

Back to School Book Recommendations

1. Your Name is a Song by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow (Pre-K-3)



A young girl learns the musicality of African, Asian, Black-American, Latinx, and Middle Eastern names and returns to school, eager to share with her classmates.

Follow-up activity: Go around the circle and ask each student if there is a story behind their name.

2. Our Class is a Family by Shannon Olsen (Pre-K-3)



Show your class that they are a family, no matter whether they meet for online or in-person learning.

Follow-up activity: Have each student draw an image of their family and “extended family.”

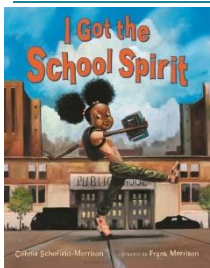
3. Tomorrow I'll Be Kind by Jessica Hische (Pre-K-2)



Sometimes the smallest gesture of kindness goes a long way. This sweet book teaches young ones how to be a good friend and classmate.

Follow-up activity: Ask students to share what is the most important thing about being a good friend.

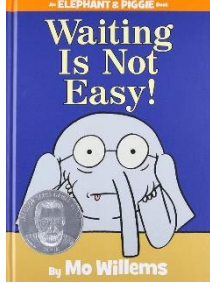
4. I Got the School Spirit by Connie Schofield-Morrison (Pre-K-1)



Students will love the rhythm and sounds in this book about back to school spirit. *VROOM, VROOM! RING-A-DING!*

Follow-up activity: Ask students to share the sounds they identify with school!

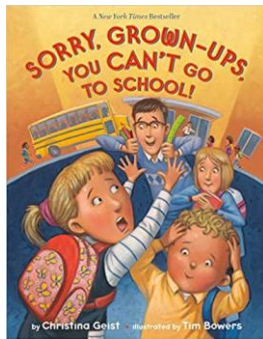
5. Waiting is Not Easy! by Mo Willems (Pre-K-2)



When Gerald tells Piggie he has a surprise for him, Piggie can hardly wait. In fact, he has a hard time waiting *all day!* But when the sun goes down and the Milky Way fills the night sky, Piggie learns some things are worth the wait.

Follow-up activity: Ask your students to turn to a partner and share a time that you had to wait for something.

6. Sorry, Grown-Ups, You Can't Go to School by Christina Geist (Pre-K-2)



Perfect for the child who is feeling a little nervous about going to school, this story features a family who doesn't want to be left behind.

Follow-up activity: Draw a picture of what school would look like if your mom and dad came to school with you.

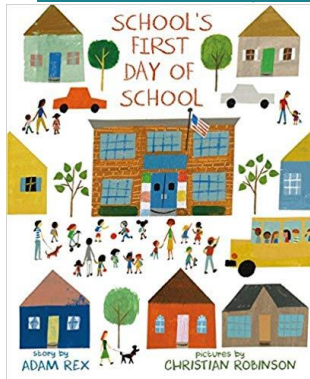
7. The Pigeon Has to Go to School by Mo Willems (Pre-K-2)



This silly picture book addresses many of the fears and anxieties that little ones feel as they get ready to go to school for the first time.

Follow-up activity: This one will get kids riled up, so after reading have them stand up and shake their sillies out.

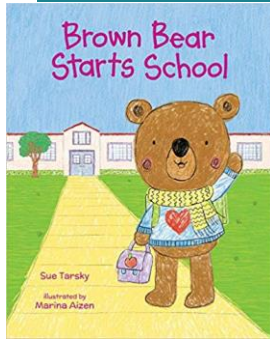
8. School's First Day of School by Adam Rex and Christian Robinson (K-2)



There are books about children, parents, and teachers being nervous for the first day of school. This adorable book examines the first day of school from the perspective of the school itself.

Follow-up activity: Project a photo of your school onto the board as inspiration as kids draw and color in their own image of school.

9. [Brown Bear Starts School](#) by Sue Tarsky and Marina Aizen (Pre-K–K)



A brand-new book about sweet little Brown Bear and his worries about the first day of school. Soon he realizes he is more capable than he thought.

Follow-up activity: Have students turn and talk about one worry they had before school started.

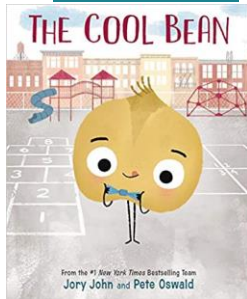
10. [Pirates Don't Go to Kindergarten!](#) by Lisa Robinson and Eda Kaban (Pre-K–2)



Ahoy, mateys! Pirate Emma has a hard time transitioning from her beloved preschool captain to the new captain aboard the S.S. Kindergarten.

Follow-up activity: Ask students to share their favorite things about preschool, which you can record on a piece of chart paper. As you list them, tell students something that will be just as fun about kindergarten.

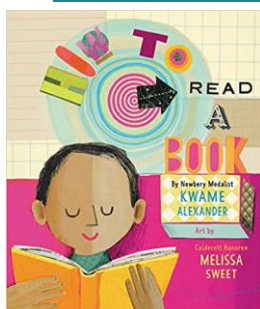
11. [The Cool Bean](#) by Jory John and Pete Oswald (K-4)



Once “peas in a pod”, poor chickpea doesn’t fit in with the other beans anymore. Despite having grown apart, the other beans are always there to lend a hand when chickpea is in need.

Follow-up activity: Ask students to write about a friend they have grown apart from.

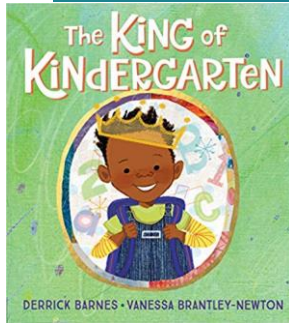
12. [How to Read a Book](#) by Kwame Alexander and Melissa Sweet (K–5)



A beautifully illustrated book about the miraculous pleasures of reading that will inspire the book lover in all of us. One reader gushes, “Every page is a wonder as the words and art melt into one.”

Follow-up activity: Ask students to write one colorful sentence in praise of reading.

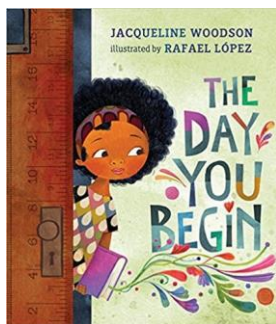
13. [The King of Kindergarten](#) by Derrick Barnes and Vanessa Brantley-Newton (Pre-K-K)



The bubbly main character of this sweet story is bursting with excitement for the first day of school. His confidence will be contagious for your new kindergartners.

Follow-up activity: Have students turn to a neighbor and tell them the one thing they were most excited about on the first day of school.

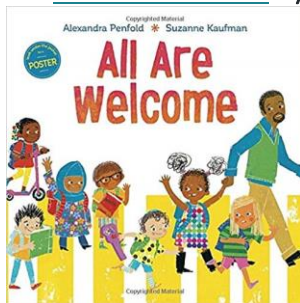
14. [The Day You Begin](#) by Jacqueline Woodson (K-3)



Starting fresh in a new environment, especially when you look around and think that nobody quite looks or sounds like you, can be scary. This lovely story will inspire your students to understand the gifts of individuality.

Follow-up activity: Have your students play get-to-know-you [bingo](#) to find out just how much they have in common with their classmates.

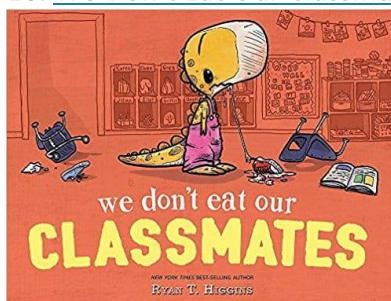
15. [All Are Welcome](#) by Alexandra Penfold (Pre-K-3)



A lovely story that celebrates diversity and inclusion in a school where everyone, no matter their dress or skin color, is welcomed with open arms.

Follow-up activity: Create an anchor chart of character traits. Brainstorm with your students all the ways they are alike and some of the ways they may be different.

16. [We Don't Eat Our Classmates](#) by Ryan T. Higgins (Pre-K-K)



Little Penelope Rex is nervous about going to school for the first time. She has some very important questions: What are my classmates going to be like? Will they be nice? How many teeth will they have? Little ones, even little humans, will relate to this charming story.

Follow-up activity: Ask your students to share some of the questions they wondered about before starting school.

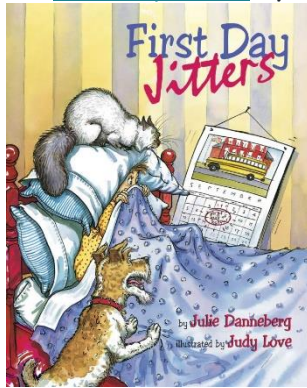
17. [You're Finally Here!](#) by Melanie Watt (Pre-K–2)



A perfect first read-aloud book to show your students how excited you are to finally meet them! Follow along with the main character, Bunny, as he bounces through a hilarious range of emotions. All of your students will recognize the back-to-school feelings beneath the surface of this silly, in-your-face story.

Follow-up activity: Have students draw a self-portrait that shows the strongest emotion they felt coming into school this year.

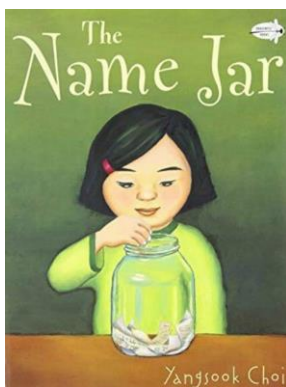
18. [First Day Jitters](#) by Julie Danneberg (K–3)



Everyone knows that sinking feeling in the pit of their stomach at the prospect of being the newbie. Sarah Hartwell is scared and doesn't want to start over at a new school. Kids will love the delightful surprise ending of this sweet story!

Follow-up activity: Have students write about a time they were scared and how their situation turned out! Or, have students partner with a friend and tell their stories to each other.

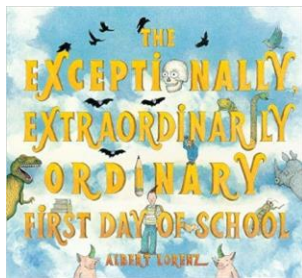
19. [The Name Jar](#) by Yangsook Choi (Pre-K–3)



When Unhei, a young Korean girl, arrives at her new school in the United States, she begins to wonder if she should also choose a new name. Does she need an American name? How will she choose? And what should she do about her Korean name? This heartwarming story speaks to anyone who has ever been the new kid or welcomed one into their familiar surroundings.

Follow-up activity: Have groups of students brainstorm 10 different ways they could make a new student feel welcome in class and create a poster to display.

20. [The Exceptionally, Extraordinarily Ordinary First Day of School](#) by



Albert Lorenz (2–4)

John is the new kid in school. When asked if the school is any different from his last one, he weaves a wildly creative tale that captures the attention of his new classmates. A hilarious story about conquering the fear of being the new kid.

Follow-up activity: Have students write a tall tale about what school was like last year to share with their new classmates.

21. [The Book with No Pictures](#) by B.J. Novak (K–3)

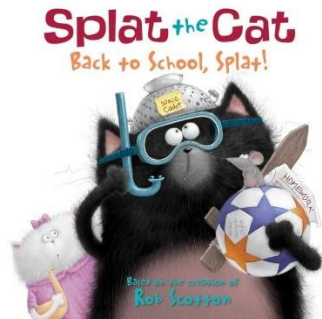
The Book With No Pictures

B.J. Novak

You might think a book with no pictures would be serious and boring, but this book has a catch! Everything, and we mean everything, written on the page must be read out loud by the person reading the book, regardless of how goofy and preposterous it may be. Irresistibly silly!

Follow-up activity: Have students work with a new friend or partner to create their own short book with no pictures. (Be sure to set clear parameters about content before letting students create.)

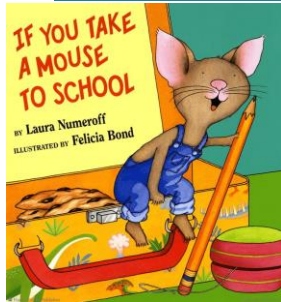
22. [Splat the Cat: Back to School, Splat!](#) by Rob Scotton (Pre-K–3)



How can there be homework when it's only the first day of school? Splat must pick only one of all of his fun summer adventures to share with his classmates at show-and-tell.

Follow-up activity: First day of school homework, of course! Have students write about one of their favorite summer adventures.

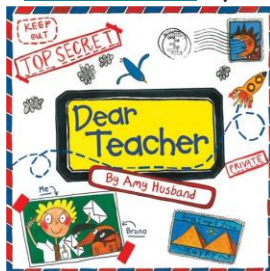
23. [If You Take a Mouse to School](#) by Laura Numeroff (Pre-K–2)



You know the routine ... If you take a mouse to school, he'll ask you for your lunch box. When you give him your lunch box, he'll want a sandwich to go in it. Then he'll need a notebook and some pencils. He'll probably want to share your backpack, too. Another silly story from one of our favorite authors that is not only fun but lays the groundwork for teaching sequencing.

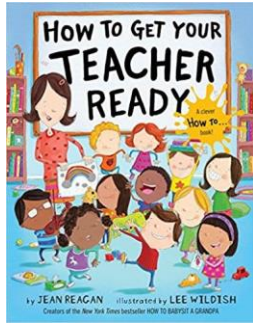
Follow-up activity: Using a long, narrow sheet of paper folded accordion style, have students create their own "If You Take ..." book. Students can build on the mouse story or create a character of their own.

24. [Dear Teacher](#) by Amy Husband (Pre-K–3)



This hilarious collection of letters from Michael to his new teacher comes packed with alligators, pirates, rocket ships, and much, much more. Can Michael's imagination save him from the first day of school? **Follow-up activity:** Have students write a postcard to a friend or family member, telling about their fun first week of school!

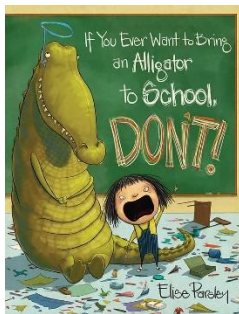
25. [How to Get Your Teacher Ready](#) by Jean Reagan (K–3)



In a charming role reversal, the students in this story gently guide their teacher through the getting-ready process for back to school. Your students will laugh and surely learn a lesson or two themselves.

Follow-up activity: Have students compile a list of rules that will help their teacher have the best year ever.

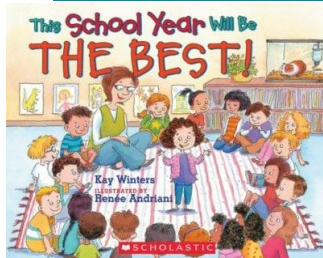
26. [If You Ever Want to Bring an Alligator to School, Don't](#) by Elise Parsley (K–2)



An alligator for show-and-tell sounds like TONS of fun. What could possibly go wrong? Magnolia is determined to have the best show-and-tell ever. What will she do when her reptilian pal starts wreaking havoc in the classroom? This hilarious story is sure to inspire even the timidest of show-and-tellers.

Follow-up activity: Have students write a story or draw a picture about something outrageous they would bring to school for show-and-tell.

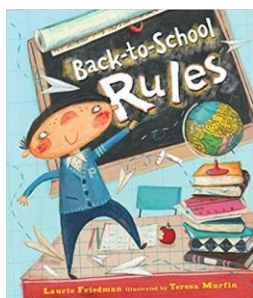
27. [This School Year Will Be the Best](#) by Kay Winters (1–3)



On the first day of school, new classmates are asked to share what they hope for in the upcoming year. The children's wishes, from the familiar to the off the wall, are shown in humorously exaggerated illustrations. As the first day draws to a close, there can be no doubt this school year will definitely be the best!

Follow-up activity: Have students draw a star, put their name in the middle, and write one wish for the school year on each point (total of five). Then, have them loop a colorful ribbon through a hole on top to hang from the classroom ceiling.

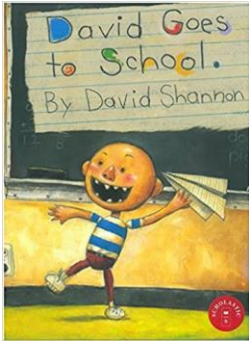
28. [Back to School Rules](#) by Laurie B. Friedman (K–3)



School's in session! When it comes to surviving school, Percy has ten simple rules that show there is more to school than showing up on time and staying awake in class, including no spitballs, no running in the halls, and no crazy scheming! See what other trouble—and tips—Percy has in mind!

Follow-up activity: As a whole class, brainstorm “rules” that will make this year the best ever. Then, have students make a class promise poster!

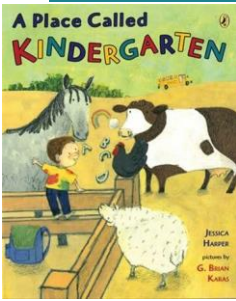
29. [David Goes to School](#) by David Shannon (Pre-K–3)



David’s antics in the classroom will make your students giggle with recognition. He’s so enthusiastic about being back to school! But David needs to learn that every classroom needs rules so that every student can learn.

Follow-up activity: Gather the whole class on the rug. Select a few students to act out “bad” behavior and ask the other students to explain why the behavior is not okay for the classroom. Then have the same students act out the “good” behavior. Repeat with different sets of students to address different rules you are reinforcing in your classroom.

30. [A Place Called Kindergarten](#) by Jessica Harper (K)



Tommy’s barnyard friends are worried! He’s gone to a place called kindergarten. They wonder what will happen to him and if he will ever come back. Eventually, he returns with exciting tales of all the fun and learning he’s had.

Follow-up activity: Have your students take a “field trip” around the school to learn more about their new “barnyard.”

31. [Is Your Buffalo Ready for Kindergarten?](#) by Audrey Vernick (K)



Is your buffalo ready for kindergarten? Does he play nicely with friends? Check. Share his toys? Check. Is he smart? Check!

Follow-up activity: Follow along with Buffalo’s checklist in this hilarious look at first-day-of-school jitters.