

Classroom ORGANIZATION



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Your Goals



1 STEP BACK 3 STEPS FORWARD

Congrats! You've made it through the first frenzied weeks. Now take a moment to assess your organizational systems. BY CARALEE ADAMS

The year is in full swing. You've established basic routines, learned your students' names, and started putting some of your best new ideas into action.

While everything is still fresh, it's important to step back for a moment and tweak what needs tweaking before you get too far into the year. Are your routines working? What about your system for handling paperwork and projects? Your mode of communicating with parents? Refining patterns and systems now will mean less stress and fewer headaches later.

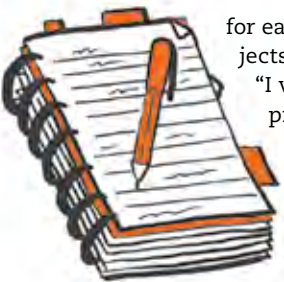
"Teachers' days are so structured, and in between the bells they get pulled in a million different directions. That's taxing on the brain," says Helene Segura, who taught English for 11 years and is now a professional organizer in San Antonio working with schools and other businesses. "It comes down to how you manage your time and having the right mind-set." Rather than feeling overwhelmed, Segura encourages teachers to stay positive, make decisions as quickly as possible, and accept that the school year is like sprinting through a marathon. "Once you accept that's how the school year is, it's easier to deal with," she says.

The Goal

Look Back to Move Forward

HOW TO ACHIEVE IT: Think first about how last year went. "Take an inventory," says Paula Eder, a time management coach in Francestown, New Hampshire. "What worked well? What were the gains, the challenges? Where do you need to switch things around?"

For years, Donna Vishnefski has kept a journal in her own special shorthand



for each of the subjects she teaches. “I write down hints, problems I need to fix the next time I teach the topic, and tips I need to remember,” says the Shreveport, Louisiana, teacher. “This tool alone has saved me a lot of time and frustration in repeating the same mistakes.” It’s an ongoing way to assess yourself and make continual improvements in your teaching.

While it’s tempting to overhaul everything at once, it’s better to focus on one element at a time and build on your success, says Cathi Cox-Boniol, a high school teacher and Achieve coordinator for Lincoln Parish Schools in Ruston, Louisiana. “I’m a firm believer in baby steps. It’s more realistic,” she says. Guard against perfectionism and reflect at the end of each day, giving yourself credit for what you did well.

The Goal

Ground Routines and Get Buy-In

HOW TO ACHIEVE IT: Make sure your techniques for getting kids to settle down (counting, clapping, turning out lights) or hand in homework (clearly labeling boxes, setting up special folders) are working—and modify them if they’re not. “It’s important that the routines you set are clear and framed as positively as possible,” says Eder. (For ideas on routines and classroom management tools, check out Harry and Rosemary Wong’s columns on



Teachers.net or the NEA’s page on classroom management: nea.org/tools/ClassroomManagement.html.) Continue to build on students’ sense of ownership in the classroom so that they want to take responsibility, suggests Loraine Stewart, an associate professor of education at Virginia Commonwealth University and a former fourth-grade teacher. Make sure, for example, that class jobs are not just busywork and that kids know how to do them properly. Delegating means giving up some control, but it can save time and students will enjoy the authority.

“I’m learning to put more responsibility on the students and less on me,” says Melissa Cooke of her third-grade students at Lake Panasoffkee Elementary School in central Florida. “I’ve realized I don’t have to do everything for them. I need to let go, or they’ll never learn to be organized themselves.”

Each week, Cooke chooses a student to be class secretary. She or he receives a clipboard to handle administrative tasks, such as checking off homework and preparing the attendance folder. This year, Cooke plans to expand the job and intermittently turn over her desk to the secretary, providing binders to manage more of the paperwork.

The Goal

Set Up a Calendar (Try Going Digital!)

HOW TO ACHIEVE IT: Start by entering important school dates on a calendar, including personal commitments, suggests Colby Kervick, a senior lecturer at the University of Vermont’s College of Education and Social Services. Then, work backward and establish interim deadlines. For instance, before formative assessments are due, select a date to organize notes in student folders.

Nicholas Provenzano, an English teacher at Grosse Pointe South High School in suburban Detroit, has all of his lesson plans in a Web-based program so he can access the information from his computer, tablet, or mobile phone. “I’m no longer confined to a lesson plan notebook that gets recycled every year,” he says. “Going digital with lesson plans saves me so much time.”

His students are basically paperless as well, submitting work online.



BUILD A CLASS WEBSITE



Use your website to communicate with parents, post class photos, and share student projects.

- To get started, consider a free platform such as Google Sites or Weebly. Also consider a blog, which is less formal and promotes more interaction. Your district may provide a custom site.
- Keep your audience in mind. Is the website for parents or students or both? If both, create separate areas within the site for each group to access relevant information.
- Get parents’ permission to publish student names and photos. Follow your district’s policy regarding student information.

While younger students may not be able to submit work online, a classroom website or app such as Class Messenger (classmessenger.com) can streamline correspondence with parents related to important school dates.

The Goal

Win the Paper Battle

HOW TO ACHIEVE IT: Segura encourages teachers to begin by taking a second look at their filing systems. You probably have specific trays for daily paperwork—be sure they’re clearly marked or color-coded. (You might get a red tray to prompt kids to put papers from their red homework folders there.) Also, post critical to-do items on a bulletin board next to your desk—and update the board on a regular basis.

Some tips for starting off on the right foot? When you pick up mail from the main office, immediately recycle anything you don’t need. Then, as you walk back to your classroom, sort through the remaining papers so that you are ready to place the action items in a prominent spot and file the rest. Design a filing system that meets your

needs, and don’t make too many folders so that it’s easier to manage, Segura advises.

Cooke avoids last-minute scrambling for papers during classtime by putting all the materials for that day’s work—typed-up schedules, markers, worksheets—in five separate plastic tubs purchased at a dollar store.

Author Debbie Silver, a retired teacher in Melissa, Texas, who now conducts workshops for educators, suggests a folder for each day of the month. It can be a reliable way to “get stuff off your brain” that you can reference later. (If this is too much, you might create weekly folders or consider texting yourself quick notes, which you can organize later.)

A teacher can be brilliant on her feet, but if she’s not organized, it doesn’t matter, says Cox-Boniol. “Kids are not dumb. They know if you are prepared,” she says. “If everything is ready, they will adopt that mind-set as well. It’s all about modeling for kids what I expect of them.”



The Goal

Establish Boundaries and Communication Systems

HOW TO ACHIEVE IT: Open communication with parents is key. But while you want to be responsive, you don’t have to be available 24-7, says Terri Hebert, an assistant professor of education at Indiana University–South Bend. Establish limits. “With technology, it’s almost impossible to shut things off,” says Hebert. If you haven’t done so already, tell parents the best times to contact you and how long they can expect to wait before getting a response, she adds.

Denise Landers, a time management trainer in Phoenix, suggests grouping tasks rather than bouncing from lesson planning to phone calls to checking e-mail. “If you know you have only this amount of time, you prioritize and go faster.” Make phone calls short by starting out with, “I have only a minute, but I wanted to give you a quick call.”

Also, try to limit interruptions. “If a colleague comes into your classroom while you are busy, just say, ‘Hey, I really have to get this done now. Can we talk at 5?’” suggests Landers. Chances are, they’ll understand and be happy to chat later.

Finding a structure that works for you and setting boundaries can make the year go smoothly and guard against burnout. “It’s important for teachers to strive for a work-life balance,” says Stewart, the professor at Virginia Commonwealth. “No one expects teachers to focus just on teaching. They need to find time to do things that make them happy outside of the classroom.” □



SOURCE: DARLENE RANKIN, DIRECTOR OF INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY, KATY (TX) INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS



How To Organize Your Classroom

Love seeing how other teachers set up their rooms? Then turn the page—we've got some absolutely fabulous spaces to share with you! **BY TARA WELTY**

WE DIDN'T WANT TO SEE MILLION-DOLLAR makeovers or overly fancy technology. When we started planning a story about classroom organization, we knew that we wanted to show real teachers with real budget constraints. So we visited two elementary schools—Town Center and Millstone River—in Plainsboro, New Jersey.

The teachers we met had gorgeous, exciting classrooms, brimming with creative solutions to common problems. They invited us in, video camera in tow, and shared their best ideas. Be sure to check out the video tours of each room (plus a bonus classroom not shown here) to really understand these spaces.

▶ **VIDEO TOURS!** See them at scholastic.com/instructor.



THE TRAFFIC COP Jen Knoblock, a first-grade teacher at Town Center, organized her room for good traffic flow. The setup “allows everyone to get their materials and get to our meeting space quickly and quietly,” she says.



1. Clear Pathways

“All the furniture is arranged along the wall so that the students can access materials easily. They know to walk one way on the paths and keep moving to avoid traffic jams.”



2. Words to Know

“We have two word walls. These are our high-frequency words,” says Knoblock. She uses the math word wall (above, far right) to reinforce math vocabulary as the year progresses.



3. Playing Favorites

One area of the library features class favorites. Students can match the sticker to the label on the box when choosing a book by their favorite author or that includes a beloved character.



4. Special Chairs

Knoblock writes each student’s name on a clothespin. She picks one boy and one girl each day to sit in the coveted blue chairs during independent reading time.



5. Art on Display

Each child has a paper cupcake labeled with his or her name hanging from the ceiling. Knoblock clips student work to the cupcakes, creating an ever-changing art exhibit.



6. Jobs for All

“Students have a job for a week. At the end of the week, I remove the student at the bottom, closest to the edge. Everybody slides down one, and that student goes to the first job.”



7. Buckets of Smiles

This area is for students to share compliments. When Knoblock catches a student adding a nice note to a peer’s bucket, she gives him or her a special coupon—and lots of praise.



8. Behavior Chart

After the first warning, a student acting out must switch his or her green cupcake to yellow. If the student must then switch to red, he or she gets time-out and parents are notified.



THE SUPER ORGANIZER

First-grade teacher Lindsay Brooks, also at Town Center, has divided her room into different areas and meeting spaces. “We have a lot of places where we can gather,” says Brooks.



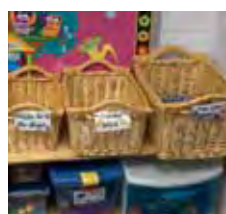
1. Group Students

Brooks groups students at tables. “The kids are always working together,” she says. “They have to be team members. I love it.”



2. Month by Month

During calendar time, Brooks goes over the day’s date and highlights any special days, such as birthdays or bookfair days.



3. Self-Service

Students pick up their own take-home folders, finished work, and notes from the teacher. The labeled baskets keep things orderly.



4. Gathering Spot

The meeting rug is home base. Students gather there for storytime, to see the SMART Board, and to go over the day’s plan.

The Critter Keepers



Vickie Gurzau and Sven Strnad are fifth-grade co-teachers in an inclusion classroom at Millstone River School. Their unusual classroom contains a bearded dragon, a ball python, hissing cockroaches, and a tarantula, among other assorted creatures. “When kids hold Linda [the ball python] for the first time, they realize they can do things they used to fear or were hesitant to do,” says Strnad. “We extend that to all sorts of other lessons about life.” □



Your Goals



10 Ways to Pack Like a Pro

Take the stress out of cleaning up your classroom for summer break.

BY JULIA MARTIN

As the school year winds down and the familiar milestones pass by—testing, concerts, report cards, parties—a final challenge looms: packing up your classroom. Though you may feel like you're running on empty, come fall you'll be glad if you take a few days now to do it right.

We've interviewed some supersavvy teachers and culled their best strategies for a smooth transition. So whether you need to move out of your room before summer break or simply prepare for the custodian's heavy-duty cleaning, these tips will help you do so quickly and efficiently. And there will be further payoff in the fall, when you'll enjoy a low-stress start to the school year.

1 PRE-PACK

Much as you might like to, don't start packing until the last day of classes. "You don't want to be ripping down bulletin boards while your students are in class—you want to send the message that they are the priority throughout the school year," says Melanie Unger, author of *Organized Teacher*, *Happy Classroom* and a fifth-grade teacher in Columbus, Ohio. But you can get ready for the move by using prep periods and after-school time over the final few weeks of the term to straighten your shelves and drawers, organize your library by author and genre, clear out any junk from drawers and closets, and pack away materials you know you won't need for the rest of the school year.

2 LABEL (A LOT!)

Identifying what goes where right on the boxes will make unpacking a breeze. "The more specific, the better," says Unger. Rather than just listing the contents, "give the location, such as 'top right-hand shelf next to the window.'" Number each box, along with the total number of boxes—for example, "3 of 6"—for a head count. Charity Preston, founder of



PHOTOS (ABOVE): TIM PANNELL/MEDIA BAKERY. (LEFT TO RIGHT, EXCEPT MAGIC ERASER): BRIGIT REITZ-HOFMANN /SHUTTERSTOCK; AARON ARNAVY/SHUTTERSTOCK; HANHANPENNY/ISTOCKPHOTO; TOM ENGLAND/ISTOCKPHOTO

The Organized Classroom blog, recommends you start packing one section of the room and continue in a clockwise direction. Make sure your name and room number are on the boxes, as well as on your desk and chair and any other furniture—to discourage sticky fingers over the summer.

3 PURGE

Teaching begets hoarding. But will you really ever use those baskets or toilet paper tubes or that mimeograph paper from the seventies? "If I haven't used it for two years, I put it in the teachers' lounge with a sign: 'Free to a good home,'" says Patti Hocker, a

first-grade teacher in Lewes, Delaware. Unger uses the acronym ROLL to make decisions about what to keep and what to pitch. R is for *repeat* (Do you really need more than one?); O is for *outdated* (Do you use it regularly?); L is for *level* (Do the materials match the grade level you are teaching?); and L is for *love it* (Do you really appreciate the item?). A tip from Preston: During the year, as you use games and manipulatives and replace them on your shelves, flip them around so they're facing backward. At the end of the year, if an item hasn't been flipped, you know you haven't used it and can get rid of it.

4 ENLIST VOLUNTEERS

Assign students simple end-of-year tasks (check district policy first, to make sure that's okay). They can tidy up recess games, weed out depleted markers, wipe down desks. Take advantage of parent volunteers, too. "When parents ask, nab 'em or they're not likely to ask again," says Jenifer Boatwright, a third-grade teacher in Hesperia, California.

5 GO PAPERLESS

Recycling paper is key to lightening your moving load. To keep paper

from piling up during the school year, use the "two-inch rule"—file or toss paper when the pile gets bigger than two inches. Preston scans all her handouts onto her computer and tosses extra copies in the recycling bin.

6 ASSEMBLE A DAY-ONE SURVIVAL KIT

This is the first box you'll open when you come back in the fall. Stock it with scissors, stapler, paper clips, pen and paper, thumbtacks, and other essentials. Mark it *Desk* and tuck it away in a spot where you won't forget it, says Nancy Flynnn of the blog *Teaching My Friends* and a fourth- and fifth-grade teacher in New Jersey.

7 TAKE STOCK

Make a classroom shopping list so you know what to pick up over the summer. Even better—keep a running list tacked up in your supply cabinet and take that with you at school's end, suggests Flynnn. You'll be prepared to jump on the back-to-school sales. Scour eBay for discounted school supplies and books, says Boatwright. Just append "lot" to your searches, such as "pencil box lot," to find great prices for items you buy in bulk.

8 MAKE OR TAKE A PICTURE

You'll want to let the custodians know how to replace the furniture in your room after cleaning. You can take a photo or make a sketch on chart paper. "One thing you don't want to have to do is rearrange the furniture when you get back," says Hocker. "It's backbreaking and you have a million other things to do." Attach a nice note to the custodians thanking them for their efforts.

9 LIMIT SUMMER WORK

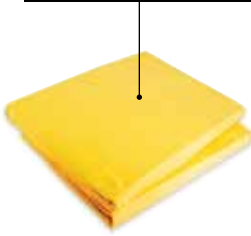
Take home only what you can fit in one container. "Otherwise, you'll take way too much," says Boatwright. "Try to think about prepping for the first month only, not the whole year, or you'll feel overwhelmed."

10 CLEAN

Even though the custodian will wax the floors, you'll want to clean tables and wipe down chairs, shelves, manipulatives, and so on. "Then, when you come in after the summer, everything is nice and fresh and you can unpack without thinking about cleaning," says Jennifer Solis, a first-grade teacher in Hesperia, California. □

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Have these items on hand to simplify your move.



Sheets. Use sheets to cover electronics to protect them from dust. And make sure to unplug all devices before you leave.



USB drive. Keep copies of handouts safe on a flash and purge extras. Download important documents onto the drive as well.



Garbage bags. Cut them up and staple them over bulletin boards to protect against possible damage and fading.



Magic Eraser. The "eraser" gets marks off whiteboards and laminated behavior charts and folders. It can even erase Sharpie ink.



Box cutter. Buy one at the dollar store and keep it in your essentials box. It's very handy for opening boxes of fall supplies.



Giant resealable bags. Use to store charts, posters, and themed units. They'll keep large, odd-size things together.



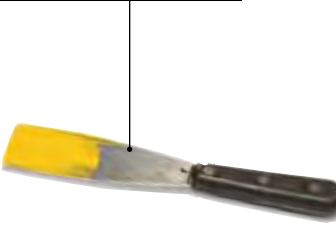
Boxes. Ask an office supply store for boxes they use to ship reams of paper. For smaller items, try plastic shoe-box-size containers.



Painter's tape. Use this to label furniture. "Masking tape bakes on during the summer," says Nancy Flynnn of *Teaching My Friends*.



Wipes. Choose your favorite brand and buy in bulk. Check your school's policy on cleaning chemicals before you buy.



Paint scraper. "I use it on tables, along with a little water, to get the gunk and glue off," says teacher Jennifer Solis.

100 CLASSROOM ORGANIZING TRICKS

What's the secret to avoiding art messes? How can you make your room orderly without emptying out Office Depot? Here are 100 teacher tips for creating a beautiful, organized environment, from no-mess glitter shakers to one-minute dance party transitions. What could be better? *By Dana Truby and Megan Kaesshaefer*

NEW USES FOR OLD THINGS

1. Empty Tissue Box

You always need plastic bags for sending home art projects and wet clothes. Tame that unruly mess that seemingly multiplies under your desk by using an empty tissue box to keep bags corralled and ready for use.

2

Post-it Notes

Are the keyboards in your classroom frighteningly grimy? Run the sticky side of a Post-it between the keys to pick up crumbs and dust. Then finish up with slightly dampened cotton swabs.



3. Address Stickers

Brand anything as yours—classroom library books, rulers, staplers—with a return-address sticker, and they just may stick around.

4

Mittens

Put off-duty mittens to work as scissor guards. One classroom we saw had a clothesline of mittens to store scissors, dry-erase markers, and extra pencils. So cute!



5. Six-Pack Carton

Transform a six-pack soda carton into a supply tote that's perfect for storing items for group work, tools for outside science exploration, or art supplies for each table of four or six students. Refreshingly simple.

TERRIFIC TIME-SAVERS

6. Download It!

From field trip forms to IEP progress reports to “No Homework!” reward coupons, you can find dozens of free downloadable templates at toolsforteachers.org. Better yet, each form can be customized for your needs.

7

Number Line Assign each of your students a number. Then have them write their name and number on every paper. It makes assignments easy to keep track of and grades quick to enter. —*Marilyn Ruzick*

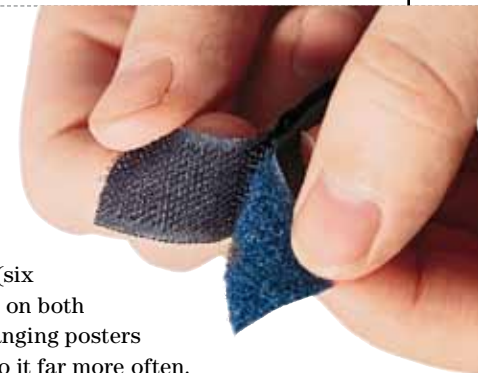
8. Label Everything

Place labels and photos on shelves and containers. It will make cleanup quicker and you won't have to field a thousand questions a day about where things go!



9. Velcro Your Walls

I use Velcro dots to attach posters to the walls. I attach the Velcro in the same spots on every poster (six inches from the center on both sides). This makes changing posters fast and easy—and I do it far more often. —*Doranne Koval*



10. Copy That List!

Make 50 copies of your class list at the beginning of the year. They will be useful for so many things—quick classroom games, a reference for substitutes, notes on behavior during an assembly, or field trip checklists.

11. Traffic Patterns

To start the year, I tape down paper footprints on the floor to teach the traffic flow I want in my classroom. It reduces conflict and saves minutes of learning time every single day. —*Shannon McGovern*

INGENIOUS ORGANIZING TOOLS

12-21

You might be surprised at the “free” organizing tools you can find in your attic, basement, or at least at a neighbor's garage sale.

- Vases
- Baskets
- Tackle boxes
- Silverware trays
- Muffin tins
- Oatmeal canisters
- Photo boxes
- Cookie jars
- Old suitcases
- Metal lunchboxes



PHOTOS: DAN SCHULTZ AND ARIANA GOLDSTEIN; STYLING: LAURA KAESSHAEFER

Organization Tricks

RETHINK YOUR ROOM

22. Instant Math Center

So you don't have the cash for Cuisenaire rods and other math tools, but you do have kitchen cabinets. Pantry staples like pasta shells and lima beans are perfect for hands-on math work and patterning.



24. Shower Gallery Space

Have an ugly wall? Hang a couple of sheets of shower paneling from a home store and let the kids write or draw! Invite the kids to be creative on a theme you are studying in class, whether it's oceans or Pilgrims. —Christina Vrba

25

Hide It Away

Ugly storage area? Hit the fabric store and look for a bright fabric or remnant. Use safety pins to hang kids' work or to make it into a word wall. —Robin Shaw

26. Color Your World

Every interior designer knows the quickest (and the cheapest) way to overhaul a room is a can of paint. You could ask parents or teens to volunteer to help! —Peggy Collrin



27. That Holiday Glow

I repurposed extra Christmas tree lights by running them along the window sill and around the bookcases in my classroom. I don't light them all the time, but it's always a pick-me-up for the kids when I do! —Mary Jo Pick

Reflections

Is your room gloomy? Hanging mirrors or even reflective wrapping paper opposite the windows can really brighten things up! —Frankie Frasure

JUST FOR FUN

28. Quack the Days

I have a huge collection of rubber ducks we use to count the days of the school year. We remove one from the window-sill each day. They add color and some fun to my classroom. —Stacey Telgren



A MORE PEACEFUL CLASSROOM

29. Soften the Lights

I like to find extra floor and table lamps at junk shops and turn off the overhead fluorescent. It makes my classroom more homey and reduces stress. —Amy Hoand

30

Reduce Clutter

Weed out all unnecessary clutter. Use crates and baskets for those things you want out of sight but handy when needed.



31. Bring Nature Inside

Plants (whether a real indoor garden or silk palms and ferns) add that soothing touch of green. And they're a boon for science study!



32. Collect It

Simple nature collections (stones, shells, pinecones, rocks) engage kids' curiosity and can be inspiration for writing, math, and art.



33. Listen Up

I often play classical music, jazz, and nature recordings in my classroom. We listen to the ocean while we do math, or the cello during reading. —Sarah Kal

34

Lower Your Voice

Sometimes the best way to get and keep kids' attention is to say less and say it very quietly. You set the tone.

FREE (OR ALMOST FREE) SUPPLIES

35-37

Too many teachers spend their own hard-earned cash to outfit their rooms. Here are a few websites you can count on.

■ **FREECYCLE.ORG** A nonprofit site where you can give (and get) stuff free in your own town. Great for kids' books, extra furniture, even a DVD player. Be sure to let people know you are a teacher!

■ **DONORSCHOOSE.ORG** A well-respected organization connects donors with classrooms in need. Any teacher can sign up!

■ **BOOKINS.COM** Refresh your library with this book swap site. Give away books that aren't working for ones that will!

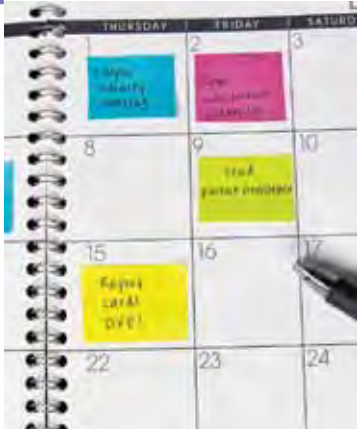
Organization Tricks

TAME THAT PAPERWORK



38. Paper Keeper

An empty wine bottle carton wrapped in a recycled map makes a perfect mailbox.



39. Start at the End

I have a calendar for the entire year. I take notes on major themes, brainstorm books, then I break down each book into themes and skills. I count the days and work backwards to fit it all in. —*Diana Kennedy*

40

In and Out Boxes

On a bookshelf by the door of my middle school classroom, I have six sets of In and Out boxes. They are arranged in pairs and labeled by period. Kids turn their work in to the top bin and pick it up from the bottom bin. It keeps the clutter off my desk! —*Miranda Wicker*

KEEP TECH ORGANIZED

41. Tangles of Wires

Slip wires through two or more empty paper towel tubes to contain them. For an even better look, have kids cover them with colored paper first.



42

Junior IT Help

Assign some tasks to students. They can position equipment, connect the projection device, log in, open the browser, and you're ready to go!

43. Share the Computer Space

Create groups of three students: keyboard operator, mouse operator, and director/recorder. In a crowded area, the director/recorder student can stand behind the other two and give the directions. Rotate roles every 5–7 minutes.

MANAGE VOLUNTEERS

44–53

Having volunteers in your classroom is a great gift, but it's also a lot of work. Here are some quick tips:

- Be clear about needs
- Set boundaries
- Give clear directions
- Respect their time
- Schedule in advance
- Make room for dads
- Give praise
- Vary the opportunities
- Use parents' talents
- Have kids say thanks!

ART IS MESSY, SO IS LIFE

54. Tempera

Sure it's washable, but it's still hard to remove from carpets. If you have a spill, first let it dry. Scrape away any loose paint. Next, use a clean cloth to blot the stain with white vinegar. The dye should begin to transfer to the cloth.



55. Instant Art Centers

Have some extra cookie sheets? If not, ask your friends. Nothing is better for keeping cut-and-paste projects contained. The edges keep all those scraps of paper on the tray instead of on the floor. —*Amanda Freeman*

56

Bingo!

Kids love to paint, but brushes can be hard to control for small hands and the cleanup is extensive. Use bingo stamp bottles filled with liquid watercolor and cleaning is a breeze.

57. Too Much Art

So much artwork, so little wall space. When kids' work piles up, take photographs of their masterpieces and post them on your website, or make them into an inexpensive photo book. (Try shutterfly.com or snapfish.com.)



58. Glitter

Transfer the sparkly stuff into recycled salt and pepper shakers. (Little hands find them easier to control!)

59

Save the Brushes

Extend the life of your brushes by putting them away clean and dry. Have students wash brushes with soap and water and then stand them to dry in jars filled with popcorn or lentils. The jars will catch any drops.



FIGHT GERMS

60–68

A five-minute daily clean routine can help keep the germs at bay and your classroom gleaming. Have your helpers of the day use disinfectant wipes to scrub down these hot spots:

- Desks
- Countertops
- Light switches
- Doorknobs
- Keyboards
- Cabinet handles
- Drawer pulls
- Faucets
- Water fountains



Organization Tricks

Online Organization Tools

- 69. REMEMBERTHEMILK.COM** This free personal organization tool works online and with mobile phones.
- 70. 43THINGS.COM** You enter a list of goals you want to accomplish and other users can “cheer” you on.
- 71. TADALIST.COM** Ta-da List allows you to create a to-do list in 30 seconds. Your lists will be hosted at a unique URL assigned just to you.
- 72. DOCS.GOOGLE.COM** Google Docs let you share work online and access your documents from anywhere.
- 73. MOMMYTRACKED.COM** Dozens of downloadable forms for work and home.
- Keep Transitions Fun**
- 74. RING, RING** Sounding a small bell or chime brings my class to order much more effectively than me trying to talk over the noise. —*Melissa Valencia*
- 75. TIME FOR TALK** I let my first graders

- have quick “chat breaks” of a minute or two. When it is time to get back to work I count down slowly from five. —*Suzanne Gerczynski*
- 76. ATTENTION, PLEASE** I use wooden castanets, a New Year’s horn, or a wooden train whistle. They enjoy the surprise! —*Ann Trastevere*
- 77. BRAIN BREAK** Between activities, have kids take turns acting out a fun or silly thing (e.g., catch and reel in a fish, hit a home run and then cheer for yourself). —*Jordan Anderson*
- 78. DOWNWARD DOG** If our lesson is longer than 30 minutes, we take a quick yoga break: strike a pose and do some breathing to get the blood circulating. —*Heather Burch*
- 79. DANCE PARTY** After a period of intense focus, I transition with a One-Minute Dance Party. We play fast dance music. They know at the end of the minute they need to be ready to do what’s

- next. —*Nancy Hodges Barlow*
- 80. SIGN IT!** I teach my kids the sign language alphabet! If we have to wait outside the music or library room door, we can silently practice our spelling words using the ASL alphabet. —*Erin Harper*
- Make Lesson Planning Easy**
- 81. BREAK IT UP** I break my lesson plans into half-hour chunks to make sure we use every minute. —*Kathie Gilbert*
- 82. STANDARDS FIRST** Start with what you’ll be testing (the standard), then plan how the students will demonstrate it. From there, plan how and what you’ll teach them. —*Jolene Wagner*
- 83. STICKY NOTES** I write my schedule and lesson plan ideas on Post-it notes because nothing goes exactly as planned. This way I can move things around. —*Sara Griffin*
- 84. STYLE CODE** I place a letter (A=Auditory, V=Visual, K=Kinesthetic)

- by each lesson plan idea to keep track of learning styles. —*Elena Beehler*
- 85. MATH ON MONDAY** Try to plan one subject’s lessons for the next week each day. On Tuesdays, plan social studies, etc.
- Keep Kids on Track**
- 86. PICTURE IT** I write the daily schedule on the board with picture cues. —*Laurel L. Wodrich*
- 87. KITCHEN TIMER** Multipurpose tool of the gods. Use it for transitions, group time, journaling, cleanup time.
- 88. TELL KIDS WHAT THEY SHOULD DO** Rather than telling them what they should *not* do, this simple twist on how to give directions may revolutionize how you communicate with your students.
- 89. TEACH STUDY SKILLS** Never assume kids know how to study. Teach them how to review a chapter.
- 90. MORNING MAIL** Set two trays near your desk, one for money (lunch, book

- orders) and one for parent notes. Check them quickly during morning work.
- Organize Your Library**
- 91. STUDENT LIBRARIANS** Every year, I have my first graders sort our books according to the categories that *they* think are important. They always know what books we have. —*Jamie Chaffee*
- 92. LIBRARY CARDS** When students borrow a book, have them write the name of the book on an index card and place it in a pocket chart. Later they can write about the book on the back on the card.
- 93. MARKET YOUR BOOKS** Use bookstore tricks! Front-face books you’d like them to read and try themed display tables.
- 94. EASY BOOK RETURN** Label clothespins with each child’s name. When they borrow a book, have them clip their clothespin to the basket.
- 95. BOOK CARE 101** Teach children how to care for books, use bookmarks, and

- repair books when needed.
- 96. MATCH UP** Place stickers (yellow stars, blue circles) on your baskets and the books inside and they’ll be easy to return to the right place.
- Parent Communication**
- 97. STUDENT INFORMATION SHEETS** I send home student information forms the first week. On the back of the sheet is a contact log I use all year long. —*Kechia Williams*
- 98. E-MAIL NEWSLETTER** A weekly e-mail that explains what’s going on in class keeps parents in the know.
- 99. POSITIVE CALLS** I schedule the time for five positive calls home per week. —*Kechia Williams*
- 100. FAMILY PROJECTS** I do family projects each month—quilt squares, collecting food for a food bank, etc. The children love having their parents involved! —*Diane Gold* □

20 Minutes to...

an organized classroom library



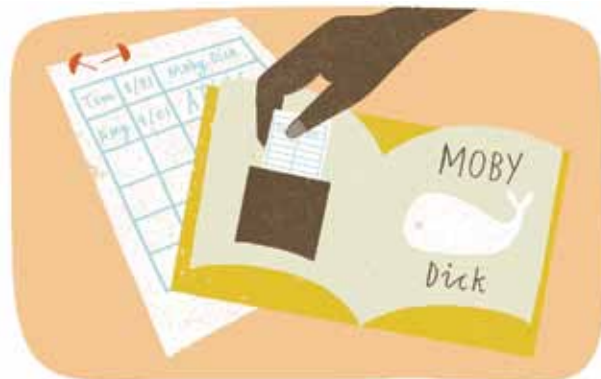
1 Assess the Mess

Take a quick inventory of the books you have in your library. Make three piles: Display (keep out for students now); Store (save for later in the year); and Give Away (donate or lend to colleagues).



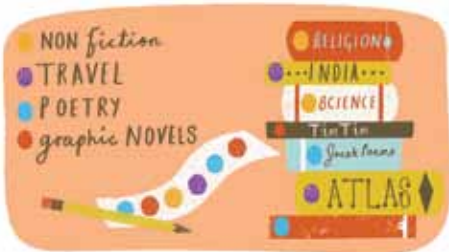
2 Evaluate Your Space

Try to pick one spot that can fit your entire library, which will lead to fewer messes and lost books. Working with a small space? Think vertical, with shelving, hanging baskets, or tall, slim bookcases.



3 Mock Up a Checkout System

Ruler in hand, mark off seven columns on a large piece of unlined paper. Label them with student name, date, title, author, genre, bin name, and reading level. Later, input info into an Excel spreadsheet, where it can be easily sorted. It doubles as a library checkout list: Just plug in the borrower's name and checkout date.



4 Label Wisely

Organize books by genre and reading level. Set up a color-coded system that matches genre to colored sticker. For example, Poetry: Purple; Nonfiction: Blue; Graphic Novels: Orange. Later, when you have time, devise a separate system that for reading levels (write levels on plain white stickers to avoid color confusion). Create a chart that identifies genres and colors, reading levels and numbers.



5 Choose Sturdy Storage

Try multipurpose bins or wicker baskets (both are resilient and attractive). Mark each bin with a genre word label ("Fantasy") and the corresponding color ("Red").

GOOD BOOKKEEPING RULES

- Keep book spines turned out, so title and author are visible.
- At the end of the day, have a couple of class helpers straighten and organize books.
- Place your name on every book. Use an address label, bookplate, or personalized stamp.
- Teach accountability and respect for property; books should be handled with care and returned on time to a designated bin.



BEFORE



AFTER

The One-Day Classroom Makeover

By Debbie Diller

KINDERGARTEN TEACHER HEATHER THRASH has a brand-new classroom. But like most of us, she doesn't have a lot of time or money to create the exciting learning environment she wants. Classroom design expert to the rescue! I work with teachers nationwide turning classrooms into effective learning spaces. We begin by mapping out Heather's classroom step by step, thinking about the best place for whole-group learning and various centers. Surprisingly, we place the desks *last*. Read on to discover more secrets of classroom design.

Classroom Design



The classroom library is the first area children see upon entering. We place pillows in a built-in cabinet and position two bookshelves at an angle beside an open-faced book rack to create a cozy reading nook. Labeled baskets will contain books Heather reads in the first weeks of school. Stuffed animals and silk plants add ambience.



The brightly colored math bulletin board includes a dry-erase calendar hung low so students can interact with it. A simple number line from 0 to 10 is also stapled where children can reach it. We don't post a hundreds chart yet—Heather will add it when she is ready to introduce bigger numbers to her kindergartners.



This built-in cabinet holds language arts materials in labeled containers. We repurpose magazine boxes to hold picture books by topic. A moveable student cubby unit is placed just to the left. Children keep their personal materials in their cubbies. Coats hang on hooks in the hallway outside the classroom to save valuable instructional space.



A small group area will be used for reading, math, and writing workshops. All materials Heather needs are in labeled, clear-plastic stacking drawers behind the table. This area also does double-duty as a teacher desk, so the one and only file cabinet is placed to the left of the table. Sitting in her chair, Heather can now keep an eye on every space in the classroom.



The housekeeping and block centers help to develop oral language, social skills, and creativity. There are just a few dolls, pots, and pans in housekeeping at the beginning. Too many materials create chaos. Children are more likely to use their own imaginations with the simple setups.



In the math and science corner, a storage unit holds math games in containers with handles for easy transport. Math manipulatives are stored on the red shelves, and science materials will be added to the blue shelves as Heather uses them. Blank boards have signs that read "Under Construction. Kids' work coming soon." □



Heather Thrash (left) and Debbie Diller

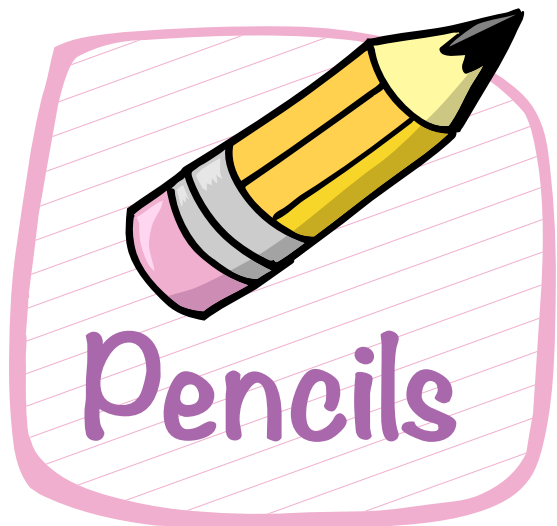


Back-to-School Basics

Label Maker

Struggling to keep classroom supplies organized? Print our free colorful labels and your problems are solved! Simple, fun illustrations will click with even your youngest students, making cleanup time a breeze.





Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Xx Yy Zz



Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Xx Yy Zz