the calendar, which appear in more detail as Planning Timeline boxes.

- *For student teachers:* Set up a meeting with your cooperating teacher (see Chapter 10).
- *For student teachers:* Learn about existing co-teacher relationships (see Chapter 12).
- *For student teachers:* Ensure your cooperating teacher does formal observations (see Chapter 9).
- *For new special educators (and maybe student teachers):* Plan for classroom management (see Chapter 6).
- *For new special educators:* Seek individualized education program (IEP) software training (see Chapter 8).
- *For new special educators:* Review your IEPs, and make a plan (see Chapter 8).
- *For new special educators:* Find a mentor, and meet with your assigned mentor (see Chapter 10).
- *For new special educators (and maybe student teachers):* Set up your substitute folder (see Chapter 11).

Week of March 12	
<p>Monday, March 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Planning</i>—Have weekly co-planning with Mr. Q. <hr/> <p>Tuesday, March 13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Math</i>—Take data on CM’s nonacademic goals. <hr/> <p>Wednesday, March 14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reading</i>—Take data on all students’ reading goals. • <i>After school</i>—Have weekly check-in with Mrs. G about JS. <hr/> <p>Thursday, March 15</p> <hr/> <p>Friday, March 16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Special assembly</i>—Confirm which students are going with which class. Am I taking any students? 	<p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JS has IEP meeting in 2 weeks (March 28). • Schedule LL academic assessment for next week. • Confirm accommodations for state assessment, and get to coordinator by April 1.

Figure 1.1. Example calendar. (Key: IEP, individualized education program.)

- *For new special educators:* Clean out your files (see Chapter 11).
- *For new special educators:* Meet with and get to know your co-teacher (see Chapter 12).
- *For all:* Learn school culture (see Chapter 2).
- *For all:* Plan for unstructured time (see Chapter 3).
- *For all:* Do action research (see Chapter 4).
- *For all:* Create assessments (see Chapter 5).
- *For all:* Seek training in behavior management (see Chapter 7).
- *For all:* Make a plan in the event a student exhibits extreme and dangerous behaviors (see Chapter 7).
- *For all:* Set up observation dates (see Chapter 9).
- *For all:* Make a point to meet others in the school building early on (see Chapter 13).
- *For all:* Plan for downtime (see Chapter 14).

BEGINNING YOUR JOURNEY

As your first day of school approaches, you have a lot of preparing to do. As a first-year teacher, you will want to gather and organize physical materials for your new classroom space and figure out what you are going to do with your students. You'll also need to do some exploring around the school. Look at Figure 1.2 for a list of things new teachers (and student teachers, to a certain degree) need to do before school starts. As a new teacher, you should try to get into the school and your classroom before teachers are required to report so you can set up your classroom before the onslaught of trainings and meetings begin.

The most important thing, as a new teacher, is to be prepared going into the first day. Read the cumulative files for students on your caseload and ensure that all their teachers know what accommodations and modifications the students need. Provide guidance on how to incorporate these, if the teachers require it. Prepare your own instruction to meet the needs of the students you will actually be teaching, and work out your own daily (or weekly) schedule to ensure you are providing all students the minutes they require in their IEPs. Think through your classroom and behavior management plans. Consider what academic objectives you will address the first week of school, and create lesson plans to achieve those objectives. Set the tone from Day 1 that your classroom is a place of learning and fun.

- Get a parking pass, and find out where to park.
- Introduce yourself to the administrative assistants, office staff, and custodians, and make friends.
- Introduce yourself to the school psychologist, school social worker, and educational diagnostician, and make friends.
- Introduce yourself to teachers who share a curriculum with you (students at the same grade level), and make friends.
- Find the copier, and learn how to use it (and if you are allowed to unjam and refill toner).
- Find out the process for calling in sick or getting a substitute.
- Find out where you can get classroom materials (e.g., chalk/dry erase markers, butcher paper, markers, class sets of books).
- Find out how to request the purchase of materials for your classroom.
- Learn school policies (e.g., student and teacher dress, discipline).
- Find out procedures for fire drills.
- Find out procedures for your students at lunchtime (Free reign or assigned tables? When do you go?).
- Find out dismissal procedures for students. How do you know who walks versus who rides a bus?
- Learn how to use any new technology (i.e., SMART Boards).
- Learn the layout of the school.

Figure 1.2. Student and new teacher to-do list.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It was a lot of work to get ready for the first day of school, but I am so glad that I prepared! Today went beautifully. The administrative assistant joked that the first day of school is successful if everyone makes it home, and all of mine did, but they also learned some things today! I checked on all my students in inclusion classes, and they seemed to be getting along well, too. It was a nice start to the year.

—*First-year special educator*

You probably decided to become a teacher because you want to make a difference in the lives of children and teens. As you enter the schools, you may get sidetracked from that mission by all the tasks that must be completed and by all the preparation that must be done before the students walk in the door. You may continue to be sidetracked by the responsibility of educating your students (whether it is 4 or 40 or 400), and you may get bogged down in the daily details you must address to have another successful day at school. You may struggle to find the successful moments in a tough day. You may sigh when you know a student could have done better.

You will also rejoice when a lesson goes off as planned, without a hitch, and you have evidence that the students met the objective. You may weep when a student meets a goal he or she has struggled with for months. You will laugh at the excitement in your students' voices when they share good news with you and when they tell you that they used a new social skill successfully. The trick is to hold onto the highs and forget the lows (after you've used them to make yourself better). Make a folder (electronic or paper) and label it "Good Things." Add to it the sweet notes from students and parents, stories you've written down that made you laugh, and compliments others have made about you or your students that reflect your work. This is the stuff that will sustain you through difficult days and remind you that you are a teacher and your value is immeasurable.

REFLECTION	
Do Now Checklist	Reflect on what you like and what you would change
1. Skim through the book and plan for how and when you will read it.	
2. Set up a calendar for this semester or year.	
3. Create a "Good Things" folder.	