

# Classroom Designs to Accommodate ADHD and Learning Disabled Students

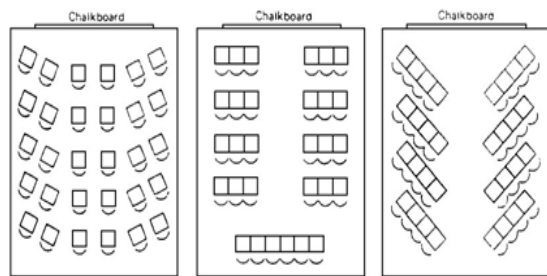
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Franklin never paid attention in class and seemed to move around more than all the other kids. He was always staring off into space or kicking the chair in front of him. Franklin has Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and because of this his classroom needs to meet special requirements. As teachers we must accommodate our room designs to fit our students. The educational experience for all the students in our classroom begins with the attention to details of learning styles and with the teacher's desire to make that experience the best it can be for every student. If you had an ADHD student like Franklin, or any other learning disabled student in your classroom, how would that influence your classroom design?

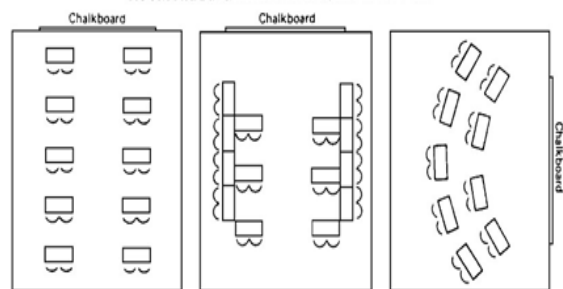
**Desk Placement.** The answer is yes. Desk placement is one of the most crucial part of classroom design when you have kids with ADHD. Desk placement depends on the child. Usually kids with ADHD learn the best placed closer to the teacher. Another option would be to "surround the child with ADHD with well-behaved, attentive classmates as desk neighbors" (Carbone, 2001). Only very rarely do kids with ADHD work best sitting in the back area of the room (Doberman, 2011). Children with ADHD work better with single seats, it is less distracting then the long tables meant for more than one child. Also, it is best to sit them away from windows or open doorways if possible as it is much easier for them to have wandering minds sitting next to open doorways or windows

Kids without ADHD also have desk placements that work best for them too. Desk placement also depends on the type of desk you have. Are they for individual students or desks for two people? Paul Denton said, in his article *Seating Arrangements for Better Classroom Management*, "Flexibility is the key word in arranging the classroom for effective instruction" (1992). This is very true as kids with different learning strategies need

**FIGURE 1**  
**ROOM ARRANGEMENTS WITH INDIVIDUAL DESKS**



**ROOM ARRANGEMENT WITH SMALL TABLES**



different desk arrangements. Figure 1 and 2 are the two best methods, according to Paul Denton, of having desks with a classroom of kids without ADHD.

**Seating.** Would it be more distracting if you used therapy balls instead of the more conventional but uncomfortable chairs? According to a study done at the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine at the University of Washington, kids with and without ADHD who that have used therapy balls found it actually helped them to be better behaved and have improved listening skills.

**Visuals.** Studies first done on kids with ADHD claimed that if you have a classroom with ADHD students in it, the room should be empty and plain. However as more research has been done about visuals in classrooms, this has been shown to be untrue. "A basic rule to follow is that visual distractions should be limited within the child's line of sight from his or her work areas..." (Doberman, 2011). As a teacher, keep in mind that too many visuals on walls distract students with ADHD; however, not having enough visuals when they are learning was actually boring for the students. When teaching, teachers should use charts and tables to help clarify what they are talking about and keep the child's interest.

**Cleanliness.** Carol S. Weinstein and Anita E. Woolfolk say "Pupils associated with neat classrooms were judged to be happier and better behaved" (Weinstein and Woolfolk, 1981). In their studies of neat vs. messy classrooms, they found, it really doesn't affect student's learning but kids prefer clean rooms. Basically they are saying a clean room seems to be better than a messy room because a messy room feels lazy and unorganized and this will rub off on the students. Soon the class won't want to do any homework because their environment portrays being unfocused. "A disorganized classroom can pull a student's attention to

irrelevant details and interrupt his/her ability to sustain focus" (Hume, 2007). When there is a classroom with students that have ADHD it is even more important to have a clean and orderly classroom in order to insure they are learning as much as they can.

**What should teachers do?** As a teacher, when you are planning your room design, you need to consider who will be your students. If you have ADHD students, or students with other learning disabilities, the plan should include a way to maximize their potential by using a good room design. The room should be organized, neat and clean so the students will see that when they walk into the room. It should be visually appealing and not distracting. Use these considerations to set up your room in a way that will be both satisfying and productive for you and your students!

## References

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