

DEPARTMENT NEWS

Follow Us!

Did you see the following information last month? (Free Books!) I'll be continuing to give away free books every month so check out the paragraph below.

I've now created social media accounts for our Primary Elementary Department. Be sure to like us! Then tag all your coworkers so they can find the page and follow us!

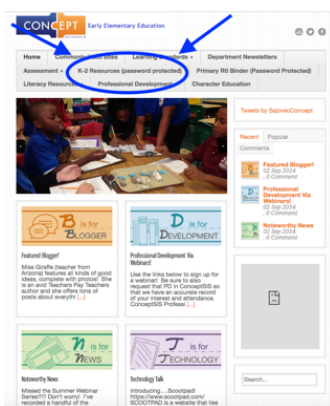
For a chance to win the 6 books, go to our Facebook Page (Concept Schools K2) and comment with the secret words. Secret words are embedded on page 2 of this newsletter!



Resource on Department Website

Have you been on the K-2 department website?!? Check it out...LOTS of freebies especially under the K-2 Resources tab. Just in case you need it....the password is a word that begins with C.

<http://elementary.conceptschoools.org/>



FREE?!?!? (or really, really cheap)

Tech for Phonemic Awareness/Phonics

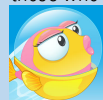
Every primary teacher knows the importance of systematically teaching phonemic awareness and phonics. After all, they are called "Foundational Skills" for a reason. Students also need to spiral review back over these skills to keep them fresh and readily accessible throughout the year.



Kiz Phonics (website)

<https://www.kizphonics.com/materials/phonics-games/>

Kiz Phonics is a phonics instructions site, which offers complete materials for teaching phonics. Materials are arranged by Level for those who want to follow a systematic approach to teaching phonics. They are also organized by type for those who choose a non-systematic approach to teaching phonics.



Fish Sky Phonics (app)

Sky Fish Phonics combines logical problem-solving puzzles (think Where's My Water? or Cut the Rope) with multiple-choice, basic reading-skills questions. Kids choose a costume and tap a succession of machines to launch a fish through an increasingly complex obstacle course, answering phonics questions and collecting stars along the way.



Wonster Words Learning (app)

Wonster Words: Spelling with ABC and Phonics uses entertaining, silly videos to introduce young readers to pattern words and word families by having them match letters to their outlines to spell the words on the list. Each list contains eight words that have the same ending pattern or a matching phonic element such as th, sh or ch sounds.



Phonics Genius (app)

Phonics Genius is a flash card style app designed to help kids learn words by letter sounds. It encourages kids to notice and think about the individual sounds in spoken words. *Phonics Genius* has over 6,000 words grouped into 225 categories, including single letter and letter combination sounds. There's also a listening game where kids match visual and spoken words, as well as pre-recorded audio playback to help kids hear each word clearly. The words in *Phonics Genius* are best for kids with previous reading experience, rather than beginning readers.

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Classroom Set-Ups that Maximize Learning

By Jennifer Sajovec

Your classroom layout reflects the kind of learning you want to happen. Having desks lined up in rows with the teacher instructing from the front gives student the sense “Sage on the Stage.” On the opposite end, flexible seating puts students in the driver seat of their learning.

A classroom layout that maximizes the use of your space and encourages learning can positively influence your learning environment, but creating an efficient classroom layout isn't easy. There's been years when I felt I had to fit 482 students, 72 tables, 34 bookshelves and an elephant into just one classroom.

Prioritize What's Important

Have you ever heard of the KonMari art of tidying up? Basically, you “which consists of gathering everything one owns by category and keeping only those things that ‘spark joy.’” You and your students will spend probably about 60% of the total awake day in your classroom. Make it a space that is warm and inviting!

Here is a tool Scholastic provides to help design your space:

www.teacher.scholastic.com/tools/class_setup/

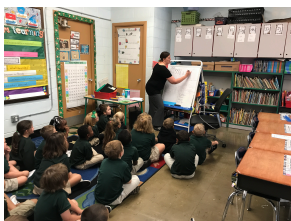
Start by plugging in the very most important things you value (see below). Yes, some rooms are really small and filled to the brim with students but honestly, you can fit it all in with just a bit of preplanning and prioritizing!

Classroom Meeting Space

Rug time is not just for Kindergarteners! Having a whole group meeting space is ESSENTIAL. It is the ONE THING I look to see is present in any elementary classroom. There are just so many benefits beyond just a place to hear a story read aloud. Now you don't have to use an actual “RUG” to have a meeting space; many teachers (especially those with limited space) just mark off an area of their room with masking tape.

Here are some of the benefits of having this designated sacred space:

1. Students need to be frequently moved within the classroom. It may look different at different grade levels, but students should physically transition from seat to rug about every 10-15 minutes. You will cut down on nervous energy students build up being in one place too long.
Secret Word: community
2. You'll be able to better engage students when they are closer to you. We all know how important proximity is to student attention and redirection.
3. A classroom meeting area changes the climate from an institutional setting to a home for learning. It helps students feel like they belong to a learning family and helps build positive relationships within the classroom. Imagine a family dinner where everyone is facing a different direction and sitting at different tables. Pretty awkward, right? But that's just the climate.
4. There's always room. Honestly, I would start with my classroom meeting space (the rug) and build everything around it. There were years where my teacher desk was non-existent and storage spaces were inconveniently accessed but I seemed to always find a way to fit it all in.



Reduce Visual Noise

Close your eyes! Can you visualize everything that's on the walls in your classroom right now? What are two or three of the most important things for students to look at for learning? Could students tell you the purpose of everything on your walls right now?

One of the most common mistakes ALL teachers make is decorating their walls too much....like way. too. much! We walk into teacher stores and browse Teacher Pay Teachers and oooh and ahhhh at the cute designs. Then we spend way too much money and time cutting, laminating, etc. The kicker to all that wasted energy is that all of these “cute” decorations probably won't help students meet learning objectives (and they can even distract certain students.) We do want tools displayed for learning around the room but we also want to find a balance so students can regularly access those tools without becoming distracted.

Here's some tips on how to create the right balance:

1. Resist the urge. Truly, you should only hang up items that you plan to actively use to enhance learning...at that moment.
2. Be highly intentional about drawing student attention to items you do display. For instance, instead of loading all the word wall words onto the wall before the year starts, only add words as they are covered. These will be fresh and students will be more likely to find them. Another benefit is that by adding the words during class, the word wall becomes an interactive tool.
3. Ask yourself these questions before hanging up anything....
 - What purpose does this poster, sign or display serve?
 - Do these posters, signs, or items celebrate or support student learning?
 - Are the posters, signs, or displays current with what is being learned in the classroom? Can the display be made interactive?
 - Is there white space in between wall displays to help the eye distinguish what is in the display?
 - Can students contribute to decorating the classroom (ask “What do you think could go inside that space?”)

Create Multi-Purpose Areas

In many of the primary classroom in our network, space is EXTREMELY limited. Figuring out how to fit all the furniture is like being on the hardest level of Tetris. Look around, though, are there items that can be used for dual purpose? Could you slide the guided reading table in and out the meeting space (google- magic movers)? Could the bookshelves double as a standing center work area? Again, invite your colleagues into your room. They may help find new designs or new ways to lay out your work spaces.

More Information:

Looking for more ideas? Here are some sites to help:

- <https://blog.classdojo.com/new-teacher-survival-series-1-setting-up-your/>
- <http://learningattheprimarypond.com/blog/5-things-to-consider-when-setting-up-your-classroom-k-2/>
- <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/6-classroom-design-tips/>
- <https://www.thedailycafe.com/articles/design-help-for-small-classrooms>