

Tips From Teachers

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Room and materials Arrangements

- Run electrical cords up the wall and across the ceiling to get to the other side of the room. This way you don't have to tape down cords or have to run a conduit all the way around the room. It is more cost effective and pleasing to the eye.
- Dish Pan Storage - each child has an individual dish pan to store crayons, pencils, etc. under their desk. They are cheap & keep things neat.
- Put velcro strips on the bottom of pencil boxes when children are seated at tables with a strip of velcro running down the table to hold them in place where all can reach.
- Use gallon-size freezer bags instead of supply boxes.
- Milk boxes (not crates) are sturdy cardboard boxes with handles that make perfect file storage. You can get them from your local grocery store.
- Arrange desks in a v-shape in the room, no more than 3 desks deep.
- Have a rolling cart with craft supplies on it, or frequently used materials. This makes it easy to move your supplies to where the instruction will occur.
- Instead of desks, use tables with 3 to 4 students at each. Arrange them depending on the activity, making sure that all students can see.
- Use hanging fruit baskets to store glue, scissors or markers.
- Arrange materials with enough room for 2 or 3 students can reach at a time.
- Place the teacher's desk and storage areas away from the main traffic areas.
- Clearly label all shelves and material storage places for easy clean up.
- Arrange student desks in a u-shape and label the areas of the room with the cardinal directions (North, South, East, and West).
- To divide up table spaces so students can have personal space but still see and be seen, use 1 ft. by 8 in. boards atop the tables.
- Cover bulletin boards with cloth, burlap, non-fade paper or plastic folders.
- To aid in cleaning up after projects, hang garbage bags at the end of each table.
- To organize materials, use plastic bins marked with mailing labels.
- Color code materials so students know where to return them.
- To keep traffic areas clear, have students leave backpacks and bags in lockers, a closet in the room or other designated areas. Make sure they have all necessary materials at their desk so they don't have to go back & forth.

- Use vinyl rain gutter sections mounted along the wall to display books.
- Make sure all electrical outlets are plugged with covers, or use a plug-in to be safe and smell good.
- Stack milk crates to use as bookshelves.
- Use carpet squares or scraps in rooms with out carpeting.
- Use high quality masking tape, the type used in car body shops. It is more expensive, however, there will be little or no clean up when removed.
- Increase display space for student work by stringing heavy-duty wire across the room or along hallways, and use clothes pins to hang work.
- Paint one wall a dark color and use it as a large bulletin board.
- Use 'Wet Ones' to clean up overhead projector sheets easily.
- Use large and medium sized clear plastic containers to store science lab equipment.
- Space coat hooks around the room so they do not touch, and students will not bunch up when retrieving coats or lunches.
- Consider getting rid of teacher's desk. Use a rolling podium; it takes up less space and can help vary where instruction occurs.
- Use a plastic magazine rack to store spiral notebooks. It keeps them organized and handy.
- To help with traffic patterns around the teacher's desk, have a front door & back door so students have to line up at one side and exit the other direction. This prevents budging and interruptions by students coming up on the other side.
- In the classroom library, color code books according to type - fiction, non-fiction, mystery, etc.
- Looking for a way to show students where their desks belong? Try using double stick carpet tape. Stick the name on one side and stick the other side to the floor. This also makes it easier for students to move their desks back to their original position
- If storage is causing you problems, consider these ideas Store teacher materials in milk crates for movement throughout the building. Use copy paper boxes to store unit material. Use laundry baskets for lunch bags. Have students roll their coat
- If you don't have enough storage space to store teacher supplies out of the sight of students, try putting small stop signs on the boxes with the teacher materials. Or, you might try hanging curtains made from a sheet to let students know that there is
- Having trouble keeping up with student textbooks? Try this idea. (1) Number students in alphabetical order. (2) Use that number for all student textbooks. (3) For easy view, tape the number on the side of the textbook in addition to recording it inside
- Need more bulletin boards? Try using long ceiling tiles attached to walls by 'Liquid Nails.' Also, you can use chalkboards as displays by using magnets to post sentence strips or posters during lessons.
- What about a little variation in bulletin board backgrounds? You might want to try the following: Fabric -- you can wash it and reuse as necessary. Note: if you use burlap or other flammable material, spray with a non-retardant solution.

- Use 3M Dry Mount spray (the re-mountable, NOT the permanent kind) to attach letters to bulletin board.
- Students can use a shoebox, fanny pack, or Ziploc bag to store their materials. These types of containers, in addition to tidying up the desks, are easy to carry to their next class.
- To minimize traffic to and from the wastebasket, provide students with their own personal wastebaskets. A brown paper bag folded over at the top to make a sturdy cuff can be taped to the side of a desk. Let students personally decorate their bags.



Rules and Procedures

- For elementary students, read the book *Shiver, Gobble & Snore* to discuss why we need rules.
- Tie writing rules into a unit on The Constitution. Have students sign to abide by the "Classroom Constitution".
- Have students practice different room arrangements so changes can be made quickly. Use a cue word that instructs them to move to a particular arrangement.
- When checking out books in the room, have students use a wooden paint stir stick to mark the place of the book they borrowed.
- Create a flip chart of procedures - both a master chart for teacher use and individual flip charts for students to have at their desks.
- For students to signal they need help, have them hold up a neon card or put a tent card on their desk.
- Use musical selections to time entry activities (hanging coats, organizing desk, getting materials) and close the day with the same selection. Let the kids chose the music.
- Cue - "Give Me 5". When the teacher puts her hand up, it is a signal for students to put things down, zip lips, get eyes on teacher, and keep hands at the sides.
- Have different levels of talk for different activities or areas of the school building. Ex. 0 = no talking, 1=whisper, 2=group, 3=fill the room. Or draw a talk-meter for voice levels using percents for 0-100%.
- Have two notebooks sitting on a table in the back of the room, one is labeled "Tattle-tale" and the other "Praise". Students can write in either throughout the day; at the end of the day, read both books and discuss.
- When using centers, assign each one a different color and place cards or beads on strings in the corresponding color at each. The number of cards shows how many students are allowed at a center.
- When conferencing with an individual student, to avoid interruption put a sign or note on the desk where you are working, reminding students that you are busy and not to interrupt.
- When passing out materials to groups have everything in one Ziploc bag per group & have one student responsible for getting and putting materials away.
- Clean-up procedure: "Magic Trash" The class custodian secretly picks a piece of trash that is "magic" and monitors as all students help clean up who got the piece of Magic Trash. The winner gets a pencil, sticker, or a prize ticket.

- Student attention cue - play music softly and say, "If you can hear the music you're ready."
- Use a timer and have a designated student in each class set it to go off 10 minutes before the end of class so you have time to wrap up each class.
- Use blue painting tape to teach traffic patterns.
- To assign students to classroom job, have them fill out an application and interview with you.
- Practice procedures for going to the auditorium before an actual program, fire drills, and dismissal to make sure they are orderly when the real time comes.
- Use channel 1 TV to show short videos to teach different procedures.
- Have a team of teachers develop school -wide procedures to have consistency, while others could be particular to your room.
- Have pictures and posters to demonstrate the procedures.
- Attention cue- when students are noisy the teacher says, "Hips & Lips." The students respond by putting their hands on their hips and their finger on their lips to get quiet instantly.
- Make magnets with each student's name on them and place next to a chart, for lunch - hot or bag, need to go to the library, etc., and have them place their name under the appropriate column.
- Have students line-up in alphabetical order to save time and cut down on pushing and shoving.
- Fire Drills - have a fire folder posted by the door containing class lists and a green and red card. When you get outside hold up the green card if all your students are accounted for, red if they are not.
- Use color-coded dots to mark furniture positions. One color for group arrangement, another for rows. This saves time when moving desks and keeps the students and desks orderly.
- To make sure parents fully understand the rules for the classroom, send TWO copies of the rules home. They sign one copy and return. They keep the second copy to hang up at home.
- There are several places in classrooms that require students to line up: water fountain, bathroom, door, pencil sharpener. To minimize disorder, place footprints on the floor to indicate where students should stand and the number of students who can stand in the line.
- For disruptions in your classroom related to students' use of the pencil sharpener, try "The Pencil Can." Place two soup cans --one empty and one filled with collected extra pencils--near the pencil sharpener. If a student's pencil breaks during instruction
- Use as many silent signals as possible. To get a drink: raise hand and then hold thumb up to mouth. To go to bathroom: raise hand and then do "walking fingers." To sharpen pencil: raise pencil. Then simply shake your head yes or no and you do not have
- As students enter the room in morning, have a procedure for what they should do once they are at their desk. One teacher has review work on the board that students work on as the teacher takes roll and handles other organizational matters. Another tea
- Do you collect lunch money from children every morning? To increase efficiency and student responsibility, try having students place their money in a utility organizer with individual drawers--one drawer for each child!

- Use a traffic light to represent to students how much talking is expected. Draw a traffic light on a piece of cardboard or poster board. Tape a movable arrow next to the traffic light, which will point to the appropriate color. Red = no talking, Yell
- To monitor the voice level of students, have a child (daily helper) be a noise monitor. When the voice level is inappropriate, the student bongs a chime once to remind peers about voices. When this type of warning comes from the student, the room usually quiets down.
- To get students' attention, say, "When you hear my voice, clap." Vary this occasionally with other actions such as snap or stomp. Identify a spot in the front of the room (one teacher uses a "talk box").



Managing Student Work and Accountability

- A fun way for students to monitor their finished work is to have each one create a Monopoly board. As they finish each assignment, they color in a block on the board and label it.
- To collect homework or other assignments, try having a real mailbox. If an assignment is due, the red flag is up and you can pick up the 'mail' between classes.
- A reflective phrase - "If you didn't get the grade you wanted, I didn't get the work I wanted."
- Create portfolios or folders of student work that mark their progression of achievement through the year instead of just collecting a hodgepodge of papers.
- One way to monitor student work is to make notes on post-its that you can place in the student's folder or in your grade-book as a reminder to follow-up or talk with the student.
- Use grading rubrics to help students be accountable for their work. Give them out at the beginning of a unit so they know what you expect. Also use behavioral expectations on the rubrics and have students grade themselves.
- Instead of grading notebooks, give a notebook quiz. Ask students to find or identify certain items from their notebook and write it down. Example - "What was the 5th vocabulary word on March 12th?"
- Use milk crates to hold the papers or activities for different classes. Each crate can have the materials for separate classes and is easily stacked and accessible.
- Have an assignment and goal listed on the board each day for students to copy down and take home each night for their parents to sign and check off completed work.
- Have a folder filled with activities for students who finish their seatwork early. It can contain review activities or materials that haven't been fully mastered.
- Cover tables with butcher paper (tape the sheets under). During class students can use the paper as scrap paper to practice, and you can post great examples on your bulletin boards.
- For handing in papers, have the cardinal directions posted on the appropriate walls. Students stay in their seats and you ask them to pass their papers to the NW corner (or farthest east etc.). They have to figure this out silently, and it is good geography.
- Use magnetic clips for students to clip work to their desks if they have unfinished work or if a child is absent.
- Make cloth chair covers with a pocket to slip over the back of each desk chair. Have two folders in the pockets, one for completed work to go home and the other for work not yet completed.

- For absentee work, have students volunteer to fill out a homework sheet for the absent student. Have them write their name and phone number at the bottom in case the absent student has questions.
- To keep parents abreast of students' work, send papers home weekly in a laminated folder. Include a cover sheet that tells how many papers are in the folder to prohibit papers getting "lost" on the way home.
- To help students keep up with daily assignments, try having the students keep a daily work folder. Students keep their daily work in it. They can turn it in at the end of the day, if needed. And, the teacher can slip notes into the folder about Mississippi.
- Remember to have a place in the room to post assignments for students. There are several ways to do this: post on the chalkboard, using different colored chalk for different subjects, use daily or weekly assignment sheets, or a weekly calendar.
- To help students monitor their own progress on long-term projects, create a step-by-step checklist that breaks down the project. To further promote student responsibility, this checklist can be created by or with the student.
- When students are absent, they miss out on lectures and discussions. To keep them up-to-date with their notes, assign a student secretary who is a good note-taker to take notes. Put a copy of the notes in the class assignment or make-up notebook for a
- Keep a daily work folder for each student that stays at their desk. When they are absent, work and assignments are placed in that folder.



Maintaining Good Student Behavior

- Keep a bunch of red color disks handy and when students are off task, instead of interrupting the lesson, put a disk on their desk to let them know. If the unwanted behavior continues, add another red disk. If a student accumulates 3 red disks, take th
- Students earn pennies for good behavior. Every check-plus equals a penny, and students can spend the pennies on treats at the school store.
- Instead of putting a child's name on the board for misbehaving, start with everyone's name on the board plus 3 smiley faces each. Erase one when a child acts inappropriately.
- Every grading period, post the names of your star students on the wall in the cafeteria for everyone to see.
- Give each student a certain number of hall passes per grading period and they can turn in unused ones for extra credit points.
- Reinforce positive behavior with tally sheets that each child uses to record their good behavior.
- When a child gets in trouble, have them write a note telling their parents what happened. Look it over, both sign it, and send it home to be discussed and returned signed the next day.
- Keep a flashlight in your desk for power failures and use during video viewing to spotlight students who are talking, writing notes, etc.
- If you catch a student drawing on their desk, tell them how much you appreciate art from students, give them some drawing paper, and ask the student to draw a picture for you to display.
- Give each student a set number of passes at the beginning of the grading period (3 bathroom, 1 drink, 2 locker). These are for emergency use. They do not get more when they are used up, and at the end of the semester any passes they have not used are exchanged for rewards.

- Possible rewards for good behavior suggested by teachers: "Treasure Box" for returned report cards, folders, etc. "Fun Friday" or "Fantastic Friday", pizza party, positive phone calls to student and/or parent, positive note to student -- placed in their folder.
- "Tiger Paw Restaurant". One school sets up tables on the stage (called the Tiger Paw Restaurant, Lion's Den, Falcon's Nest, etc.) Students who behave in the cafeteria have the opportunity to sit in the restaurant the next day.
- Having trouble with hall behavior? Try a class incentive folder. The folder is laminated, labeled "Hall Pride," and has a picture of the school mascot on it. Each time the class gets a compliment on behavior from another teacher, draw a mascot-related
- Curtail tattling by having students write their complaints down, rather than simply telling you. Create a form in which students fill out what happened and whether or not it is an emergency. Emergency complaints can be handed directly to the teacher at an appropriate time.



Planning and Organizing Instruction

- Keep ziploc bags of various sizes for holding unit materials and activities together.
- Keep a running record of lesson plans on the bulletin board, which cuts down the time absent students spend inquiring about work they missed.
- Keep all plans including transparencies, notes, handouts, and assignments in a binder. This portfolio is great for organizing and makes it easy to revise lessons in the future.
- For bulletin boards use cloth backgrounds or a neutral background and change the border for different seasons.
- Negotiate with textbook publishers for a classroom set of textbooks so students can keep their copy at home and you can eliminate students carrying heavy backpacks.
- Use color-coded signs outside your door to remind students about materials they need for class. Ex. - orange sign for orange grammar book, brown sign for brown literature book.
- It's important to make sure your daily schedule is posted.
- Before you have a pet in the classroom, make sure students are not afraid of the kind of animal and be sure to send letters home announcing the presence of the pet and asking about allergies.
- Have "Silent Sustained Reading" time for the last 10 minutes of the day or after morning announcements.
- To let others know where your class is at a given time during the day, place a hook on the outside of the door or in the hallway and hang index cards that have hole punched corners with the location of the class on them (library, gym, lunch etc.)
- Many school districts have a teacher center with staff available to help teachers create attractive learning environments. If your district does not have one, you can contact a neighboring one. Most allow outside teachers to use the center for a nominal
- To minimize the number of students out of their seats during group work, assign a "runner" for each group. The runner is then the only group member allowed out of their seat to ask questions or go for supplies. Or, give each group a box of materials with required supplies.

- To easily assign students to groups, use a transparency of the seating chart that shows where you want students and groups to go. Students are able to visualize where they will be moving which will help facilitate their movement to and from their groups
- If you are unable to leave centers set-up during the day, place the materials for the centers in labeled, colored plastic containers. You can teach student leaders to set-up and clean up center materials.



Conducting and Facilitating Instruction to Maintain Lesson Momentum

- Bulletin boards should be interactive - use as part of the lesson, have a weekly theme from what you are studying, have a map of the USA and have kids attach the state names with velcro, put a note on the board or ask a question that can be answered on.
- When leaving the room at any time, use the time to review facts on note cards with the students as they are in line or walking in the halls.
- When students are working in cooperative groups, use a die to determine which students will answer a question. If it lands on 4, then the number 4 student in each group will give an answer.
- An overhead projector is great because it focuses the students' attention, as long as everyone can see, and you never have to have your back turned to the class.
- Use popsicle sticks that are numbered for each student in alphabetical order to keep track of participation.
- When assigning students to groups, deal out playing cards and have a group for each sign - hearts, diamonds, clubs, and spades.
- When making transitions use a song or music, clean up song, line-up song etc.
- When the class raises an issue or question that is not relevant to the matter at hand, write those issues on a part of the board labeled "Parking Lot." Let students know that, when time permits, you will address those issues.
- Give your students individual dry-erase boards to work problems on instead of having students come up to the board. To check answers, everyone holds their board up to see if they were correct.
- Keep a list of activities, problems to solve, and extra credit worksheets on a bulletin board specifically for when students finish a test or seatwork early.
- If a student finishes their work before his classmates, have a "Job Jar" for students to draw a job out of that will keep them occupied until the class is ready to move on.
- Students who are finished early with their work get to become the 'experts' and help the other students who are not done, but only if they ask for help.
- "Word Walls" are an invaluable tool for writing, especially for middle school and reluctant writers.
- During independent work, students can volunteer to be 'troubleshooters' - if they place the red apple on their desk, it is a sign that other students can go to those students for help before asking the teacher for help.
- For student projects, have each child bring a photo at various stages of the project and have them write a short paragraph on back to explain the picture.
- To encourage students to think about what they say before sharing in a discussion, tell students to . . . Decide (what you will say) Hide (or keep your answer) Shine with Pride (give your answer when called on).

- For a nice alternative to written feedback from teachers, try responding to students' work by tape-recording comments for students to listen to at school and to take home to share with parents.
- After explaining a concept, it is essential to find out which students still do not understand. However, students often will not ask questions on their own. Try checking for understanding in other ways. For example, give each student a cup. If the



Getting the Year Off to a Good Start

- For the first month of school, instead of assigning jobs, have each student get his or her own day to do it all - line leader, run errands, etc. That way each child can feel special and you avoid having students fight over who gets to do what.
- Tired of students using the wrong heading? Make sure you spend time teaching this procedure at the beginning of the year. Use poster board-sized paper to make models of how to set up their papers. Then, laminate this model and place it in a clear location
- To help students learn about each other at the beginning of the year, one teacher has students do "Hanging Autobiographies." Students make a poster of their life. They bring things from home such as baby shoes, pictures, etc.
- Try the following game to help students get acquainted with one another. Students take a piece of paper and write their name boldly at the top. They write some things that they would like others to know about them. Then, students fold the papers up like
- On the last few days of school, have your students write letters to the next year's group telling them what to anticipate. Then, on the first day of the next year, the new students read the letters as they discuss their own expectations and goals for t



- Place a full length mirror on the wall so students can see their appearance before leaving the room.
- ICMM - "I Can Manage Myself" Club. Students who have all their work in and no behavior problems for the week get a laminated card with a key drawn on it that gives them permission to use the restroom, get a drink, etc. without asking the teacher first.
- Save time for comments and compliments at the end of the day so students leave feeling positive.
- Have an "Appreciation Community Circle" at the end of the day where each student takes the opportunity to appreciate the student next to him or her.
- To prevent students from interrupting you when you are talking to another student, keep a wait card that you hand to the interrupting student. When you finish your conversation, take the card from the waiting student and talk to them.
- At the end of the day, to do a quick assessment of your students, do a "ticket out" where you stand at the door and each child has to answer a question of give you a high-five to get out of the room. This one-on-one interaction helps to develop a better
- All student book bags should have the student's name displayed on the outside.
- Keep healthy snacks on hand for when kids get hungry (especially if you have a very early or late lunch). This short break helps keep the class on task more than if they were hungry.
- Have your students paint murals on your window blinds so that you can keep them down at all times and students are not distracted by what is happening outside.

- On days of performances or presentations, encourage students to dress up, take a picture of them, and display the photos on the board. The students love to see themselves.
- Use the 3 C's - "Cares, Concerns, & Celebrations" during the opening 5-10 minutes of class for discussion.
- Use the 3H's - "Handshake, Hug or High-Five" to greet students at the door each morning.
- Develop the idea that a plant is a friend, and when it is time for quiet activities or silent reading, invite students to take a plant with them to their work area.
- Give each student some wall space in the classroom to display items - papers, pictures, sports team memorabilia, etc. This space might be created by giving them a length of yarn and a way to attach it, which lets them choose the spot on the wall and the
- To help build a positive climate in his classroom, have students recite this poem: Welcome to SUCCESS, a place where we do our best. We respect, encourage and support each other. We never laugh at, put down or discourage another. We may be children, but
- Create a "Positive Reinforcement Center." In one corner of the room, have the following: a positive thought for the day, a mirror that reminds students that they're special, a poster with ways to handle stress, etc.
- Students enjoy hearing something positive from the teacher. Try having a "mailbox" for each student. Write a short note on something positive and places it in their box. By doing this for five students each day, you can write each student once a week.