

Organizational Ideas

James B. O'Connor

For the topic “Five *Organizational Ideas* for your classroom”, I decided to concentrate on physical organization - i.e. the arrangement of desks and other furniture in the classroom, and other physical factors. I am sure that the various books and articles I have read in my education courses so far have contributed the “foundation” knowledge on which I base several of these ideas, but I do not have specific references for all of them. Here is my list:

1. seating arrangements

I will attach self-stick card holders to the desks in my room. On the first day of class, the holders will have cards with a number, and I will allow students to pick their own seats. The number at their desk will become their student number in my class for that semester. Then, I can easily rearrange seating assignments just by moving the cards around in the holders. I can also utilize some fun activities using the card holders by replacing the numbers with a math problem. Then, the students find their seats by finding the problem with an answer that matches their student number. I could give the students an incentive to work quickly, and work together, by offering “bonus points” if everyone in the class is in their correct seat within a specific amount of time.

2. alternative physical arrangement of desks

As part of my goal to make correct and effective use of group activities, I will try to provide clusters of lessons that utilize groups, and then arrange the desks into group clusters, so that it is easy for the group members to work together. If I was able to get anything I wanted for my classroom, I would get rid of the traditional individual desks all together, and use small tables and chairs (like the classrooms in Dunlap Hall where we’ve

been doing our EDUC classes), so that I would have even better flexibility in the physical arrangements.

3. places for students to put their stuff

To keep distractions at their work areas to a minimum, I would like to use storage boxes as a place for students to drop off their excess baggage and personal items. I would facilitate efficient entry/exit to/from the classroom by also having the student mailboxes in the same area. Thus, on the way in students can put away their stuff, drop off any turn-ins in my mailbox, pick up any hand-outs from their mailbox, and take their seats.

4. provide an area for comfort

The MEA-MFT New Teacher Assist section of their web site provides some great information on classroom organization (Classroom Organization). One idea that specifically stood out for me was “Create a retreat area for students to have separation from the rest of the class (but not removed from your visual observation.)”. I have fond memories of classrooms when I was in school where the teacher had brought in a couch, or several bean bag chairs, where it was possible to sit with a little more comfort than in the standard desks. In the classes I was in, getting to sit in the “retreat area” was a privilege that was earned, and I think that doing something similar would help provide an extra incentive for good behavior and productive class participation.

5. classroom lighting

I can't stand fluorescent lights! In her book Learning to Teach, Linda Shalaway

specifically addresses lighting concerns:

”Create both well-lit and dimly-lit areas in the classroom by using bookcases, screens, plants, and other furniture. Some children learn best in bright light, but others do significantly better in low light. Bright light actually makes some students restless and hyperactive. Try allowing students to sit where they feel most comfortable, or try placing fidgety children in low-light areas and listless children in brighter areas.” (Shalaway)

If I am able to do so, I plan on bringing in my own incandescent lamps, and using the overhead lights infrequently. With computer projectors and smart boards becoming common place in classrooms, the lower light levels should also make it easier to view the material displayed on the boards.

References

*Classroom Organization*. Retrieved from MEA-MFT New Teacher Assist:

[http://www.mea-mft.org/assist/classroom\\_org.html](http://www.mea-mft.org/assist/classroom_org.html)

Shalaway, L. Classroom Organization: The Physical Environment. *Learning to*

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