

## DEPARTMENT NEWS

### Donor Choose

If you aren't familiar yet, log on and browse through the Donors Choose site: <https://www.donorschoose.org/> and see the tremendous amount of requests put in by educator across the US. Donors Choose allows teachers to crowd-source efforts to gain materials and tools to use in their classrooms!

Please consider creating your own Donors Choose project to post. Last year, during the #BestSchoolDay campaign headed by Stephen Colbert, many teachers across our network had their projects fully-funded by donors!

Check out a few of the projects currently listed on Donors Choose by some of our primary teachers!

Ms. Snoddy (HSA Toledo): Hands-On Manipulatives

<https://www.donorschoose.org/we-teach/3715593/?active=true>

Ms. Hony (HSA Cincinnati): Interactive Learning

<https://www.donorschoose.org/project/interactive-learning/2133660/>

Ms. Palmer (IMSA West): Desperately Seeking  
Technology

<https://www.donorschoose.org/project/desperately-seeking-technology/2244840/>

I'll also be putting together something that recognizes what Donors Choose has done and will do for our students. Please send information and the links to your projects to [sajovec@conceptschoools.org](mailto:sajovec@conceptschoools.org)!

### Contact Information:

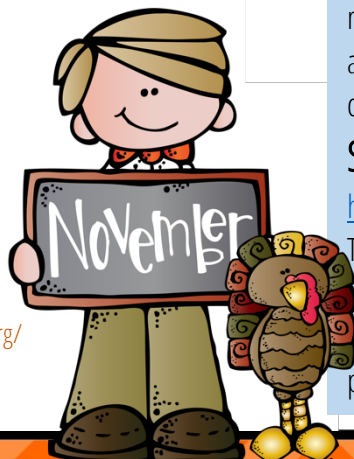
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## FREE?!?!?

### Blended Learning

Educators have been looking for ways to meet the vast needs of students in their classroom. Blended learning, with its mix of technology and traditional face-to-face instruction, is a great approach. Blended learning combines classroom learning with online learning, in which students can, in part, control the time, pace, and place of their learning. There are a few free tool teachers can integrate into their classroom instruction as an entry point into using Blended Learning:

### ABC Mouse

<https://www.abcmouse.com/teachers>

ABC Mouse allows teachers to create a free account for their classroom. One of the best features is that ABC Mouse is extremely little-kid friendly so that even your youngest student can find something to challenge them. Students can freely explore but teachers can also assign student(s) specific lessons to better target student-need.

### Scoopad

<https://www.scoopad.com/>

Since Scoopad is an adaptive platform, student work on the very specific skills they need. Teachers can create free accounts for their students to use in both the classroom and at home. The free version has students work within their current grade level bands; the paid versions allow students to work at any grade level.

### Prodigy

Prodigy is one of the coolest sites for students to work on their math. It's very much like playing a video game but teachers are able to set parameters for learning. Students also like that they can "battle" one another on certain challenges.

### Splashmath

<https://www.splashmath.com/>

This app/platform does a great job of integrating the Common Core Standards with a fun and visual way to practice those crucial math skills. In this clever game-like format, kids can get that extra practice in while having a great time!

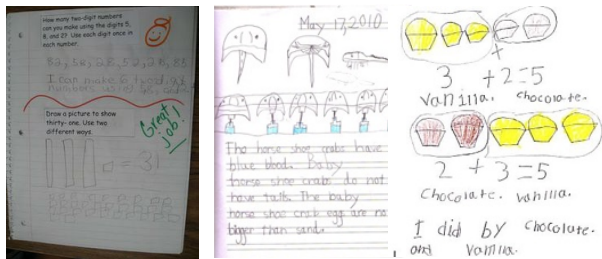
# Alternatives to “The Worksheet”

We’ve all heard the comment “students are ‘worksheeted’ to death.” There are so many underlying issues to why we resort to worksheets as an educational tool but one of the most mentioned reasons are that they are just easier to manage. Let’s face it! It’s much easier to pop a pre-made worksheet into the copier than to pass out manipulatives.

Now let’s not throw the baby out with the bathwater!; worksheets are still a great way to have students practice the key skills covered in class. It’s all about balance. By simply blending some of the ideas listed below with your current practices, you can provide an engaging as well as manageable learning environment in your classroom.

## JOURNALS

One of the easiest, cheapest and most manageable ways to have students complete work without a “worksheet” is to just let them write! Consider this, how many hand out daily “morning work” (aka-worksheet)? Instead, write a simple daily prompt on your classroom whiteboard and have students respond in their journals.



Journals aren’t just limited to the traditional writing prompt. For instance, you can write a prompt something like this “How many different ways can you make 10? Draw and write about this in math terms.” Have students who can’t quite work from a prompt on the board? Print out the prompts on several small strips and have students quickly glue them in their journals.

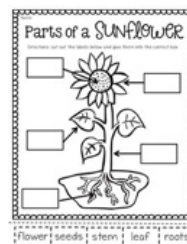
**Tip: Composition notebooks might work best as the pages don’t rip out easily.**

## STUDENT-CRATED PAGES

A blank sheet of paper can be your best friend! (Better yet, collect unused worksheets from others as scrap paper.) Young students tend to be very visual anyways so with just a little guidance, they can create their own ways to show learning processes or demonstrate what they have learned.

Example: At least one time a year, students are asked to label something in science (plant parts, animal habitats, etc.) Instead of handing them a pre-made picture of these, ask them to draw and label it themselves. You have now moved beyond rote learning into higher DOK!

Compare these three activities. Which one do you think means more to students?



## STUDENT CHOSEN EXPRESSIONS

We’ve long understood that students learn best when you tap into their main “intelligence” (as reference in Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence theory.) However, worksheets usually only meet the visual-spatial learners. Why not offer your students some choice on how they would like to express their learning?

Let’s take another look at plants! Sometime during their K-2 years, students will be asked to demonstrate knowledge of the life cycle of a butterfly. Here are some student-drive

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expression methods students can choose to show this process.

1. Poster or graphic
2. Dance
3. Written paragraph
4. Dramatic performance
5. Explaining using real examples

### MANIPULATIVES

We are all aware of how powerful manipulatives can be for learning. However, we also know how time-consuming and daunting passing out and using manipulatives can be. Keep trying, though! Here are some tips to help make using manipulatives with young students not so scary:

1. Preload Ziploc bags or container with the maximum amount you'll need most of the year. Better yet, tap a couple of students to do this for you. Keep these baggies/containers filled and pass them out as needed.



2. Let students explore. Give students some time to 'play' with the items and they will be more likely to use them appropriately during the lesson.
3. Draw very clear boundaries for their use. One warning and a student isn't given this "fun" option. You'll set a tone of high expectations.

### WHITEBOARDS

One thing I think all teachers need is a class set of whiteboard. They are an invaluable tool in engaging students. Imagine you are working on short a words. You

can easily go over a few as a whole group lesson and send your students back to their seats for a short a cut and paste worksheet. OR you can try this....

Give each student a whiteboard. Have a set of short a picture cards ready. Students will write the short a word for each of the pictures. You can walk them through the first couple and then let continue to write the correct short a word for a picture you hold up. You'll also get immediate feedback on who hasn't quite mastered the skill.

Websites to Check out:

<http://keystoteachingsuccess.blogspot.com/2010/02/worksheets-alternatives.html>

[http://www.pre-kpages.com/no\\_more\\_worksheets/](http://www.pre-kpages.com/no_more_worksheets/)

<http://keystoteachingsuccess.blogspot.com/2010/02/worksheets-alternatives.html>

<http://brownbagteacher.com/a-1st-grade-morning-work-alternative/>

<http://www.madlylearning.com/2016/10/no-more-worksheets.html>

### Conclusion

Yes, it is STILL okay to use worksheets. But in the words of Tim Gunn, "Use the styling wall very thoughtfully." Try to pepper in one or two of the example list above until you and your students have built up a new repertoire of strategies to show proof of learning!

