

## Module A: #1. Arranging the Physical Environment

### Evaluating the Physical Organization of the Classroom: Setting the Stage

Use the guidelines listed in the following table to evaluate the organization of your classroom.

1. Have you designated areas for specific activities (e.g., whole group instruction, small group instruction, class gatherings on rug, free-choice area, quiet reading area, computer lab)?	Yes No
2. In instructional areas, are students in close proximity to the teacher?	Yes No
3. Have you created seating charts and assigned seats?	Yes No
4. In instructional areas, are students facing the teacher?	Yes No
5. During instruction, can students easily share answers with partners or team members?	Yes No
6. Have you arranged your instructional materials for easy retrieval?	Yes No
7. Are the student materials needed during instruction or independent work easily retrievable?	Yes No
8. Have students been taught organization skills (e.g., notebooks, folders, assignment calendar)?	Yes No
9. Can you move quickly and easily around the room, monitoring students without interference of physical barriers?	Yes No
10. Can you see all parts of the room and all students?	Yes No
11. Have you displayed material on the classroom walls that supports instruction (e.g., class calendar, vocabulary words, strategy posters, rubrics, reference material, rule/guideline poster, notices)?	Yes No
12. Have you displayed student work?	Yes No
13. Is your classroom orderly?	Yes No

Archer, Anita L., & Hughes, Charles A. (2011) Explicit Instruction, The Guilford Press, NY

### Consider the following when designing the environment in your classroom:

A well-arranged classroom environment is one way to effectively manage instruction. It creates a climate conducive to learning with clear spaces that act as visual prompts for behavior. With routine spaces for learning, quiet time, social time, etc. students are able to engage with the environment in predictable ways and therefore demonstrate less inappropriate behavior. For instance, classrooms will contain a high-traffic area around commonly shared resources and spaces for teacher-led instruction or independent work. There should be areas for large and small group activities that set the stage for specific kinds interactions between students and teacher and spaces to store items, computers, or audio-visual equipment.

The spatial structure of the classroom refers to:

- how students are seated,
- where the students and teacher are in relation to one another,
- how classroom members move around the room, and
- the overall sense of atmosphere and order.

The research on classroom environments suggests that classrooms should be:

- organized to accommodate a variety of activities throughout the day and to meet the teacher's instructional goals (Savage, 1999; Weinstein, 1992) and
- set up to set the stage for the teacher to address the academic, social, and emotional needs of students (MacAulay, 1990).

The standards for determining which spatial lay-out is most appropriate to fulfill these functions include:

- ways to maximize the teacher's ability to see and be seen by all his or her students;
- facilitate ease of movement throughout the classroom;
- minimize distractions so that students are best able to actively engage in academics; provide each student and the teacher with his or her own personal space; and ensuring that each student can see presentations and materials posted in the classroom.

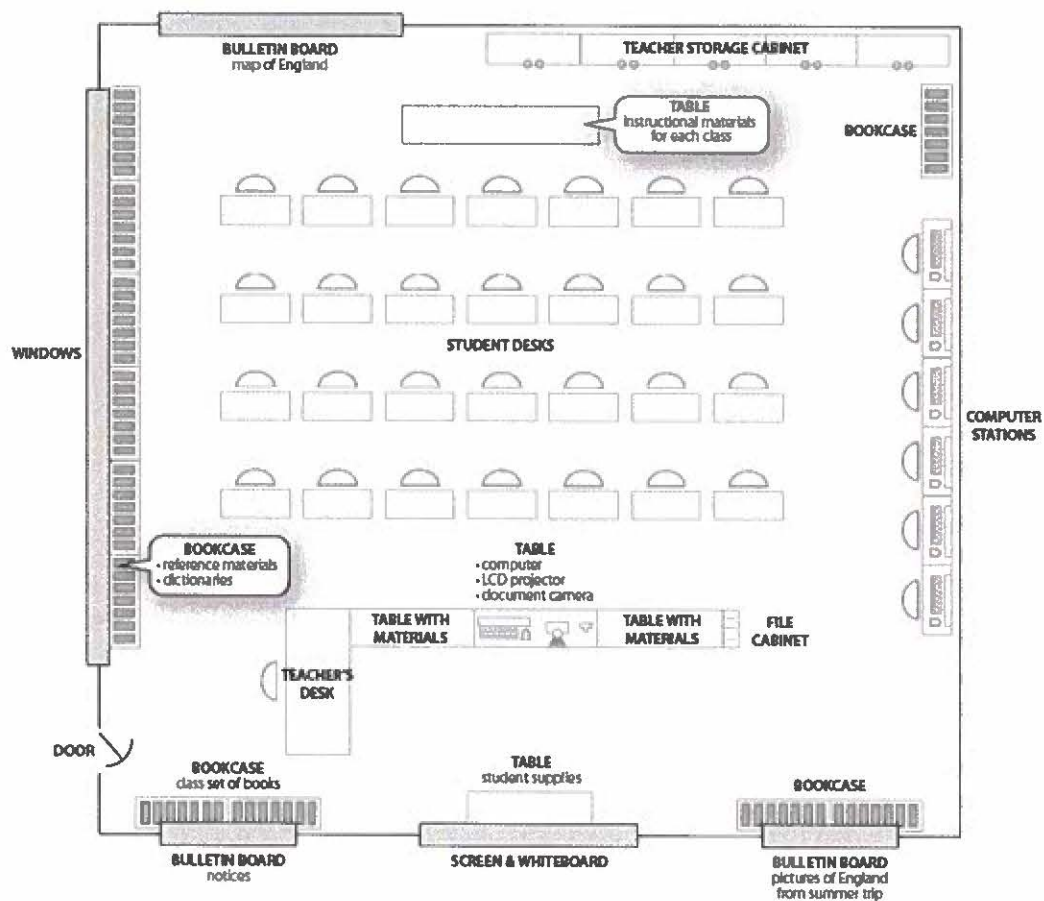
A classroom for students with learning/behavior challenges may have:

- separate quiet spaces where a student can cool down or work independently;
- personal spaces that each student can call his or her own;
- limit visual and auditory stimulation that may distract students with attention and behavior challenges;
- strategically place students who need additional behavioral supports in close proximity to the teacher's desk to facilitate teacher delivery of positive statements when appropriate behaviors are exhibited and to monitor and respond to student problem behavior;

- seating students in rows facilitates on task behavior and academic learning; whereas more open arrangements, such as clusters, facilitate social exchanges among students;
- it is useful to strategically arrange the classroom to limit student contact in high traffic areas, such as the space surrounding the pencil sharpener and wastebasket, and instructional areas; and, to seat students who are more easily distracted farther away from high-traffic areas;
- all students should have a clear view of the teacher and vice versa, at all times;
- the traffic pattern in the classroom should allow the teacher to be in close physical proximity to students who need more intensive supports;
- finally, it is advantageous to keep the classroom orderly and well organized.

### Considerations:

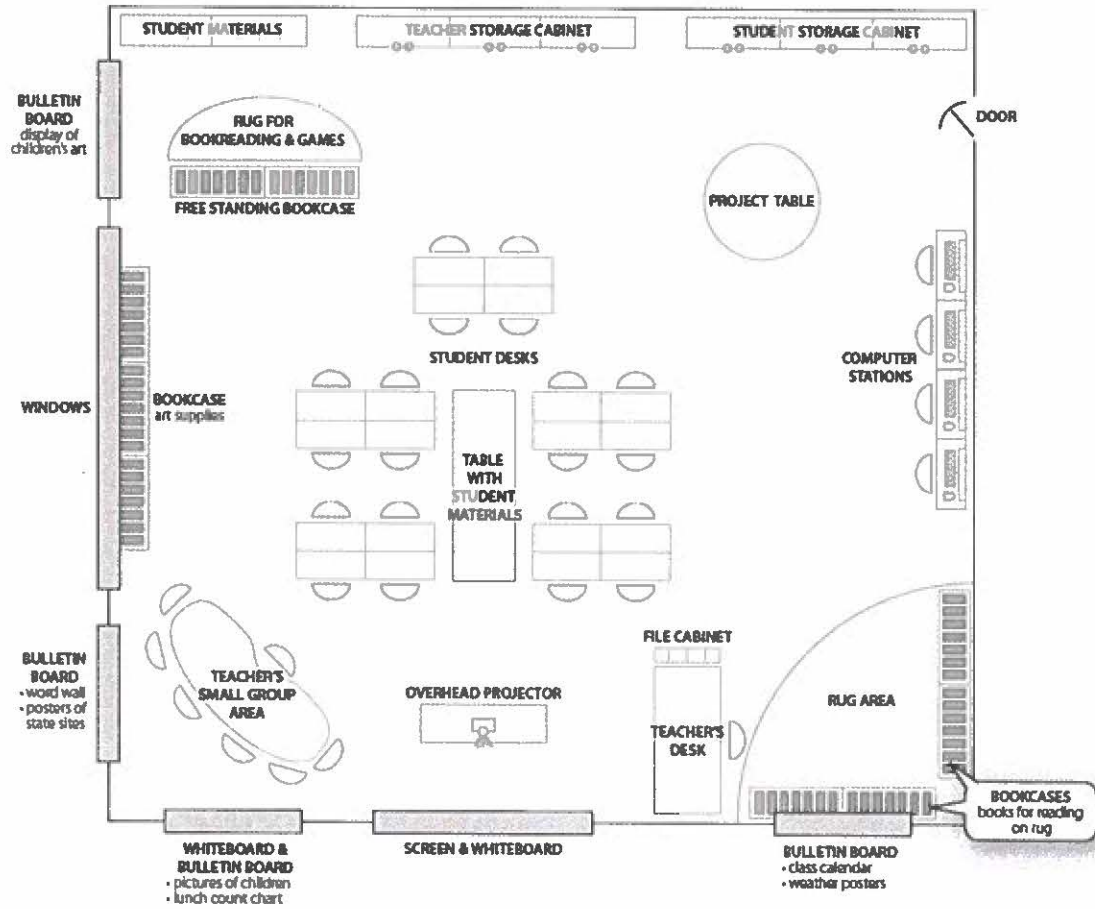
- ? How many students will you have in the room at one time?
- ? How should student desks/seats be grouped?
- ? What kinds of activities will be taking place in your classroom and where will they take place? Will student desk arrangement change to best suit activity?
- ? How is movement in the classroom to be regulated? High traffic areas?
- ? What can you do to create a sense of well-being and safety for your students in your classroom?
- ? Does the physical arrangement of the classroom maximize the opportunity for positive teacher–student interaction while minimizing the possibility for disruptions? Teacher desk placement? Clutter or teacher view obstructed?



**Secondary Language Arts Classroom – Non-Example**

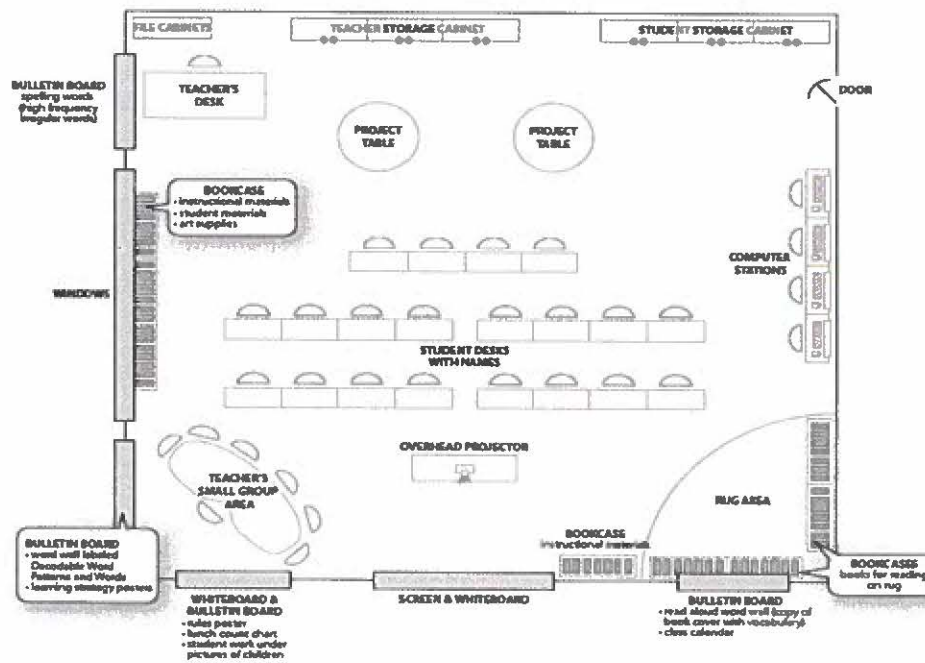
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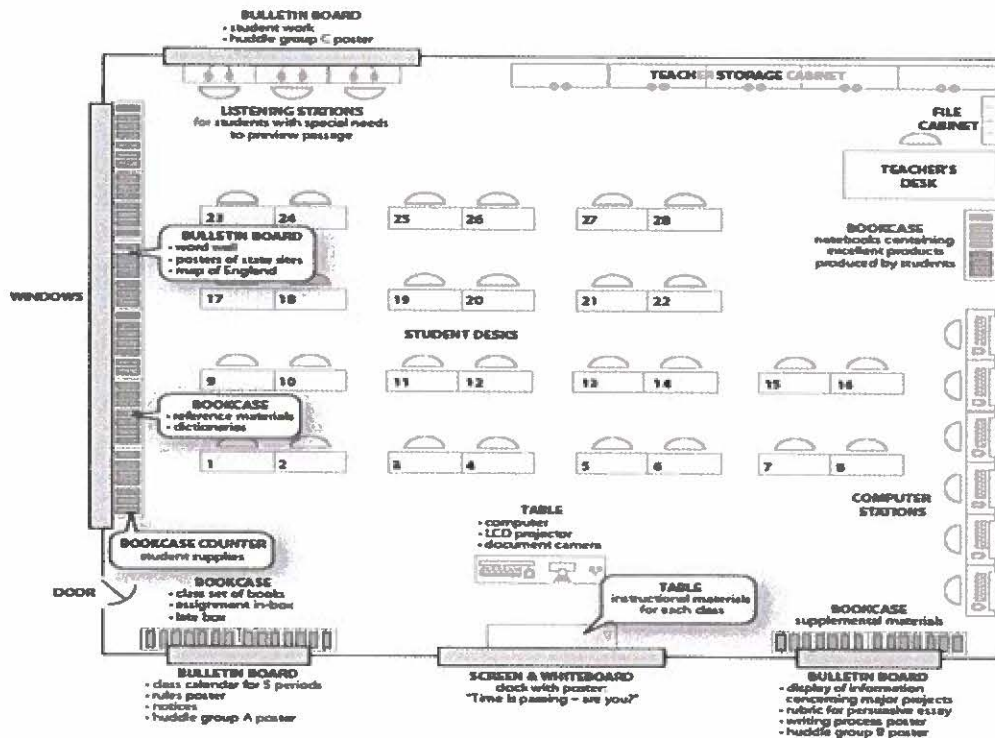


**Primary Classroom – Non-Example**

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**Primary Classroom – Example**



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