

Try This

Thinking back on your own elementary school experience, write down the names of your teachers by grade level. I know—as if! Unless you have a superhuman memory (or are in your twenties), these names won't all pop into your head—but jot as many as you can. If you are like me, you might remember a face or a feeling but not the name. Draw or write those attributes. Warning: Many times, memories of your middle or high school teachers will intrude on this experiment, but try to rule those out for now.

Now comes the fun part. See if you can remember how any of those teachers started the day. What activities came first? Perhaps:

- the Pledge of Allegiance
- the National Anthem
- a prayer
- play time
- a teacher-directed lesson
- seatwork
- a class meeting
- a greeting ritual
- music or songs
- movement
- a read-aloud
- free time
- silent reading
- show and tell
- a bell ringer

I hope these possibilities help trigger your memory. As you ponder, you may come up with general memories of how the day typically began in the schools you attended. But maybe there also was one teacher who started the day in a really unusual or interesting way. What details can you recall about that?

On your own or with colleagues, reflect on how your childhood school days typically began. How engaging or energizing was each way of launching into the morning? Talk about the “outlier” teachers, if you remembered any whose day-beginning routine was unique. Finally, think about the first ten or fifteen minutes of the school days you are in charge of now. Are you pleased with the routine, or looking for fresh ideas?