Welcome to the first edition of STEPPING STONES! It is our hope that this will be a valuable resource for teachers of young children. Developing good habits and learning skills in early childhood years offers young learners the stepping stones needed to enter primary grades with confidence. Each publication will hold tips for organization and classroom management, spiritual, social and environmental awareness through literature, theme activities and some digital resources for teachers. As we progress with this new work, we hope teachers will forward ideas and suggestions to the writers to be shared in future publications.

**ORGANIZATION for Primary Grades 1, 2, 3**

Every child is created in the image and likeness of a God. Reflecting on the beauty and order of creation we view with our eyes, we must be aware that the young child has an innate need for order. Beginning the year with a plan for classroom order will give children a sense of comfort and feeling at home, in due time. Particularly this year, teachers will want to create a good plan of operation and present it to children and parents with calm and concern for the good of all. Let's begin!

- Decorations: place decorations so that they are easily visible and meaningful for children
- Religion or prayer center - leave this space undecorated so that children might help to create the center that reminds them God is at their center. It may include a child’s bible, a small statue of Our Lady, a flip book with each child’s page with family names. The center can be maintained by children in turn and be changed according to liturgical season. [Look here.]
- Instructional posters can be introduced as needed. If the room is fully “posterized” upon children’s arrival they will not really pay attention to much of it. Let them focus on a few important points at a time. Let parents know the room will grow with their children.

**MANAGEMENT**

- Readiness and Patience

Most of the children you will receive this year have been in your school. Due to the fact that school will operate differently, it will be important to patiently go through the protocols and reminders to create ease and awareness of others.

- seating
- movement around the room
- going to the restroom
- walking in line
- ordering personal space
- one way traffic for social distancing

**Presentation of Religion text**

- Play soft background music. Tell the children you have a gift for them.
- Have religion texts on special cloth on table.
- Call each child forward by name: Abby, you are a special child of God. Take this book and you will come to know and love Jesus more. God bless you, Abby. (Sign the child’s forehead with a cross as you say “God bless you.” Allow the children time to look through the book.

**Literature and Social Awareness**

- Share the book *Thank you, Omu* written by Oge Mora. This award winning book is a great conversation starter to encourage children to be aware of the needs of others. Several read alouds of the book are available on YouTube. One in particular has many guides for the teacher to engage the children in every aspect of the book.
Thanksgiving Prayer (to be adapted for grade level)
According to each grade level direct children to list things and people they are grateful for each day. This could begin early in November when children can speak of things for which they are grateful. Teach the litany form of prayer using the combined student suggestions during the week leading to Thanksgiving holiday. Encourage children to share this type of prayer with family. Here is an explanation of litany prayer and some samples. This link has many suggestions for thanksgiving prayer forms for young children related to creation.

Fall Leaf Graphing Activity Plan and Templates

Acorn Writing Activity Plan and Templates

Adjectives for Jesus Activity Plan and Templates