

Classroom Physical Arrangement/Environment

By Ron Walker

Visual posting strategies

All room decoration should be directly related to what the teacher is currently teaching.

Room is decorated with visual cue cards and posters containing currently taught academic information. Examples: Spelling words in bright colors on 5 x 8 index cards - Vocabulary in content areas on 8½ x 11 paper, word in one color, definition in another - Math facts - Math formulas - Dates and events in history.

Materials posted in areas where students are most likely to look when they go off task - visual posting (windows, ceilings, around pencil sharpeners, etc.)

Material is left visible during quizzes and daily work so that students can directly copy from the posted cues.

Posted material is taken down for chapter tests, unit reviews, and etc. (all major tests).

Students help make and post as much of the material as possible.

Maximizing the auditory environment

The use of low-level background music or environmental sounds during independent work time increases the on-task performance of most students, even improving test scores.

Pencil sharpening should not be permitted during work periods.

Timers, particularly those that make repetitive noises, often decrease the concentration of students with attention-focusing problems and can distract others. Digital timers are significantly more effective with such students.

Placement/arrangement of desks

The more eye contact students have with one another when seated, the greater the conversation level in the classroom.

Physically active students should be allowed to kneel in or stand by desks and the teacher should not try to limit their movement so long as it is not disruptive to others.

Student posture/seating position should not be altered so long as the student is on task and not disrupting others.

A significant percentage of students concentrate better while sitting or lying on the floor than they do when seated at a desk or table.

When moving students, move many at once rather than targeting only one or two who are a problem.

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In classrooms where the seat placement of individual students becomes highly problematic, random, two-week rearrangement is an effective strategy.

Do not seat students facing away from blackboards or overheads if they are expected to copy any material from these locations.

Placement of difficult students

Placements in the far back of the room (or any type of deliberate isolation) are often ineffective for students with behavior problems and sometimes worsen the situation.

Voluntary isolation (office concepts) are very effective in many classrooms to improve the on task performance of inattentive or distractible students.

Placements near the middle of the room, surrounded by hard-working students of the opposite sex, are usually most effective.

Place the most behaviorally difficult students in an area where it is easiest for the teacher to maintain proximity.

Ron Walker is president of Walker Educational Consulting, Inc. This material is part of his handouts from the T/TAC-EV Conference, *Challenging Behavior: Making our Schools Safe Again*, May 2, 1997.