

Paper Plane

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Trading long lunches for photocopier queues, Netflix marathons for lesson-planning and sleep-ins for staff meetings is a rude shock to the system as we start back at school.

Whether you've spent the break on an exciting overseas adventure or curled up on the couch, hopefully you are feeling energised and excited to start the 2019 school year.

I'm always excited to see the kids and my work colleagues, but resent falling back into a life dictated by bells and assessment deadlines. This makes me susceptible to laughing acknowledgements of Darryl from PE's commentary every first day back; "It's like we never had a holiday", followed by "How long until the term is over?"



The first day back, with no kids, I am always fascinated to see the graduate teachers, those who are yet to complete a full year as a teacher. I remember being in their position and grasping my timetable and a whole set of class lists with kids' names that meant nothing to me at that point.

Older teachers would look over my shoulder and point to names and issue warnings and recommendations.

"Don't let those two sit together under any circumstances."

"Don't take your eyes off him for a second."

"Don't ring home for that one, her mum's crazy. Get the co-ordinator to do it."

"Good luck with that lot."

The idea of teaching and being alone in a classroom with your own students can be extremely confronting when you've always had another adult in the room with you.

I remember my very first class. I thought I would spend the lesson getting to know the kids and discussing what we would be doing for the year, establishing the rules of the classroom and basically having a warm, fuzzy experience.

Unfortunately, before I'd even marked the roll, a fight had broken out and my plan flew out the window. I turned into crowd controller and so my teaching career began ... rather differently to how I'd envisioned it.

I've never forgotten how I felt on that first day as a teacher and how rapidly I learned that often what you had planned out for your class has to change to suit the atmosphere of the classroom.

I even had to alter my plans for my year 7 class that I had after lunch twice a week in my first year because the canteen was selling a particularly potent confectionery item that came in a long roll.

It was sending kids loopy (obviously before the healthy eating campaigns came in). The vast majority of my class would arrive with a bright blue tongue and incapable of staying on a chair for two minutes. Not a lot was achieved in those lessons.

As the school year gets underway, take a moment to think back on how far you've come as a teacher or, if you're just starting your career, best of luck. And don't take the advice not to smile before Easter – smile whenever you feel like it.

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