

Totally Cool Elementary School Leader's Guide

Letter

Read this introductory letter aloud.

As a group, make a list of things that students need to do to get the most out of school. Put this list on the board.

Table of Contents

Read through the *Table of Contents*. Compare the ten steps listed here with the list your students made.

Know What to Expect – Page 2

New Teachers and Changing Classes

If your students are changing classes, remind them that part of their education is learning how to get along with different teachers and teaching styles.

Clubs, Activities, and After-School Programs

Discuss the clubs, activities, and after-school programs at your school.

More Independence and More Responsibility

Remind students that as upper elementary students, they are the role models and leaders of the school.

Harder Classes

Discuss the classes your students are taking this year.

Step 1 – Know Your School – Pages 3-6

Student Handbook

If your school has a student handbook, go over it together.

School Calendar

Get a copy of your school calendar and go over the important dates. If your students have student planners, have them write in test dates, holidays, special events, etc.

Remind students to put these dates on their calendars at home.

Website

Discuss your school's website. Go over the information your students can find there.

Attendance and Tardy Policies

Go over your school's attendance policies and procedures. Make sure that students know what they're supposed to do if they are ever absent or late.

Ask students if they have any questions about your school's attendance or tardy policies.

Code of Conduct/School Rules

Go over your school's rules and discuss the reasons for them. Also discuss the consequences for breaking these rules.

Ask students if there are any rules they think should be changed. Are there any new rules that should be added?

Where to Go for Help

After reading this section, discuss the people at your school who are available to help students (principal, secretary, counselor, librarian, etc.).

If possible, ask one or more of these people to come and talk about what they do to assist students.

Step 2 – Be in School Every Day – Page 7

Before reading this section, ask students what affect attendance has on grades.

Tell students to make sure that they have phone numbers for at least two people in their class. They will then have someone to call if they have a question, need to get an assignment, etc. Remind students to keep these numbers at home, not at school.

Step 3 – Know How to Get Good Grades – Pages 8-11

1. Read the five items under **Be Organized**.

2. Ask students to rate their organizational skills on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being best). Have students write this number beside the **Be Organized** heading.

3. Ask students if they have any additional ideas on how to be organized.

Repeat these three steps for each of the skill areas on pages 8-10.

After reviewing all of the skill areas, ask students to choose two areas they need to work on. Then ask students to identify 1 or 2 things they can do in each of these areas to improve their grades.

Note: Study skills and strategies for getting good grades are covered in-depth in our booklet *10 Steps to Great Grades*. For information, go to www.woodburnpress.com

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Cheating

Do your students think cheating is a problem in your school? Discuss why students cheat and why cheating is bad, both for the student and the school. Do students care if other students cheat? What are the consequences for cheating in your class?

What is Cheating?

Do students consider all of these cheating?

The Internet

How has technology (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) affected the social scene? Are these good or bad things?

Discuss the term cyberbullying. (*Using technology to harass or intimidate someone.*)

Remind students that if they put something on the Internet, it's not only there for their friends to see, parents, relatives, and teachers may also see it.

Step 4 – Set Goals – Pages 12-14

Set Short-Term and Long-Term Goals

Ask students for some examples of both short-term and long-term goals.

Discuss how setting short-term goals can help someone achieve a long-term goal.

If, for example, a student's long-term goal is to make the school basketball team, what are some short-term goals that he/she might set? (Be able to run a mile in less than 12 minutes, make 30 out of 100 foul shots, etc.)

Set Goals that are Specific, Measurable, and Realistic

Discuss the meanings of the terms specific, measurable, and realistic.

Ask students for two examples of goals that are not specific, not measurable, and not realistic (e.g., do better in school, save money, get better at playing the piano). Write these on the board. Then change each goal to make it specific, measurable, and realistic.

Set Both School and Personal Goals

List examples of academic and personal goals that are specific, measurable, and realistic.

Write It Down

After reading this page, ask students to come up with two personal goals for the current grading period. One goal should be academic and one should be non-academic.

Remind students that each goal should be specific, measurable, and realistic. Ask students to write their goals on a piece of paper. Ask them to also write down one thing they can do to help them achieve each of their goals. Assure students that no one will see what they have written. When they're finished, have students fold their paper and put their name on the outside.

Collect these papers and tell your students that you will return them at the end of the term. Students will then be able to see if they were able to meet their goals. At the end of the grading period, return the papers to your students. Did they achieve their goals?

Ask students to then make new goals for the following grading period.

Step 5 – Be Involved – Pages 15-16

Before reading this section, go over the activities in your school.

Discuss how students can become involved in these activities.

5 Reasons to Get Involved in School Activities

If any students are currently participating in school activities, ask them to share their experiences.

Get Involved in Activities Outside of School

Discuss activities that are available in your community.

Ask students to share one activity (in or out of school) that they're involved in. Ask students what they like about this activity.

Develop Some Hobbies

Have students write a paragraph, or draw a picture, about their favorite activity outside of school.

Step 6 – Make Good Choices and Decisions

Pages 17-19

Discuss the rewards that students get for making good choices and decisions (e.g., extra privileges, parent's approval, more freedom). Also discuss the consequences for poor choices and decisions. For example, what are the possible consequences for cheating on a test or disobeying parents?

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Making Good Choices

Ask students to think about a difficult choice or decision that they've had to make. Do they feel good about the decision they made?

Think of a situation that your students can relate to, and role play "saying no."

Show how exaggeration or humor can be helpful. For example, in response to being offered a cigarette, a student could respond with *"Hey, my mom has a nose that can smell smoke a mile away. If she smells smoke on me, I'll be grounded for life."*

The Decision-Making Process

After reading this section, come up with a decision that your students might have to make (e.g., whether to keep or turn in money they found in the hall). Go through the decision-making process as a class and have students come up with as many positive and negative aspects for each choice as possible.

Jake's Dilemma

Ask students for examples of decisions they have had to make. Were these decisions easy or difficult to make?

Step 7 – Deal with Stress, Anger, and Bullies

Pages 20-21

Before reading this section, talk about how we feel when we're under a lot of stress (heart pounds, anxious feeling in the pit of the stomach, etc.).

Dealing With Stress

Tell students about a time or situation in which you personally felt stressed. Ask students to talk about times when they feel stressed (before a big test, when they are worried about something or someone).

Ask students to share how they handle stress.

Dealing with Anger

Does getting angry sometimes make a situation worse?

Ask students to tell what they do when they get angry. Do these things help? List additional healthy ways to deal with anger. Is anger always a bad thing?

Dealing with Bullies

Ask students to define "bully." (A person who is habitually cruel to smaller or weaker people.) Ask students if they, or anyone they know, has ever been bullied. What happened? What did they do about it?

Is bullying a problem in your school? (If not, discuss the effects of teasing.) Discuss (or role play) what someone should do if they're being bullied. What can bystanders do to discourage bullying?

Discuss the fact that while you don't have control over someone else's behavior, you do have a choice as to how you react.

Step 8 – Get Along with Your Parents – Pages 22-24

Ask students why their parents might worry when they are away from home. What do they think their parents worry about most? Ask students what qualities they think parents hope to find in their children's friends. What do they want in a friend?

Talk about (or role play) how someone can be disrespectful without ever saying a word.

After reading number 9, ask for an example of something a student might want permission to do (go to a high school football game, a friend's party, sleepover, etc.). Then have students identify the things that their parents might be worried or concerned about (e.g., they might get hurt, be pressured to do something they shouldn't do, be put in a situation they're not ready to handle).

What are some things students can do to help put their parents fears to rest? What are some things students can do to show their maturity to their parents?

Discuss situations with little or no compromise (e.g., going to school, following parent's rules, etc.). Discuss issues that might involve compromise (e.g., bed time, allowance, time spent with friends, etc.).

Tips for Getting Along with Parents

Ask students for additional tips on how to get along with parents.

Step 9 – Be a Good Friend – Page 25

Discuss the social scene at your school. Are there lots of cliques? Are students friendly? Is having friends to eat lunch with ever a concern? How are new students treated?

What can you and your friends do to make your school a better place for all students?

You often hear adults say, *"Just be yourself and you'll make friends."* What do they mean by this?

What characteristics do students look for in a friend?

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Step 10 – Plan and Prepare for Your Future

Pages 26-27

After reading this section, ask students to write down two things they are good at doing, or that they have a natural talent for (math, drawing, athletics, music, etc.).

Have students also write down two things they like to do.

Remind students that they will be happier and more successful if they choose a career that fits their abilities and interests.

Preparing for a Career

The purpose of this section is to encourage students to think about continuing their education after high school, and to show students that they have a number of educational options.

Have students choose two careers they'd like to know more about. Ask them to find out what kind of education or training is needed for these careers.

For information on specific careers, have students go to www.bls.gov/oco

Tips for Students – Page 28

Have students ask older brothers, sisters, and friends for additional advice. Ask students to share this advice with the group.

Tips for Parents – Page 29

Have students take this book home and ask their parents to read this section.

Do students have other tips for parents?