

Thursday, August 31, 2006

Quick Tips

Develop or Upgrade your Classroom Library

Make a classroom library a focal point in your classroom, and partition the area in some way from the rest of the room. The space should be large enough to accommodate five or six students in a comfortable manner. How do you make the space comfortable? Carpets Beanbag Furniture Soft Chairs Pillows You also need shelves and an organizational system. There is no "best way" to organize the library, but you (or preferably the student librarian) need/s to be able to put books back in their place each time.

You also need to be able to display books in two ways.

With the spines facing outward (like regular book shelves for most of the books) With the cover visible (especially covers with exciting art work)

Other display tricks are: Staggered displays Hang small books from clothes pins from lines stretched between two points, or from lines dropped from the ceiling Modular storage such as crates, cubes, etc.

Decorations can include: Posters Student art (particularly theme and book related art) Puppets and stuffed animals (for younger students) Your library needs about five to eight books per student. This translates to 160 books for a class of 20 students.

When constrained by the volume of your teacher's pay, it can take several years to build a classroom library, But, you do not need to purchase all these books at retail prices. Sources for classroom library books include: Flea Markets Garage/ Lawn/ Yard Sales Bound classroom anthologies Gifts Scrounged books from teachers who are leaving eBay Lots (Note: purchasing individual books on eBay(TM) is inexpensive, but shipping costs increase the final price) Purchased from any district classroom budget allotment (if these still exist for your district) District grants Donations from churches and civic groups Purchase of books from your local library (Public libraries often sell donated and pulled-from-circulation books at affordable prices)

But, there should be fun, exciting, stimulating books in your classroom library; not just non-fiction titles. And, make sure that the books span a range of reading levels, i.e., some books (Baby Bear Books) will be easier to read, some books (Papa and Mama Bear Books) will be a challenge for your students to read, and most books (Teacher Bear Books) will be just about right.

Books do not need to be the only materials that are available in your classroom library. Tapes, CDs and DVDs may also be available, particularly if you have the equipment for playback of these items.

Rules for the use of the classroom library need to be similar to that of a campus or public library, i.e., quiet and relaxed enjoyment in a pleasant and comfortable atmosphere. You will also have to set rules about taking books home, or allowing students to store a book at their desk for a few days. Very few students will steal a book, but some students will misplace (and forget about) a book. Decide how much loss you are comfortable with, but expect that your losses will be small.

Even young children can figure out that if all the books were to disappear from the classroom library, then the teacher will find something less delightful for them to participate in. It is to everyone's benefit to keep this happy space clean, neat and well furnished

Yes, a classroom library gobbles up a substantial amount of classroom real estate, but, dedicating space for a classroom library is worth the investment.

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