

RULES AND PROCEDURES

Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom

THE **MARZANO COMPENDIUM** OF
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom



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555 North Morton Street
Bloomington, IN 47404

888.849.0851
FAX: 866.801.1447

email: info@marzanoresearch.com
marzanoresearch.com

Visit marzanoresearch.com/compendium to access the Marzano Compendium of Instructional Strategies to view additional resources related to this element and others.

Director of Content and Resources: Julia A. Simms

Editorial Manager: Laurel Hecker

Production Editor: Ming Lee Newcomb

Editorial Assistants / Staff Writers: Elizabeth A. Bearden & Christopher Dodson

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INTRODUCTION

In 2007, Dr. Robert J. Marzano published *The Art and Science of Teaching: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction*. The framework, composed of three lesson segments, ten design questions, and forty-one elements, was based on research showing that teacher quality is one of the strongest influences on student achievement—that is, an effective teacher can positively and significantly impact student learning. As such, *The Art and Science of Teaching* sought to identify specific action steps teachers could take to improve their effectiveness.

In 2015, Dr. Marzano updated *The Art and Science of Teaching* framework to reflect new insights and feedback. The Marzano Compendium of Instructional Strategies is based on this updated model, presenting forty-three elements of effective teaching in ten categories. Each folio in the series addresses one element and includes strategies, examples, and reproducible resources. The Compendium and its folios are designed to help teachers increase their effectiveness by focusing on professional growth. To that end, each folio includes a scoring scale teachers can use to determine their proficiency with the element, as well as numerous strategies that teachers can use to enact the element in their classrooms. Indeed, the bulk of each folio consists of these strategies and reproducibles for implementing and monitoring them, making the Compendium a practical, actionable resource for teachers, instructional coaches, teacher mentors, and administrators.

ORGANIZING THE PHYSICAL LAYOUT OF THE CLASSROOM

When considering the physical layout of a classroom, teachers should consider the following four aspects of room organization: (1) decorations; (2) materials; (3) areas for instruction, and (4) other learning spaces and supplies (such as learning centers, classroom libraries, and lab equipment). Teachers with effective classroom layouts consider these aspects of the classroom and their compatibility with planned instructional activities. Classroom design should facilitate easy movement around the classroom and allow teachers to monitor the class regardless of the type of lesson at hand.

Monitoring This Element

There are specific student responses that indicate this element is being effectively implemented. Before trying strategies for the element in the classroom, it is important that the teacher knows how to identify the types of student behaviors that indicate the strategy is producing the desired effects. General behaviors a teacher might look for include the following.

- Students move easily about the classroom.
- Students make use of materials and learning centers.
- Students attend to examples of their work that are displayed.
- Students attend to information on bulletin boards.
- Students can easily focus on instruction.

Desired behaviors such as these are listed for each strategy in this element.

Teachers often wonder how their mastery of specific strategies relates to their mastery of the element as a whole. Successful execution of an element does not depend on the use of every strategy within that element. Rather, multiple strategies are presented within each element to provide teachers with diverse options. Each strategy can be an effective means of implementing the goals of the element. If teachers attain success using a particular strategy, it is not always necessary to master the rest of the strategies within the same element. If a particular strategy proves difficult or ineffective, however, teachers are encouraged to experiment with various strategies to find the method that works best for them.

Scoring Scale

The following scoring scale can help teachers assess and monitor their progress with this element. The scale has five levels, from Not Using (0) to Innovating (4). A teacher at the Not Using (0) level is unaware of the strategies and behaviors associated with the element or is simply not using any of the strategies. At the Beginning (1) level, a teacher attempts to address the element by trying specific strategies, but does so in an incomplete or incorrect way. When a teacher reaches the Developing (2) level, he or she implements strategies for the element correctly and completely, but does not monitor their effects. At the Applying (3) level, a teacher implements strategies for the element and monitors their effectiveness with his or her students. Finally, a teacher at the Innovating (4) level is fluent with strategies for the element and can adapt them to unique student needs and situations, creating new strategies for the element as necessary.

Scale for Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom

4	3	2	1	0
Innovating	Applying	Developing	Beginning	Not Using
I adapt behaviors and create new strategies for unique student needs and situations.	I organize the physical layout of the classroom, and I monitor the extent to which my actions affect students' behavior.	I organize the physical layout of the classroom, but I do not monitor the effect on students.	I use the strategies and behaviors associated with this element incorrectly or with parts missing.	I am unaware of strategies and behaviors associated with this element.

The following examples describe what each level of the scale might look like in the classroom.

Not Using (0): A teacher hasn't put much thought into the physical layout of her classroom, and, as such, the classroom often is counterproductive to learning. For example, the teacher finds it difficult to transition between whole-class instruction and group work because of the way the desks are arranged.

Beginning (1): A teacher recognizes that décor is important and hangs up classroom decorations as well as students' work. However, the teacher rarely changes these decorations, so they are often outdated and unrelated to the content being taught in class.

Developing (2): A teacher realizes that she does a lot of group-work activities with her class, so she reorganizes the rows of desks into clusters of four. This eliminates students' need to move when starting group work, but the teacher is not sure how it has affected overall classroom behavior.

Applying (3): A teacher tries various arrangements for students' desks including small clusters, one large circle, and traditional rows. The teacher tries each for a few weeks, monitors how students' behavior is affected, and weighs the pros and cons of each. The teacher uses this experiment to inform her preference for student desk arrangement.

Innovating (4): A teacher involves groups of students in the design process by identifying areas that need improvement and letting them independently create solutions. For example, the teacher recognizes that the classroom library and the arrangement of student desks are not effective. The teacher divides the class into two groups and has one group focus on the classroom library and one group focus on the arrangement of student desks. The students collaborate, make changes to the existing models, then explain the reasoning behind their changes to the group.

STRATEGIES

Each of the following strategies describes specific actions that teachers can take to enact this element in their classrooms. Strategies can be used individually or in combination with each other. Each strategy includes a description, a list of teacher actions, a list of desired student responses, and suggestions for adapting the strategy to provide extra support or extensions. Extra support and extensions relate directly to the Innovating (4) level of the scale. Extra support involves steps teachers can take to ensure they are implementing the strategy effectively for all students, including English learners, special education students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and reluctant learners. Extensions are ways that teachers can adapt the strategy for advanced students. In addition, some strategies include technology tips that detail ways teachers can use classroom technology to implement or enhance the strategy. Finally, each strategy includes further information, practical examples, or a reproducible designed to aid teachers' implementation of the strategy.

Classroom Décor

When considering the classroom décor, a teacher should aim to create a welcoming and functional learning environment. The teacher can post pictures, posters, and “homey” touches (such as curtains) or use themes relevant to the season or upcoming events to make the classroom feel friendly. The teacher should also align the classroom décor with learning goals and instructional priorities, so that it enforces the value and relevance of what students are learning. To this end, the teacher may leave empty spaces on the walls at the beginning of the year and post student work later on. Bulletin boards might display learning goals, classroom rules and procedures, assignments, school announcements, or school spirit paraphernalia, and calendars might display daily schedules or assignment timelines. Other learning resources on the walls could include the alphabet (in elementary classrooms), poems, vocabulary lists, historical timelines, information on current topics of study, the correct format for assignments (headings, page numbers, and so on), or exemplars and prototypes for assignments. In general, the emphasis in classroom decoration and use of wall space should be on functionality.

Teacher Actions

- Considering how students see the room
- Decorating the classroom so that it feels welcoming
- Decorating the classroom so that it encourages learning

Desired Student Responses

- Referring to information posted on the walls
- Feeling alert and positive upon entering the room
- Focusing on the learning at hand while in the room

Extra Support

- Providing extra support (pictures, diagrams) through the classroom décor without making students feel patronized (use graphics and color schemes that are appropriate for students’ ages)

Extension

- Asking students to create learning resources to display on the walls, such as posters showing correct procedures or timelines of important dates

Décor Considerations for Elementary Classrooms

A teacher can use the following questions to assess the classroom's décor.

- What do you want students to see as they enter and leave the classroom?
- What will students see when they are seated at their desks?
- What will students see when they are engaged in group work?
- What will students see in learning center areas?
- Are wall spaces available for bulletin boards, calendars, and displays to post learning goals, special announcements, and student work? What is the best placement for these things?
- How much empty space will be set aside for later use?
- What could be distracting?
- Is the room welcoming?
- Does the room communicate an overall focus on learning?

A teacher can use the following checklist as a starting point as he or she decides what to put on the walls of the classroom.

- A calendar
- "Homey" touches such as photos, posters, and curtains
- A place for school announcements and school spirit paraphernalia
- A place for posting expectations regarding the correct format for assignments (headings and so on)
- A place for listing daily assignments or the daily schedule
- A place for displaying information about current topics
- A poster with a pocket for each student that can be made of laminated envelopes; these pockets can be used to send messages to individual students

Décor Considerations for Secondary Classrooms

A teacher can use the following questions to assess the classroom's décor.

- What do you want students to see as they enter and leave the classroom?
- What will students see when they are seated at their desks?
- What will students see when they are engaged in group work?
- What will students see in learning center areas?
- Are wall spaces available for bulletin boards, calendars, and displays to post learning goals, special announcements, and student work? What is the best placement for these things?
- How much empty space will be set aside for later use?
- What could be distracting?
- Is the room welcoming?
- Does the room communicate an overall focus on learning?

A teacher can use the following checklist as a starting point as he or she decides what to put on the walls of the classroom.

- A place for school announcements and school spirit paraphernalia
- A place where assignments can be listed
- A place to display prototypes for assignments
- A place to display student work

Displaying Student Work

It is important for students to see themselves represented in the classroom and to benefit from samples of effective student work and other relevant visual artifacts. As such, a teacher should consider how students' work will be displayed within the classroom and how such displays reinforce learning. A teacher can either post the same assignment from all members of the class or post particularly noteworthy assignments from individual students. If a teacher chooses the latter, the teacher should regularly switch out displayed student work when possible to give more students the opportunity to have their work posted. Furthermore, the teacher should be able to explain why he or she thought any posted work is exemplary.

Teacher Actions

- Creating a system for displaying current and past student work
- Using guidelines to select exemplary work for display

Desired Student Responses

- Explaining why specific items of their work are posted
- Explaining why posted items are exemplary

Extra Support

- Posting small cards next to student work listing aspects of the displayed item that were done especially well

Extension

- Asking students to identify especially good aspects of their displayed work

Suggestions for Displaying Student Work

- A teacher should regularly consider the student work posted around the room and whether or not it has become outdated. The teacher may want to update student work if several weeks have passed since the end of a unit or if the work is unrelated to the current instructional unit.
- A teacher can display student work using clear 8 ½ × 11-inch pockets into which students slide their exemplary assignments or compositions. This allows students to identify work that they are proud of and post it for others to see.
- In some cases, it is appropriate to display an assignment or project from every student. When this is the case, make sure that every student is represented in the display and have students find their work on the walls.
- Especially in middle and high school, some teachers choose to display only exemplary work as a type of reward for students who do well on a particular assignment. This has the benefit of providing the class with examples of quality work. However, the teacher should take care to vary the students whose work is posted, as displaying students' work should boost students' academic confidence, not make other students feel inadequate.
- When a teacher changes the student work displayed in the classroom, the teacher may want to make note of the changes to the class. During this time, the teacher can explain why he or she felt that the posted work warranted being displayed.

Classroom Materials

When a teacher monitors his or her learning materials and ensures that they are accessible and organized, he or she facilitates a classroom environment that runs smoothly and efficiently. The teacher should consider the placement and organization of various classroom materials as well as the frequency of their use. As such, frequently used materials should be placed in a location that allows for easy access and should be organized and labeled in such a way that students can find what they need quickly and independently. Materials that are less frequently used may be stored in a less accessible space and brought out for students when necessary. The teacher should also plan ahead to consider the classroom materials needed for specific lessons and units and take care to acquire them in a prompt manner to ensure their availability at the proper times.

Teacher Actions

- Organizing materials so students can quickly find what they need
- Locating materials close to student work spaces
- Ordering new materials when needed

Desired Student Responses

- Finding needed materials quickly and easily
- Alerting the teacher when supplies are running low

Extra Support

- Labeling cabinets, drawers, and supply caddies with pictures and words so students can quickly find what they need

Extension

- Asking students to evaluate the organization and accessibility of materials and suggest changes

Classroom Materials Checklist

A teacher can use the following questions to assess the placement of classroom materials.

- Which classroom materials are most often used?
- When do I use specific classroom materials?
- How accessible are classroom materials when they are needed?
- When students go to access classroom materials, how does the setup of the room facilitate or impede this action?
- How can I place classroom materials so that they are most easily accessed?
- How can I organize and label classroom materials so that they are most easily accessed?

A teacher can use the following list as a starting point to ensure he or she has all the necessary classroom materials.

- Pens, pencils, and a pencil sharpener
- Paper
- Paper clips, staplers, staples, and a staple remover
- Music and a CD player or a classroom computer
- Bandages, tissues, and any other first-aid equipment your school requires
- Attendance materials, class sheets, and seating charts
- In and out boxes for collected papers
- Dry erase markers or chalk
- Sticky notes and name tags
- Clock (if not already provided in the classroom) and a timer
- Scissors
- Pushpins
- Tape or glue

Teacher's Desk

When placing his or her desk in the classroom, a teacher should consider how he or she plans to use the desk during class time and when he or she is alone. Ideally, a teacher's desk should be placed so that it allows the teacher to monitor the class during seatwork and can be easily accessed during whole-group instruction. Often, a teacher will either place his or her desk in the front or the back of the room. When a teacher's desk is placed in the front of the room, it allows the teacher to easily make direct eye contact with students during independent seat work, while placing a teacher's desk in the back of the room allows the teacher to monitor the class without students knowing which part of the room is being observed. Regardless of its position, the teacher should be able to see and hear all parts of the classroom when seated, and the desk should be in an accessible location.

Teacher Actions

- Placing the teacher's desk to accommodate whole-group instruction
- Placing the teacher's desk to facilitate eye contact and monitoring students

Desired Student Responses

- Easily seeing and hearing the teacher while in the classroom
- Easily seeing and hearing any media used in the classroom

Extra Support

- Creating an area where students who need extra support can work that allows them to consult the teacher more frequently than if they were at their desks

Extension

- Creating a system that allows students who need to confer with the teacher about independent projects or tasks to schedule a one-on-one interview with the teacher

Considerations for Teacher's Desk Placement

A teacher can use the following questions to assess the placement of his or her desk.

- Does my desk impede the flow of traffic?
- What do I primarily use my desk for?
- How is my desk used during whole-group instruction?
- How is my desk used during individual seatwork?
- How is my desk used when I am not teaching a class?
- Should I place my desk at the front of the room or at the back of the room?
- Can I easily see all students from my desk, regardless of the type of instruction occurring?

Student Desks

The organization of student desks and chairs can either inhibit or facilitate student learning. When considering the placement of student desks, the teacher should consider how students may use them during whole-class, small-group, and individual instruction. The arrangement of students' desks should allow students to hear directions, watch instruction, access necessary materials, and move quickly and safely around the classroom. A teacher should also be able to see and make eye contact with all students from various locations in the classroom. If needed, a teacher might also use seating charts that ensure that students stay on task and are not distracted by their neighbors.

Teacher Actions

- Considering how many students will be in the class
- Placing student desks to accommodate pairings and groupings
- Creating walkways to each student's desk

Desired Student Responses

- Moving to and from desks safely and easily
- Easily working with other students while at their desks
- Receiving individual assistance from the teacher while seated at their desks

Extra Support

- Seating students who need extra support closer to the teacher and in such a way that the teacher can interact with them if they are experiencing difficulty

Extension

- Seating students who often complete extra work or extensions close to each other so they can collaborate and confer without disturbing others

Considerations for Student Desks

A teacher can use the following questions to assess the placement of student desks.

- Are there enough desks and chairs for my students?
- Can each student see and hear me, regardless of where I am in the classroom?
- Is there a clear traffic pattern around the desks in the classroom?
- Can students easily access materials from their desks?
- How easily can students break up into pairs or small groups?
- How do students use their desks during whole-class instruction? Does the seating arrangement facilitate this?
- How do students use their desks during small-group instruction? Does the seating arrangement facilitate this?
- How do students use their desks during individual seatwork? Does the seating arrangement facilitate this?
- Does the seating arrangement encourage or deter off-task behavior?
- Do I need a seating chart? If so, are there specific students who should not be close to one another?

Areas for Whole-Group Instruction

When designing a classroom's layout, a teacher should consider how the class interacts with the space during whole-group instruction. A teacher may consider the ease of access to materials frequently used during whole-group instruction, the teacher's ability to instruct and monitor the class, and students' ability to hear the teacher and see the board. First, the teacher must decide where whole-group instruction will take place, and this is generally informed by the placement of the black- or whiteboard or projector (which teachers often have little control over). After deciding where the whole-group instruction will take place, the teacher can consider the layout of the desks, the placement of materials, and how both facilitate easeful learning and an orderly classroom.

Teacher Actions

- Creating areas to store whole-group instructional materials
- Ensuring that all students can see the board, teacher, and projection screen
- Ensuring that all students can hear the teacher easily

Desired Student Responses

- Easily seeing the teacher, board, and projection screen
- Easily hearing the teacher and any media used during instruction

Extra Support

- Placing a word wall (with words and pictures) close to the whole-group instruction area, and pointing to terms and concepts that arise during whole-group instruction

Extension

- Asking students to evaluate how well they can hear, see, and participate during whole-group instruction

Considerations for Whole-Group Instruction

A teacher can use the following questions to assess the effectiveness of the classroom's physical layout for whole-group instruction.

- What do I need for whole-group instruction (black- or whiteboard, projector, interactive whiteboard, and so on)? How do these needs inform the design of the area for whole-group instruction?
- How easily can students transition from whole-group instruction to group work or individual seatwork?
- During whole-group instruction, can I see all of my students? Can all of my students see me?
- During whole-group instruction, can all of my students easily hear my directions?
- How easily can students access necessary materials during whole-group instruction?
- Can I easily move around the room during whole-group instruction?
- Does the area for whole-group instruction encourage the participation of all students?

Areas for Group Work

To facilitate differentiated instruction and productive interaction among students, the classroom should include areas for small-group instruction in addition to the area for whole-class instruction. The teacher should consider where small groups of students can meet and how easy this is considering the placement of students' desks. The teacher may also want to create a space where he or she can meet with a small group of students while the rest of the class completes individual seatwork; this is often accomplished by placing a table off to the side of the classroom or through the use of learning centers or labs. In all cases, areas for small-group instruction should provide easy access to related materials (for example, chart paper and markers) and be out of the way so as not to block traffic patterns.

Teacher Actions

- Ensuring easy access to collaborative materials (chart paper, markers)
- Arranging seating to facilitate discussion

Desired Student Responses

- Easily accessing collaborative materials (chart paper, markers)
- Focusing on groupmates during discussions

Extra Support

- Using images to help students separate into small groups (for example, students who were in the rabbit group would gather by a poster with an image of a rabbit on it)

Extension

- Asking students to evaluate how well they can hear, see, and participate during small-group instruction and activities

Considerations for Group Work

A teacher can use the following questions to assess the classroom's physical layout in relation to group work.

- Where can small groups of students meet for group work?
- How easily can students transition from whole-group instruction to group work or individual seatwork?
- During group work, can I see all of my students? Can all of my students see me?
- During group work, can all of my students easily hear my directions?
- How easily can students access necessary materials during group work?
- Can I easily move through the classroom to check on individual groups of students?
- Does the classroom layout encourage focused work from various groups?
- Is there a place where I can meet with small groups of students during individual seatwork?
- Are there any locations in which I do not want students to congregate during group work?

Learning Centers

When designing the physical layout of the classroom, a teacher should consider the location of learning centers, if necessary. This is most often a concern for elementary school teachers, and typically, the teacher will want to place learning centers away from major traffic patterns. A learning center should be easily monitored from all parts of the room and should be close to books, resources, and other materials that may be required to complete tasks at the center. Furthermore, the learning centers should be isolated enough that students can work within the learning centers and focus on the task at hand without being distracted by other students.

Teacher Actions

- Placing centers away from major traffic patterns
- Placing centers where he or she can monitor them at all times
- Placing centers where students can easily access required materials and resources

Desired Student Responses

- Working effectively and efficiently at learning centers
- Easily accessing required materials and resources at learning centers

Extra Support

- Providing illustrated directions at each learning center showing where materials are, what the procedure for the center is, and what the center should look like before students leave it

Extension

- Asking students to evaluate centers for ease of access to supplies, clarity of directions for the center activity, and their ability to focus while at the center

Technology Tips

- Use a video recording device to record students as they access learning centers and then watch the footage to gauge the effectiveness of their locations and make changes as necessary.

Considerations for Learning Centers

A teacher can use the following questions when setting up learning centers in the classroom.

- How will students use the learning centers?
- How many learning centers are needed?
- How are the learning centers affected by the primary patterns of movement around the class?
- Should some centers be close to particular books, materials, or other resources?
- Can I monitor students in learning centers, regardless of where I am in the room?
- Will the placement of the learning centers help students focus on the task at hand?

Computers and Technology Equipment

In most classrooms, computers and technology are integral parts of the learning environment. Most classrooms have an overhead projector or interactive whiteboard for whole-class instruction. Many classrooms have their own computer or computer stations to which students have access. When designing the physical layout of a classroom, the teacher should consider the various technologies in his or her classroom, their purposes, and how students make use of them. A teacher can then use these considerations to inform the placement of computers and technology equipment. For example, a teacher who regularly uses an overhead projector might place it so that it can be easily accessed for whole-class instruction, while the same teacher might place the classroom printer off to the side of the room, as it is less frequently used.

Teacher Actions

- Placing technology equipment away from major traffic patterns
- Placing technology equipment where it is easy to use
- Placing computers where he or she can monitor them at all times

Desired Student Responses

- Using technology equipment effectively and efficiently
- Following school and classroom guidelines while using technology equipment

Extra Support

- Providing illustrated directions for each computer or piece of technology equipment showing where materials are, what the procedures for using the equipment are, and what the technology equipment area should look like before students leave it

Extension

- Asking students to evaluate computer and technology equipment areas for ease of access, clarity of expectations, and their ability to focus while working with the technology equipment

Considerations for Computer and Technology Equipment

A teacher can use the following questions when setting up computer and technology equipment.

- How does technology play a role in instruction (for example, overhead projectors and computer access)?
- Does each student have a clear line of sight to the projector or computer display?
- Are computer and technology equipment physically close to their accessories?
- Do computer and technology equipment in the classroom disrupt traffic patterns when they are in use or when they are stored?
- Are computers and technology equipment in a location where I can monitor students' use of them?
- Do I have guidelines posted about appropriate use of computer and technology equipment?
- Are computer and technology equipment close to an adequate power source?
- Does the computer and technology equipment in my classroom distract students?

Lab Equipment and Supplies

Though this may not be relevant to all educators, most science teachers will have to consider effective storage and use of lab equipment and supplies. When making these decisions, the teacher should consider student safety, protection for the equipment, and ease of access and use for students. In particular, some lab equipment and supplies—such as living and preserved animal and plant specimens, chemicals, glassware, and so on—require special considerations, especially concerning safety. Furthermore, many science classrooms are designed as a laboratory, which limits the teacher in terms of the locations of specialized equipment and spaces for instruction. If this is the case, the teacher should create a separate lecture area so that students are not near the laboratory equipment unnecessarily, if possible.

Teacher Actions

- Placing lab equipment and supplies in safe areas
- Placing lab equipment and supplies where students can easily access them

Desired Student Responses

- Accessing lab equipment and supplies easily
- Following classroom guidelines for using lab equipment and supplies

Extra Support

- Providing illustrated directions for each area where lab equipment and supplies are stored showing where specific materials are, the procedure for handling and using equipment, and how equipment and supplies should look when returned to storage

Extension

- Asking students to evaluate storage areas for lab equipment and supplies for ease of access, clarity of directions, and their ability to find what they need

Considerations for Lab Equipment and Supplies

A teacher can use the following questions when setting up lab equipment and supplies.

- How and with what frequency will students use specific lab equipment and supplies?
- Do certain materials and equipment require special placement for safety reasons (for example, chemicals or lab equipment)?
- Are certain materials and equipment permanent fixtures? If so, how does this affect my classroom design?
- How do I store my lab equipment and supplies? Does this protect both students and the equipment?
- How accessible are lab equipment and supplies?
- Do I have a separate space for instruction so that students are not near lab equipment unnecessarily?
- Have I considered the lab equipment and supplies needed for specific units or lessons? Do I order supplies in a timely manner?
- In case of an emergency, does this layout impede or facilitate proper safety protocols?
- Do I have rules and guidelines posted around the classroom that encourage safe use of lab equipment and supplies?

Classroom Libraries

The purpose of classroom libraries is to support student learning; therefore, they should be accessible to students. The teacher should place libraries where they will provide support for individual, small-group, and whole-group learning activities. Students should be able to easily access the classroom library, but bookshelves should not cause traffic jams or create blind spots where students can be out of view of the teacher. The teacher can also consider the contents of his or her classroom library, the way in which the books are organized, and systems for ensuring that books are returned to the bookshelves.

Teacher Actions

- Placing bookshelves where students can easily access them
- Creating a system to keep bookshelves organized

Desired Student Responses

- Accessing resources on bookshelves easily
- Knowing where to find specific resources in the classroom
- Following procedures for returning and organizing books

Extra Support

- Use color coding or pictures to indicate books on specific topics, materials for specific projects, or where books should be returned to on the shelves

Extension

- Asking students to write and display reviews of books they recently read or have enjoyed in the past

Suggestions for Classroom Libraries

Acquiring Books

When building a classroom library, teachers should consider what the library already has and how they can build upon the existing library. This may include seeking out books on specific topics or in specific genres. Furthermore, teachers should keep in mind students' ages and reading levels as well as the appropriateness of content. Teachers do not need to go out and purchase brand new books. Rather, they can add to a classroom library on a relatively low budget using the following resources.

- Thrift stores
- Garage and estate sales
- Library sales
- ebay.com
- bookoutlet.com
- Soliciting donations from parents and community members

Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom

Cataloging and Organizing Books

1. Ensure that your name is in every book. Write or stamp your name and school on one of the first or last few pages of each book as well as along the side of pages if possible.
2. Consider how the classroom library will be organized. You may choose to organize books by author, topic, genre, or reading level.
3. Once an organization structure is decided upon, sort books in the library. This may take several tries if you are organizing by topic, genre, or reading level, as there may be some books that defy classification initially. It may help to label books based upon their classifications to facilitate ease of reshelving books.
4. Place the books in the library. Create a key that explains the library's system of organization clearly or post an explanation near the bookshelves.

Accessing Books

Consider how students will access books in the library using the following questions.

- Will students be allowed to bring books home? If yes, for how long?
- How will students check out books?
- What sort of system will be in place to keep track of which student has what book?
- How will students return books?
- Will students be responsible for reshelving books they have checked out or will this be a classroom job?
- What is the proper way to handle books? What happens if students are not respectful of the books in the library?
- What will be my policy if a student keeps a book for too long? What if a student loses a book?
- How will I teach students how to use the classroom library?
- What visual resources will I provide to help students access books in the library correctly?

Involving Students in the Design Process

Although many teachers arrange the classroom before students arrive for the first day of class, asking students to be involved in the design process can help them feel invested and comfortable as they work in and move around the classroom. The teacher may informally poll students to solicit their feedback about the classroom décor and the organization of the room or formally survey them. If a teacher does choose to involve students in the design process, he or she should use their input to make changes—a teacher who asks for student input but then ignores it may make students feel as though he or she does not care about their opinions.

Teacher Actions

- Soliciting feedback from students about classroom décor and organization
- Incorporating student feedback into changes to the classroom décor and organization

Desired Student Responses

- Providing comments and suggestions about classroom décor and organization
- Feeling welcome in the classroom
- Easily navigating the classroom

Extra Support

- Providing students with options for changes to the classroom and having students vote

Extension

- Having groups of students design their ideal classrooms and present these designs to stimulate discussion

Technology Tips

- Use polling technologies to have students vote on their preference for classroom design (for example, let students vote on the arrangement of student desks).

Suggestions for Involving Students in the Design Process

A teacher can involve students in the design process of the classroom in the following ways.

- Ask students to complete the Student Survey for Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom on page 28 of this folio. Use the results to inform changes to the physical layout of the classroom. A teacher can also review the results, identify patterns in the responses, and ask the class directly about their answers.
- Facilitate a class discussion on the physical layout of the classroom. Solicit positive and negative comments from students as well as changes they would make to the classroom. Use this discussion to inform changes to the physical layout of the classroom.

Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom

- Informally ask students about the physical layout of the classroom before class starts or during transitions. A teacher could focus these questions to address specific elements of the classroom. For example, a teacher might ask a few students before the period starts, “I’m thinking about rearranging the desks in the classroom. How do you think I should do it?”
- Create a list of possible changes to the classroom layout and run each one by the class. Take comments and suggestions from students. Consider these comments to create a new list of modifications to the classroom layout. Have the class vote on each of the changes.
- Ask students to bring in or create their own decorations for the classroom. Post these decorations and acknowledge the students who brought them in.

REPRODUCIBLES

Teachers can use the following reproducibles to monitor their implementation of this element. The reproducible titled Tracking Progress Over Time helps teachers set goals related to their proficiency with this element and track their progress toward these goals over the course of a unit, semester, or year. Tracking Teacher Actions and Tracking Student Responses allow observers in classrooms to monitor specific teacher and student behavior related to this element. Teachers themselves can also use the Tracking Student Responses reproducible to document instances of student behaviors during class. The Strategy Reflection Log provides teachers a space to write down their thoughts and reflect on the implementation process for specific strategies related to this element. Finally, this section provides both a student survey and a teacher survey, the results of which provide feedback about teachers' proficiency with this element.

Tracking Progress Over Time

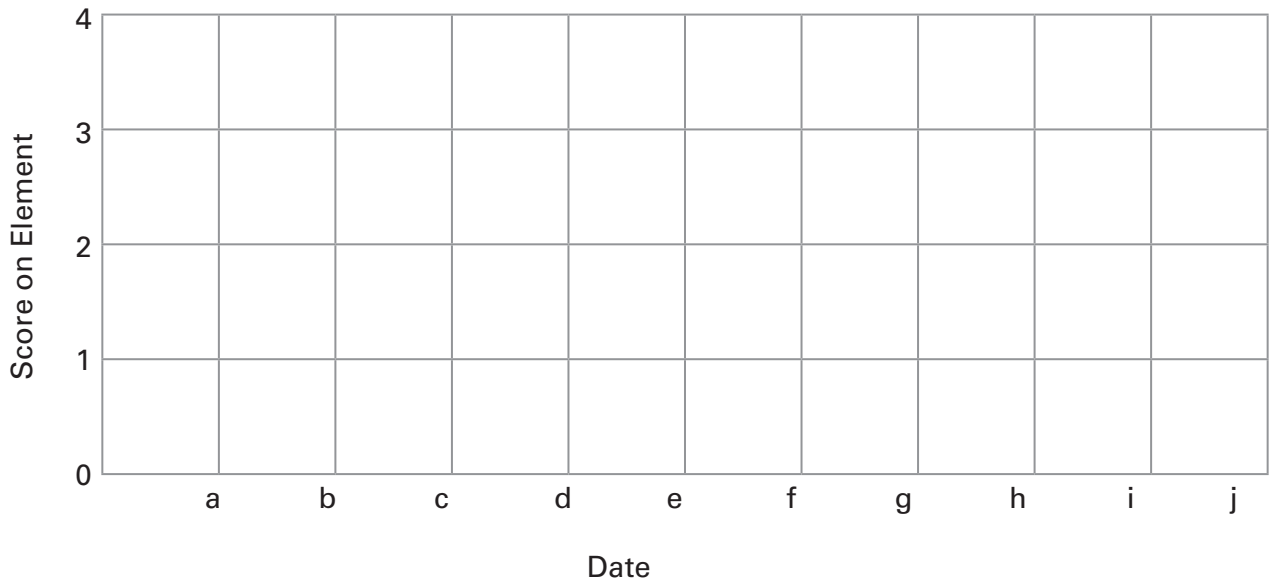
Use this worksheet to set a goal for your use of this element, make a plan for increasing your mastery, and chart your progress toward your goal.

Element: _____

Initial Score: _____

Goal Score: _____ by _____ (date)

Specific things I am going to do to improve: _____



a. _____

f. _____

b. _____

g. _____

c. _____

h. _____

d. _____

i. _____

e. _____

j. _____

Tracking Teacher Actions

During an observation, the observer can use this form to record the teacher's usage of strategies related to the element of organizing the physical layout of the classroom.

Observation Date and Time: _____ Length of Observation: _____

Check Strategies You Intend to Use	Strategies	Description of What Was Observed
	Classroom Décor	
	Displaying Student Work	
	Classroom Materials	
	Teacher's Desk	
	Student Desks	
	Areas for Whole-Group Instruction	
	Areas for Group Work	
	Learning Centers	

	Computers and Technology Equipment	
	Lab Equipment and Supplies	
	Classroom Libraries	
	Involving Students in the Design Process	
	Other:	
	Other:	

Tracking Student Responses

A teacher or observer can use this worksheet to record instances of student behavior to inform planning and implementation of strategies associated with organizing the physical layout of the classroom. Any item followed by an asterisk is an example of undesirable behavior related to the element; the teacher should look for a decrease in the number of instances of these items.

Observation Date and Time: _____ Length of Observation: _____

Behavior	Number of Instances
Easily moving around the classroom	
Having trouble moving around the room*	
Easily accessing materials	
Having difficulty finding or getting materials*	
Referring to posted resources	
Easily transitioning between whole-group instruction and group work	
Focusing during instruction	
Noticing changes to the classroom	
Easily making eye contact with the teacher	
Being unable to see the teacher or the board*	
Providing suggestions or comments about the physical layout of the classroom	
Other:	
Other:	

Strategy Reflection Log

Use this worksheet to select a strategy, set a goal, and reflect on your use of that strategy.

Element: _____

Strategy: _____

Goal: _____

Date	How did it go?

Student Survey for Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom

1. My classroom is organized for learning.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree
Nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

2. My classroom is well-organized; I don't trip over things and it doesn't feel crowded.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree
Nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

3. I can always see and hear the teacher, and I can see everything that he or she shows us during class.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree
Nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

4. I can find the materials that I need in my classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree
Nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

5. The things that my teacher displays on the walls of my classroom help me learn.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree
Nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

6. When I come into my classroom, it makes me feel excited about learning.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree
Nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Teacher Survey for Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom

1. The physical layout of the classroom has clear traffic patterns.

Often Sometimes Rarely Never I don't know

2. The physical layout of the classroom provides easy access to materials and centers.

Often Sometimes Rarely Never I don't know

3. I display student work in the classroom.

Often Sometimes Rarely Never I don't know

4. Classroom decorations relate to the current content being taught.

Often Sometimes Rarely Never I don't know

5. The physical layout of the classroom allows me to monitor students.

Often Sometimes Rarely Never I don't know

6. I have designated areas for whole-group instruction and group work.

Often Sometimes Rarely Never I don't know

7. I involve students in the design of the classroom.

Often Sometimes Rarely Never I don't know