

New Hampshire Partners for Healthy Schools

Tips for Setting up your classroom

1. Make a map of your classroom

- a. Note where the air supply and return vents are in your classroom and any heating or cooling units. You want to make sure these aren't blocked. Have the facilities manager or custodian help you identify these things. Talk to them about how these systems work and what you can do to make sure they are working properly in your room. Proper ventilation is key to good air quality. Don't put books on top of the ventilation unit or heating and cooling units!!
- b. Note if there is evidence of excess moisture. Look for stained ceiling tiles, wet/damp windowsills, and leaks under sinks. If you find excess moisture, report the problem to the facilities manager or custodian.
- c. Identify the different stations/ work areas you want to create (i.e., reading area,) and map where they will go. Make sure none of these areas will hinder the heating, cooling, and ventilation systems. After you set up your classroom, have the facilities manager check to see that your stations/ work areas aren't blocking the ventilation system.

2. Design your classroom so that it is easy to clean

- a. Store as many materials as possible in clear plastic bins that can be easily wiped off and labeled
- b. Avoid excess clutter. As you put things back in your room consider whether or not you've used the item in the last year. If you haven't, then get rid of it or loan it to a teacher who may be able to use it. If it's something that you've used in the past but now have something better that serves the same or similar function, then you no longer need it. Clutter can have a negative impact on your mood and ability to concentrate; the same is true for your students. More isn't always better. Also keep in mind that it is hard to argue that you lack books or other supplies when your classroom is spilling over with stuff; empty shelves are more persuasive. If you inherited something from a previous teacher, it doesn't mean you have to keep it!!!
- c. Allow only vinyl covered stuffed chairs and sofas in your classroom. These can be easily wiped down. Fabric furniture and pillows collect dust, harbor dust mites, and collect germs and are hard to clean.
- d. Store all food in plastic containers to keep any critters out.

3. Organize your materials

- a. Use clear plastic bins for storing items
- b. Use three ring binders to store papers according to theme/subject or better yet scan materials and only keep electronic files.
- c. Avoid having piles on your desk or other areas of your room. Identify where you will keep homework assignments and other items that tend to pile up.
- d. Consider setting up a schedule to rotate what you have available to students. For example, if you have a story corner only put 1/2 or 1/3 of the books you have out and then switch them 2 or 3 times a year. This not only gives you an opportunity to clean this space a couple times a year but will also rejuvenate interest. This can be done with games, toys, and bulletin boards as well.



4. Ordering supplies

- a. Use only low-emission markers and art supplies.
- b. Check with custodians to see if they have cleaning supplies that have been approved for use during school hours. Microfiber cloths or wet wipe disposable cloths are your best choices if cleaning needs to take place during school hours. Avoid any type of spray – do not use them even when kids are out to lunch or at recess because they stay in the air long after they are used. Do not bring cleaning chemicals from home.
- c. When you buy something new for your classroom, try to get rid of something. For example, when you buy new markers, get rid of the old ones.

5. Set a cleaning schedule

- a. Daily clean up- Have students stack chairs, pick up large pieces of paper and other debris, and put the trash cans by the door. This will help ensure your room gets properly vacuumed and cleaned in the evening.
- b. Dusting- Typically, maintenance budgets will not support regular dusting of classrooms. Try to wet wipe excessive dust from classroom surfaces at least once a week. Encourage students and/or parents to assist in this effort to reduce allergy “triggers” that could impact health. Again you don’t need to use chemicals. Try using microfiber cloths or a damp cloth.
- c. Laundry- If you have stuffed animals, curtains, or other fabric in the classroom, set a schedule for washing them. These items collect dust, dust mites, and can harbor germs. Depending on their use you may want to wash them weekly or monthly.
- d. Wall and ceiling decorations – Student art and decorations should not have an opportunity to become dust collectors. Try not to leave these items in the classroom for more than a month.
- e. Refrigerator and other appliances- Depending on their use you may want to wash them monthly or quarterly.
- f. Just prior to winter and spring break have your students help you thoroughly wipe down your classroom (you don’t need to use chemicals just a damp cloth or microfiber cloth).

If you follow these tips, you will create a clean, healthy, clutter-free classroom.

Have a great year!!!!

