

Organization in the Classroom

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Abstract: This article explains the importance of organization in the classroom. It breaks down the assumption that organization is simply “where things go” and discusses that organization in the classroom is actually a mixture of elements that enable success. These elements are class management, creating a positive learning environment, and the physical set-up of the room. Implementing these aspects of organization is a best teaching practice that leads to optimal success for the teacher and the students.

There are many pieces to the puzzle of a successful classroom. One of the most pertinent pieces to this puzzle is organization. When one hears the word “organization”, they may assume it is simply tidiness or a certain precision when determining the placement of items. However, organization implies much more than “where things go.” Maintaining a physically organized setting is of value when one has their own classroom, but the other components of classroom organization are equally valuable. The main components of organization in the classroom are effective class management, creating a positive learning environment, and the physical set-up of the room.

Effective class management is vital to having a classroom run smoothly. If an instructor cannot stay on task and apply adequate management to their classroom, then chances are they will not be successful in applying their curriculum either. Steps to be taken in applying classroom management are establishing set rules and routines, addressing potential disciplinary actions, developing relationships with and among students, and administering engaging education (Garrett, 2013). It is a common misconception that adequate classroom management cannot be taught; it is quite possible through learning the most effective strategies and practice (Garrett, 2013). Although effective class management is necessary in keeping a classroom organized and running smoothly, it is also important to maintain a personable disposition in doing so. This leads into creating a positive learning environment.

Creating a positive learning environment is a key to success in the classroom that often gets undermined. Educators have to present

themselves in a way that shows that they not only care about what they are teaching, but that they care about who they are teaching to as well. It is proven that if a teacher creates a positive learning environment, they also develop an efficient classroom setting alongside an emotional setting that boosts student performance (Bailey, Beasley, & Swafford, 2014). To be specific, one way to create a positive learning environment is to encourage student engagement. Studies show that classroom engagement is highly correlated to students’ academic achievement (Finn & Pannozzo, 2004). Overall, having a student-oriented classroom is the best way to manifest a positive learning environment (Bailey, Beasley, & Swafford, 2014). The atmosphere of a positive learning environment is crucial in letting students know they are in an organized classroom setting. The physical set-up of the classroom plays a role in this as well.

The physical set-up of a classroom is important because it is the first thing a student sees when they walk in. Factors such as unorganized bookshelves, unruly and random (student) desk patterns, and excess clutter can all make a difference... and not for the better. If the room is disorderly and unkempt, it reflects badly on the educator. A messy, (physically) unorganized classroom also creates a sense of instability. It is important to not only keep a tidy classroom, but to appropriately utilize space as well. In a study of classrooms done at Hong Kong, it was shown that shelving, cabinets and learning corners were stationed along the sides of the room with chairs and desks at the center to optimize the space they had (Li, 2006). A key factor in determining how to set up a classroom is the age group of the students. When considering how to set up a classroom for elementary students, it is wise to have a more open environment where there is room for low-key activities, such as sitting in a circle on the floor during story time or show and tell. On the other hand, when considering how to set up a classroom for secondary students, room for activities is not as important. Rather, creating a set-up that is conducive to discussion among the class should be heavily considered. It is important for students to be able to not only learn from the teacher but from each other as well. Another aspect to consider when creating the classroom set-up that

often gets overlooked is the teacher's desk/work space. A teacher's desk says a lot about them since it is their personal space. If it is untidy, cluttered, and overly secluded from the rest of the room, it will make it hard for students to feel comfortable approaching the teacher during independent work time with questions, for example. Evidently, there is much to consider when orchestrating organization in the physical set-up of the classroom.

Effective class management, creating a positive learning environment, and physical set-up all have their own important role in implementing organization in the classroom. Although one may think that organization is simply, "where things go," there is much more to it. Organization in the classroom is one of the best teaching practices that can make for a successful educator and class.

References

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