

# The Just ASK 2014 Opening of School Checklist

## Focus on Teaching Staff

## Person Responsible

## Deadline

Fill all personnel vacancies

Have artifacts from collaborative teams available for applicants to review so that they understand that the school is a professional learning community

Complete the master schedule planning new teacher assignments so they do not have difficult schedules

Make sure all teachers know team assignments (including co-teaching) before they return to school

Review and update teacher handbook and post on school internal website

Plan the site-based induction program including a mentor for each new teacher

Provide mentors with necessary training and resources such as copies of *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mentor's Handbook* and *Why Didn't I Learn This in College?*

Make personal calls to new teachers to invite them to the new teacher orientation and answer any questions

Ensure that copies of the learning standards, curriculum guides, and other teacher resource materials are available in hard copy and/or online

Provide each new teacher a copy of *Why Didn't I Learn This in College?*

Ensure that appropriate textbooks and supplies are on hand and placed in classrooms

Plan the focus, outcomes, and organization of the opening faculty meeting

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Model and explicitly note best instructional practices at opening meetings

Continue to provide professional development on the **Common Core State Standards** and the implications for instructional and assessment practices

Test technology to be used in opening meetings to ensure that presentations run smoothly

Review/Prepare a “Procedures for the First Day of School” document to discuss at the opening meeting

Schedule time for teachers to work in their rooms

Arrange for distribution of keys to teachers as they arrive on the first day

Prepare packets for the opening faculty meeting

Determine school committees and develop a procedure for teacher selection of assignment to school committees

Determine extra duty assignments for teachers; minimize additional duties for new teachers

Review teacher leadership roles and responsibilities and provide needed training and resources

Complete and publish a calendar of school events

Determine meeting dates for teachers for the school year (faculty meetings, department chairs, grade level team leaders, collaborative learning teams, etc.)

Make arrangements for an opening day breakfast and/or luncheon

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Distribute and discuss implications of student data that was received over the summer

Plan a presentation on any changes in the supervision and evaluation process for teachers and administrators

Schedule administrative staff classroom walk-throughs for the first quarter

Review new district initiatives and plan appropriate presentations for staff

Determine which administrators will supervise/ evaluate which teachers

Review the school's grading policy and determine if there will be any modification to how teachers determine student grades

Review and celebrate the accomplishments of collaborative teams from the previous year and their goals for the upcoming year

Review RtI (Response to Intervention) procedures and identify next steps

Communicate expectations and guidelines about teacher websites/webpages

Be explicit about appropriate use of school computers and personal use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

Meet with technology resource teacher to plan a presentation about any changes in policy, new instructional and organizational technologies available

Meet with library/media specialist to discuss instructional priorities and needs

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Review past *Just for the ASKing!* e-newsletters to use with the staff throughout the school year

Encourage teachers to have upbeat and engaging opening of school activities that transcend filling in forms or hearing about rules

Promote the establishment of SMART goals along with SMART actions to ensure that the goals are carried out

Research available grants that can support the school's mission; seek assistance from staff members who are skilled at grant writing

Orchestrate opportunities for staff to explore instructional strategies that are in the news and influencing our thinking (e.g., flipped classroom, project-based learning, etc.) as options for the new year

Clarify the difference between formative and summative assessments and how each should be used during instruction

Model and/or have staff model technology applications during opening meetings

Provide opportunities for different administrators to lead portions of staff meetings so that all members of the administrative staff are seen as instructional leaders

Arrange for the introduction of new staff members by mentors, when possible

Update the staff on the new developments related to implementation of the **Common Core**

Emphasize/publicize the availability of free, on-line video resources to supplement instruction, e.g., the **Teaching Channel**

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Have all staff members subscribe to the three **Just ASK** free e-newsletters:

- *Making the Common Core Come Alive!*
- *Just for the ASKing!*
- *Mentoring in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

Plan a bus tour of the community for new (and/or veteran) teachers

Arrange for the distribution/installation of new technology tools and for professional development on their use

Make a plan to collect paperwork or forms from students that are distributed during the first few days of school

Provide appropriate student services personnel opportunities to explain their role and the role of district-level human resources and student services personnel

Create opportunities for staff to explore new technology tools and strategies as options for the new year

Encourage teachers to seek out and share examples of best teaching and learning practices in action, including the **Teaching Channel**

Recommend that teachers reflect on and itemize the specific advances they have made to address the **Common Core** or any revised state standards

Access the **Just ASK Resource Center** at [www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/](http://www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/) for hundreds of copyright-free resources, including **Common Core** resources, to use with staff

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## Focus on Students

## Person Responsible

## Deadline

Prepare, mail, and place on website information for students and families about the opening of school, including a welcome letter from the principal and necessary forms to be returned to school

Arrange for any necessary translations of information for non-English speaking students and their families

As appropriate, publicize school supply lists for the opening of school

Make sure that all contracted printed materials (student handbook, student directory, etc.) are ready by the deadlines and are also placed, as appropriate, on website

Plan orientation for new students

Schedule buses for new student orientation

Arrange for student guides for new student orientation

Publicize summer registration dates for new students/families

Make sure that appropriate schedules are prepared for special needs or special education students

Make sure that all students will have an accurate schedule on the first day of school

Notify students or families during the summer of any schedule changes so that there are no surprises when students report to school

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## Focus on Students

## Person Responsible

## Deadline

Display appropriate signs throughout the building that will help newcomers navigate the building more easily

Assign student lockers

Assign cafeteria seating and make tent cards to identify seating arrangements

Greet students as they arrive the first day

Prepare the welcoming announcement for the first day of school

Plan assemblies to welcome new and/or returning students; ensure that the message to students is upbeat and positive

Help students find the right bus on the first day of school

Help high school students that drive find the correct place to park

Make sure all critical medications are in the clinic

Ensure that all IEPs and 504 plans are complete so that special education students are appropriately placed

Contact feeder schools to determine which students may need special support or attention

Ensure that there is a high visibility of adults in hallways during the opening of school to provide assistance to students and to promote the school's tardy policy

Identify students who are no-shows and make plans to register them in a timely manner

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## Deadline

Review the records of students who have struggled in the past; plan to provide additional support as the school year begins

Plan an in-school mentoring program matching older students and younger students

Re-examine the school's character education program for revisions and updates

Watch out for "loners" or students who may need special support

Arrange for a system to determine students who are on free/reduced lunch status and expedite their ability to access meals

Adjust the opening day bell schedule lunch periods (if necessary) to allow for smaller lunch lines, student table assignments, etc.

Reinforce the importance of being on time for class in a positive manner by having adults be highly visible at classroom doors and in hallways; assist students who are having difficulty finding their classrooms

Ensure that students understand how and when electronic devices can be used on campus

Work with staff to determine equitable student use of available technology

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## Focus on Parents

## Person Responsible

## Deadline

Ensure that the school website is continuously updated over the summer and easy for parents to navigate

Update the school website to make sure it contains accurate and timely information

Post pertinent contact information and information about the opening of school on the school message board, the front doors or windows of school, and on website

Make sure that all written materials are prepared for either mailing to parents or distribution to students to take home on the first day of school

Work with the PTA to decide on meeting dates, newsletter publication dates, dates for special events for parents during the year, fundraising, etc.

Publish/distribute a school year calendar with information about school events, report card distribution, parent meetings, etc.

Arrange for PTA representatives to contact new families and welcome them to the community

Plan an Open House for new parents and students to tour school before the opening of school

Determine Back-to-School Night date(s)

Meet and welcome parents throughout the summer as they register their child or visit the school

Assign personnel to the parking lot to assist “first time” parents on the first day of school

Arrange for translations for mailings for non-English speaking parents

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## Focus on Parents

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On opening day, make sure guidance staff is prepared for parents who come to register new students; make new parents feel welcome

Display directions to the main office inside the main entrance of the school

Prior to the first day of schools, arrange for conferences with parents who may have specific concerns about the educational/social needs of their child

If feasible, have translators available for opening day to assist with non-English speaking registrants and their parents

Make parents aware of technology tools and resources, such as **Khan Academy**, that they can use at home to support student learning

# The Just ASK 2014 Opening of School Checklist

## Focus on Community

## Person Responsible

## Deadline

Establish a school/business partnership that will benefit both the school and the business

Solicit contributions from community businesses or organizations to provide beginning-of-the-year school supplies for economically-disadvantaged students

Reach out to community leaders (religious, civic, business, etc.) to build alliances and support systems for the school

Attend and/or present at community meetings to personalize school leadership

Seek mentors in the community to work with and support selected students

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## Focus on Building

## Person Responsible

## Deadline

Arrange for and supervise the summer cleaning process

Test the bell system and prepare the bell schedule for the upcoming year

Change hall locker combinations and repair broken lockers

Make sure that all summer repair jobs are completed in a timely manner

Check for the completion of any scheduled technology work that was scheduled for summer completion

Inspect the building and the grounds to make sure they are in good shape for the opening of school; remove all graffiti

Post bus routes, directions, and other essential information in highly visible places

Prepare hall bulletin boards

Have copiers serviced so that they are ready for teachers when they return

Work with technology support staff to assure proper functioning of all available technology

Order any necessary furniture

Make sure that all rooms are equipped with a sufficient number of desks and chairs

Make sure that non-instructional supply orders are completed

Hold a thank you luncheon for custodians when the summer cleaning has been completed

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## Focus on Building

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Walk through the building with the building supervisor/head custodian to make sure everything is in order

Ensure that handicapped access to the building is clearly delineated

Determine the bus loading and unloading areas/procedures and communicate information to bus drivers

Inspect the schools grounds, especially playgrounds and playing fields, for any safety hazards

Review security measures (cameras at the entrance of the school, visitor sign-in procedure) to make sure everything is ready for school opening

Review school safety plan (including evacuation drills)

Make a year-long schedule for required fire drills

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## Miscellaneous

## Person Responsible

## Deadline

Ensure that clerical staff members are included in opening of school events as appropriate and feel that they are valuable members of the school community

Establish dates for school pictures

Review and sign any necessary contracts (yearbook, uniforms, etc.)

Devise alternate bell schedules (late openings, early closings, etc.)

If appropriate, arrange for student assignment notebooks to be purchased

Prepare folders for teachers to use when they have substitute teachers

Create a crisis plan to deal with any emergencies that might occur during the year

Recognize the contributions of cafeteria staff

Make sure all communication devices (PA, Walkie-talkies, etc.) are ready for use

Keep records of what worked and did not work to use in planning for next year's opening