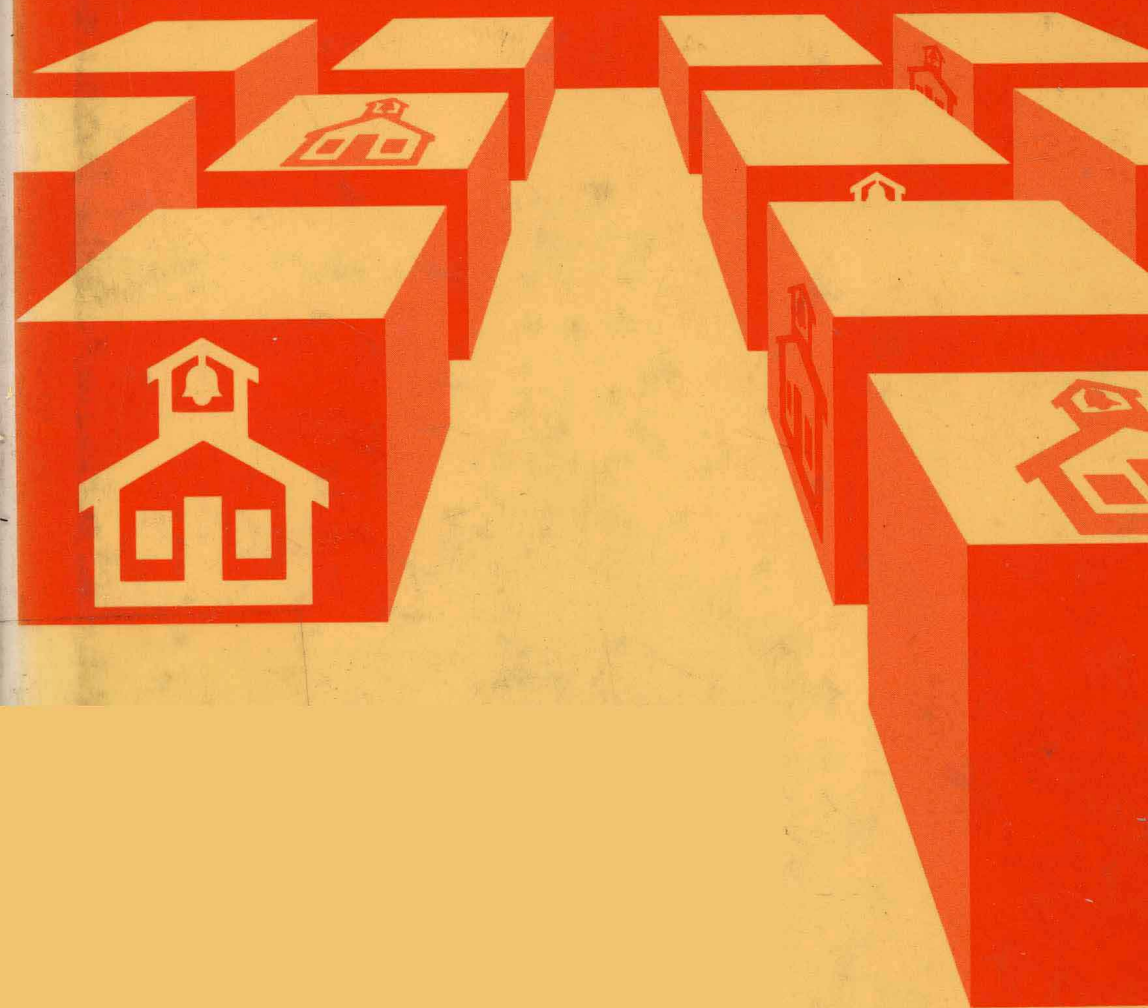


CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS



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PREFACE

Good classroom management doesn't just happen. Smooth-running classrooms where students are highly involved in learning activities and that are free from disruption and chronic misbehavior do not happen accidentally. They exist because effective teachers have a very clear idea of the types of classroom conditions and student behaviors that provide good learning environments and because those teachers work very hard to produce such behaviors and conditions. This book describes what *you* can do to create a well-managed classroom. The process is described as teachers encounter it: first by planning in several key areas before the school year begins; then by implementing the plan and establishing good management at the beginning of the year; and finally by maintaining the management procedures throughout the year. We have tried to make the materials as useful and practical as possible by providing checklists to help organize your planning activities in key areas. Numerous case studies are also provided to illustrate how important concepts can be applied in classrooms. We hope you will find much here that is helpful as you plan and organize your own classroom.

Like all teachers, our own experiences have influenced our understanding of classrooms. However, much of our knowledge about classroom management has been derived from research in over 300 elementary and secondary classrooms. Most of these classes were observed at the beginning of and throughout the school year in order to identify management practices associated with high levels of student engagement in learning activities and low levels of disruptive behavior, two classroom conditions that contribute to good student achievement gains. The guidelines, suggestions, and case studies in this book are based on analyses of observations in classes taught by effective teachers identified in these classroom management studies. The research program was conducted over a five-year period at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education, University of Texas, and it was supported by the National Institute of Education. Of course, the views expressed in this book are those of the authors and are not the official positions of the Center or of the Institute.

We would like to acknowledge a large debt of gratitude to the teachers who permitted us to observe in their classrooms. Without the base of reality they provided, this book would not exist. We are also grateful to the many observers, school administrators, and other researchers who both assisted and enlightened us. Finally, we are very grateful for the skills of Kitty Hays and Judy Camps, who typed this manuscript.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORGANIZING YOUR CLASSROOM AND SUPPLIES

Arranging the physical setting for teaching is a logical starting point for classroom management because it is a task that all teachers face before the school year begins. Many teachers find it easier to plan other aspects of classroom management after they have a clear idea of how the physical features of the classroom will be organized.

The number of things that must be considered in arranging the typical elementary school classroom is amazing! Of course there is furniture—the teacher's and the children's desks, bookcases, filing cabinets, chairs, and a table or two. In addition, there may be audiovisual equipment such as an overhead projector, tape recorder, record player, and television. Visual aids such as bulletin boards must be prepared; charts, globes, and maps must be displayed; and storage for materials must be provided. Finally there are the personal touches that teachers often bring to a classroom, perhaps plants, an aquarium, or animal cages for hamsters. When you arrange these physical features, you will need to make many decisions. Should desks be set out in rows? Where should your desk be located? Where will reading groups meet with you? What areas of the room will you use for presentations? How will you and the children obtain materials and supplies?



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The decisions you make will have important consequences for the success of your instructional activities. For example, if areas for storing materials are poorly placed, bottlenecks may occur when children get supplies or return them, which could slow down the activities or waste time getting them started. The location for reading groups must be chosen carefully, or else you may have difficulty watching the rest of the class when meeting with a group of readers. The positioning of desks is important: because a poor arrangement may interfere with visibility of chalkboards or other instructional areas, increase distractions during instruction, or make it difficult for you and your students to move around the room.

This chapter will help you make these and other decisions about room arrangement, equipment, and basic supplies. Each component is described and guidelines and examples are given to help you plan. In addition, a checklist of room arrangement items is provided. Use it to organize your efforts in this important task and to be certain that your classroom is ready for the beginning of school.

FOUR KEYS TO GOOD ROOM ARRANGEMENT

Remember that the classroom is the workspace for both you and your students. It is not a very large area for containing up to thirty persons working for long periods of time—as much as seven hours in a day. Furthermore, you and your students will be engaging in a variety of activities and using different areas of the room. You will get good results if you arrange your room to permit orderly movement, keep distractions to a minimum, and make efficient use of available space. The following four keys will be helpful as guidelines for making decisions about your room's arrangement.

Keep High Traffic Areas Free of Congestion

High traffic areas include group work areas, pencil sharpener, trash can, water fountain, certain book shelves and storage areas, students' desks, and the teacher's desk. High traffic areas should be widely separated from each other, have plenty of space, and be easy to get to.

Be Sure Students Can Be Easily Seen by the Teacher

Careful monitoring of students is a major management task. Your success in monitoring will depend on your ability to see students at all times. Therefore, be sure there are clear lines of sight between instructional areas, your desk, students' desks, and all student work areas.

Keep Frequently Used Teaching Material and Student Supplies Readily Accessible

Easy access to and efficient storage of such materials and supplies will aid classroom management by allowing activities to begin and end promptly and by minimizing time spent getting ready and cleaning up.

Be Certain Students Can Easily See Instructional Presentations and Displays

Be sure that the seating arrangement will allow students to see the overhead projector screen or chalkboard without moving their chairs, turning their desks around, or craning their necks. Also, don't plan to make instructional presentations in a far corner of the room away from a substantial number of students. Such conditions do not encourage students to pay attention, and they make it more difficult for the teacher to keep all students involved in presentations and other whole-class activities.

Each of the above four keys will help produce good room arrangement. The specific components that will lead to this goal are described below. By attending to these areas you will address all of the important aspects of room arrangement. You can be confident that you will have designed a physical setting that is efficient and conducive to student involvement in work.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ARRANGING YOUR CLASSROOM**Wall and Ceiling Space**

Wall space and bulletin boards provide areas to display student work, instructionally relevant material, decorative items, assignments,

rules, schedules, a clock, and other items of interest. Ceiling space can also be used to hang mobiles, decorations, and student work. The following points should be considered when preparing these areas:

1. At the start of school, you should have at least the following displays for walls and chalkboards:

Class rules (to be discussed in Chapter Two)

A place for listing daily assignments

Some decorative display to catch your students' interest, such as a bulletin board with a "Welcome Back to School" motif, or a display that includes the names of each child in the room

2. Other displays that many teachers find useful include an example of the correct paper heading to be used in your class, and a content-relevant display, such as one highlighting a soon-to-be-taught topic.

3. You will probably want to cover large bulletin board areas with colored paper. This paper comes on large rolls and is often kept in the school office or a supply room. You can trim the bulletin boards with an edging or border of corrugated paper. If you can't find this item in your supply room, you can spend a few dollars for the materials at a school supply center or other store. You can also find books of bulletin board ideas for sale at such stores.

4. If you need ideas for decorating your room or for setting up displays, borrow some hints from other teachers. A look in some other rooms will probably give you several new ideas.

5. *Don't* spend a lot of time decorating your room. You will have many other more important things to do to get ready for the beginning of school. A few bare bulletin boards won't bother anybody. Leave one or two empty and add displays later or allow children to decorate a blank space for an art project or as part of a science or social studies unit. Also don't overdecorate. Wall space that is cluttered with detail can distract students and make a room seem smaller. Your room will seem small enough when your twenty-five to thirty students are in it.

Floor Space

Arrange your furniture and equipment so that you can easily observe students from all areas of the room in which you will work. Students should be able to see you, the overhead projector screen, the main chalkboard, and any other area that will be used for presentations to the whole class. Of course, you will have to adjust to whatever constraints exist in your assigned classroom. Common problems are a classroom that is too small or that has inadequate or poorly placed chalkboard space or electrical outlets. You should assess your space and determine whether any feasible changes in order to accommodate whatever constraints exist. For example, if the classroom is small, be sure to remove unnecessary student desks, other furniture, or equipment; if you have inadequate storage, perhaps you can locate an extra file or supply cabinet.

A good starting point for your floor plan is to determine where you will conduct whole-class instruction. Examine the room and identify where you will stand or work when you address the entire class to conduct lessons or give instructions. You can usually identify this area of the room by the location of a large chalkboard or the overhead projector screen. This area should also have room for a table or desk where you can place items needed in presentations and an electrical outlet for the overhead projector. Once you have located this area, you are ready to begin planning floor space.

As you read each item below, refer to Figure 1–1, which shows an example of a well-designed floor plan for an elementary school classroom. Note how each item has been addressed in this floor plan. Of course, this is just one of many possible alternatives. The location of desks, the small-group area, and other physical features of the classroom will depend on the size and shape of the room and how different parts of the room will be used.

Arrangement of student desks. Many different arrangements of student desks are possible, but be sure to arrange them so that all stu-

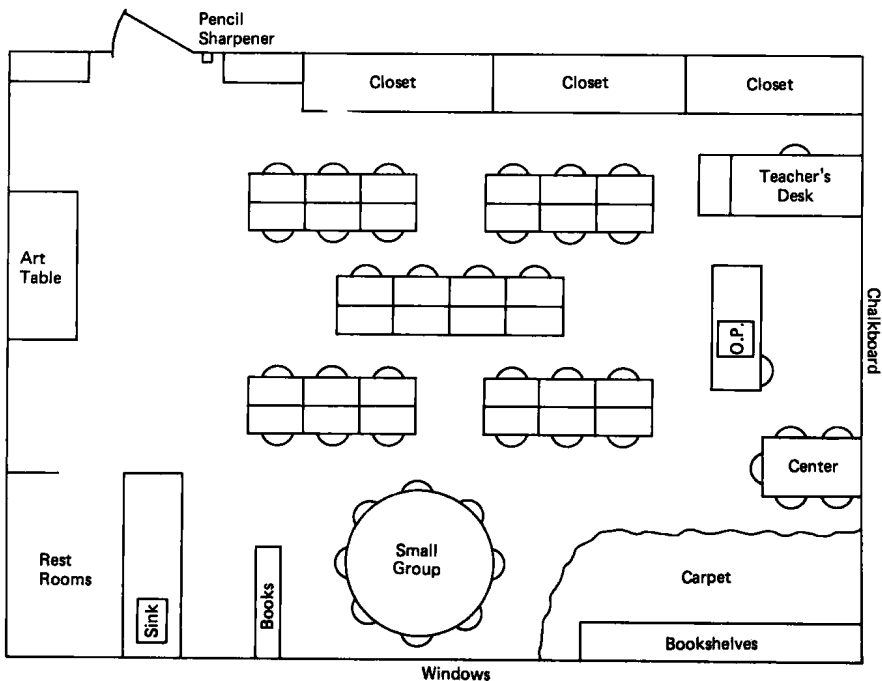


Figure 1–1 An Example of Good Room Arrangement