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Setting up for Writing Workshop

By Steve W. Dunn



Introduction

As the school year begins, teachers get busy setting up classrooms for the new beginnings. Often, I set up the student desks first and tried to fit other areas with the space that was left. I was doing it backward! I should set up all the areas (whole group, small group, library, etc.) first and then fit the desk/tables with the space that is left. Since almost all of my instruction is done in the whole group, it is important to set this space up carefully so that students are not sitting on top of one another. This would help with better flow for the students and a less cramped space for whole group instruction (the heart of the classroom).

Meeting Areas

Have a whole group meeting area for focus lessons and sharing. This is important because children attend better when they are in close proximity.

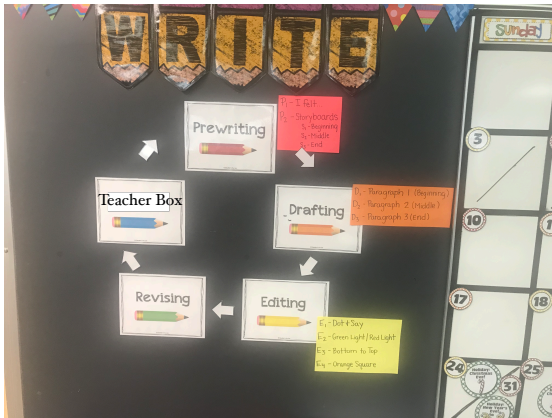
Have a small group table for homogeneous instruction.

What you need in whole group/small group area

Make sure that you have everything you need in the teaching areas. Often teachers put the whole group and small group area together since they need the same materials in each area.

Consider:

- Do I have a teaching easel or chart rack for writing?
- Do I have enough chart paper?
- Do I have different color markers, highlighter tape, scotch tape, pins for hanging up posters, etc., within reach?
- Do I have an area nearby that I can hang posters so that I can refer to them during focus lessons?
- Are my assessment tools by my small group area?
- Do I have class sets of whiteboards, markers, and erasers?
- Do I have resource materials close by, such as a personal word wall, fine tip markers for editing, paper clips, staplers, etc.?
- Do I have a smart board, document camera, other technology?



Library

This can be set up in numerous ways, however, remember this is where book choice should be the major consideration. Students who have an interest in a topic (especially nonfiction) can usually read at a higher level because of their background knowledge. Make sure there is comfortable seating within the library so that students can ‘curl up’ with a great book.

Wall Space for Posters and Word Wall

Have space to place the anchor posters and teacher examples from focus lessons. In addition, have space for a word wall (kindergarten through 2nd grade) or vocabulary/spelling wall(2nd

grade on up). If you do not have room for a word wall, tape a word list inside the writing folder and use the aid during the focus lesson. If possible, have these spaces by the whole group area so that teacher and students can refer to them during the focus lessons.

Graphic Organizers Storage

Have a place for the graphic organizers so children do not have to ask you for what they need.

Computers

Programs like Microsoft Word/Seesaw/Pages can be used for publishing and checking spelling. *In order for the spell check to work, you must have enough phonemes within the word for the computer to suggest what word you are attempting.* In addition, it can be used to recommend synonyms.

Table Bins

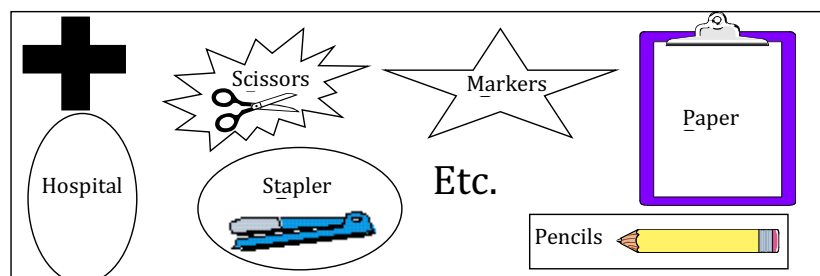
Have bins for each table that include the writing folders, extra pencils, electronic dictionary, thesaurus, scissors, tape, stapler, staple remover, editing tools (colored pencils), small pencil sharpener, paper, etc.

Story Storage

So that the folders do not get overstuffed, have a file folder for each child in a storage box or file cabinet where children can store the work that they may return to later.

Resource Table/Shelf

Have a resource table with the supplies that kids will need during writing workshop. Cover the table with butcher paper so

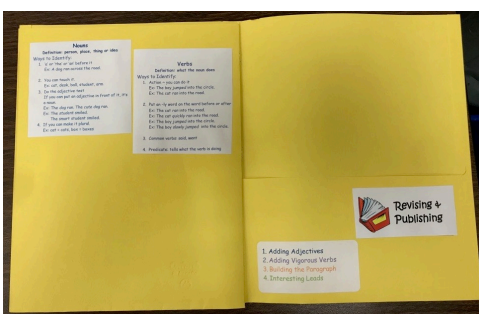
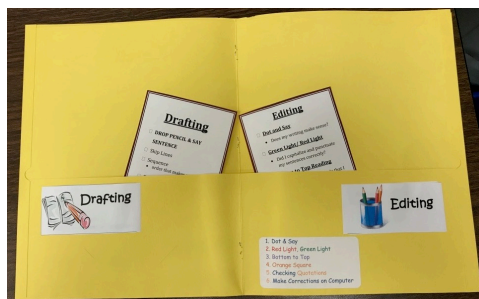
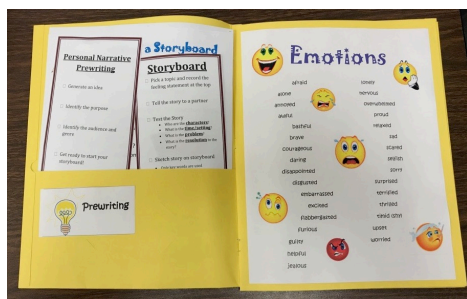
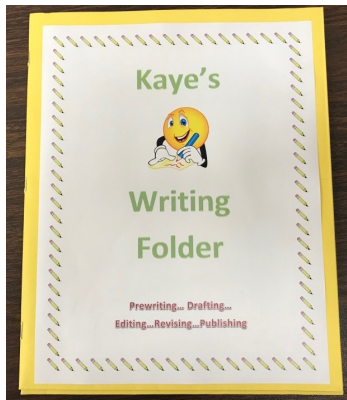


you can draw where things should be housed. Have a special

basket, called your hospital, for supplies that are broken or unusable. Include extra pencils, electronic tools scissors, tape, stapler, staple remover, editing tools (colored pencils), a small pencil sharpener, paper, etc.

Writing Folders/Binders

Have a four-pocket file folder for students' current writings. Label each pocket (an example is given below).



<i>Prewriting</i>	<i>Drafting</i>	<i>Editing</i>	<i>Revising/ Publishing</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick topic • Choose audience • Identify genre • Build background using character and setting • Tell story to partner • Test story by asking partner questions • Sketch story on storyboard • Have partner tell story back to you using the storyboard • Write a working title 	<p>When I draft, I...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • skip lines • think about sequence • reread • refer to the storyboard • circle anything that doesn't look right or that I need to sound out • question what the reader thinks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dot and Say • Green Light/ Red Light • Word Wall Words (K-1) • Orange Square/Sticky Note • Bottom to Top Reading • Say, Syllabicate and Stretch 	<p>Add as you introduce strategies</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building the Problem • Adding Vigorous Verbs • Developing the Character • Developing the Setting • Using Figurative Language

In editing and revision, this list should be added to throughout the year as assessment indicates students are capable.

Avoiding Log Jam

If you use tables instead of desks, make sure writing folders/binders, textbooks or content materials are in piles along the walls of the room. Separate them so that student helpers do not end up in a log jam because they are waiting in a line to retrieve materials.