



 TeacherVision

# 5 Must-Have Back to School Resources from Top Teachers

BY WENDY MCMAHON



## Wondering how to start the new school year off on the right foot?

We can help! We asked three well-known teachers—much-admired for their successful teaching strategies—to share what tops their list when it comes to [back-to-school resources](#) and activities.



**Tom Loud**

 [@loudlearning](https://twitter.com/loudlearning)

First-grade teacher Tom Loud is widely known for his belief that student feelings come first in the classroom—and that developing connections and trust between teachers and students is the first step toward a successful learning environment. This sentiment is reflected in the tools that top his back-to-school list.

### **First Day Jitters Book**

To start connecting with students on Day One, Loud uses a book called [First Day Jitters](#) by Julie Danneberg. The main character in the story doesn't want to go to school on the first day because he is nervous. But the book has a twist students don't expect: the main character is the teacher.

"I choose that book because I want that kids to know I feel the same way they do. I understand the nerves they have and the questions they have. And that I can relate to them," explains Loud.

After reading the book, Loud asks students to draw how they feel on Post-It notes. Using a feelings graph, students then chart their pictures to explain how they feel on their first day.

Loud says connecting with students and building trust makes them much more receptive to the feedback he gives them. "When I give feedback and correction, they don't take it personally. They know I care and when that trust is there [and they know I care], they want to meet my expectations."

**"When Day One comes, I want to focus on kids — not secretarial stuff like registration papers."**

### **Google Drive**

To ensure he can focus on students, not paperwork, another back-to-school must-have for Loud is Google Drive. Before the school year begins, he sets up folders within Google Drive and then scans and adds everything from registration papers to the social media release forms parents sign. Throughout the year, he adds important documentation such as assessments and notes from parents.

"When Day One comes, I want to focus on kids — not secretarial stuff like registration papers," explains Loud.



## Vicky Davis

 [@coolcatteacher](https://twitter.com/coolcatteacher)

Vicky Davis is a speaker, author and technology teacher for students in grades 5 through 12. With over 144,000 followers on Twitter, she's beloved for her teaching strategies and advice alike.

### **Bloomz**

Like Loud, Davis focuses on building a strong relationship with students during her first days back to school. She also focuses on creating strong ties with parents.

"The first thing I like to do is set up my parent-teacher communication system. I use [Bloomz](#) (a free app) for that," explains Davis. She sends four or five updates to parents during the first week of school — specifically pictures of students, so parents know their kids are in a safe place, having fun, and learning.



### **FEATURED TEACHERVISION RESOURCE:**

Check out our [Teacher-Parent Collaboration section](#) to help create positive connections with parents.

**“You want to have as much positive [interaction] at the beginning of the year.”**

As Davis explains, it's important to establish a relationship with the parents even before Day One and let them see that your classroom is a welcoming, encouraging place.

"You want to have as much positive [interaction] at the beginning of the year. When they see me coming, they can know that (most likely) Mrs. Vicki is going to say something positive. And if there is a problem, we've already established that I like their child."



## Elisabeth Bostwick

 [@ElisaBostwick](https://twitter.com/ElisaBostwick)

Elisabeth Bostwick, another leader in education with 14 years of experience and over 12,000 followers on Twitter, uses the first days back to school to introduce growth mindset to her fourth-grade students. She also starts building a strong connection between home and school.

### A Growth Mindset Activity

Bostwick starts each new school year with a discussion about growth mindset followed by a growth mindset activity. “We do an activity with gummi worms for example, and they need to work collaboratively as a team to get that gummi worm into a gummi life saver without using their hands.” Throughout the activity, Bostwick pauses with her students to discuss growth mindset and how it’s okay if someone makes a mistake.

“Growth mindset for me is one of the most important things students can embrace,” says Bostwick. She explains that growth mindset helps students understand “that learning is a process, not a final product...you’re going to suffer failure sometimes, but those failures are what help us to be innovative.”



### FEATURED TEACHERVISION RESOURCE:

10 Strategies for [Developing a Growth Mindset](#) in Gifted Students

“Growth mindset for me is one of the most important things students can embrace.”

### Seesaw

One of Bostwick’s favorite digital tools for back to school is [Seesaw](#), a student-driven digital portfolio. She introduces students to the tool during the first week of school so they can share work not only with the class, but also with their parents. While there is a paid component for the app, Bostwick only uses the free version.

“A lot of the learning I do in my classroom is not on a worksheet, so parents can’t see that work,” explains Bostwick, who has a strong focus on project-based learning in her classroom.

“That’s one of my favorite apps because it brings together the home and school connection. It helps families feel like they’re a part of the students’ learning and see the value in what they’re doing. And I find then parents support what’s going on in the classroom a lot more.”

**Want to make this your best year ever?** Our Back-to-School resources can help you get your school year off to a great start. Visit our [Back-to-School Headquarters](#) for everything you need to help you and your students succeed.



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