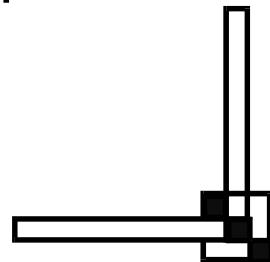


Classroom Management & Organisation Secondary



Foreword

A series of workshops was conducted in June 1995 by Chris Dickinson of Network Consultancy. He revisited Argyll and Bute in June 1996. Those who attended enjoyed them so much that they felt they would like to share some of the enthusiasm and reassurance that was engendered by Chris Dickinson.

The essence of Chris Dickinson's philosophy is that classroom teachers are classroom experts; our knowledge, our experience and our ideas are the most valuable resources a school has.

As a result of financial support from TVEI a working party was set up and this document has been produced. It is always difficult with such a document to balance being helpful against being too prescriptive. Our remit was to consider principles which apply to all subjects.

All teachers differentiate all the time. Nevertheless we hope this document will generate discussion and stimulate new ways of differentiating - giving all students of all abilities full access to the curriculum.

This document offers some ideas for consideration which may help address some of the day-to-day difficulties faced by the classroom teacher. We would suggest that you experiment with the ideas. Which of the ideas you find most useful will be determined by your own subject, your strengths, your experiences, your situation, the materials you use every day, the furniture in your classroom and your access to support. Please remember - there are people in your school who attended the seminars. They can tell you more about it.

Members of the Teaching and Learning Group:

Chair: Alistair Kirkwood, Head Teacher, Tarbert Academy
 Sybil Bertoli, PT Learning Support, Tarbert Academy
 Fiona Campbell, IT Co-ordinator, Tiree High School
 Jane Oswald, PT English, Tobermory High School
 Paul Phillips, Teacher of Biology, Rothesay Academy
 Sheila Tollan, Senior Teacher, Oban High School

General Points

- The most important resource is the teacher.
- General guidelines *can* be adapted to subject-specific requirements. Customise your system; don't reinvent it.
- It is wise not to over-complicate.
- We need to recognise that the mechanistic approach may support weaker learners while being the kiss of death to the more able.
- Using these guidelines can help students to take personal control of their learning and increase their sense of responsibility.
- Many students have come through a primary system which teaches self-reliance in learning. We should capitalise on this.
- Successful learning depends on planning; and we should be prepared to adapt our plans to suit the demands of course work and individual students.
- To be effective this approach is best suited to a whole unit, not single lessons.

Notes

Principles

These principles apply to the **using** of knowledge, not just its **acquisition**.

- Involve students in *activities*, not questions. This ensures that they are *using* their knowledge, instead of just acquiring isolated facts or a mechanical skill.
- *Open-ended tasks* allow an outcome to be achieved in a variety of ways, e.g. instead of simply writing answers to a list of questions the student could create a poster display; produce a booklet; write a laboratory report; present a talk/video to the class; create a ready reckoner for a chef.
- An *advance organiser* is not a teaching document and should not convey academic information. It is a guide for the student which is directly related to the task. It tells the student what to do, how to do it, where to find the information required and how long to spend on it.
- ***Prompts***. *The single most important principle.* Prompts should appear on the advance organiser and be easy to follow. They help the student and any support staff to achieve the learning outcome. They can be summarised thus:

This is what you're aiming at,

This is what you'll do,

This is what you'll need,

This is how to tackle it,

This is what you might produce (or indicate the range of acceptable solutions)

The advance organiser should direct students to the resources they need. See classroom organisation.

- When giving instructions language should be kept simple. It has been proved that most learning difficulties are in fact language difficulties, caused by a variety of social, academic and cognitive factors.

The students' experience of the principles applied

- Students gain *active* knowledge as opposed to *passive* knowledge. This is more memorable and more challenging.
- Using a variety of products achieved by a variety of routes enables *all* students to say, '*I can do X*' and therefore celebrates their achievements and builds confidence.
- The students get customised advice and support in the advance organiser which ensures no nasty surprises. Target setting enables student and teacher to negotiate learning routes and outcomes. This helps him/her to take responsibility for learning within a comfortably tight framework. Again - no nasty surprises.
- As with the simple language of instruction, prompts are a great confidence-builder. The safety net is built in. The environment is safe and so the efforts the student makes are seen as respectable.

- Separate resources in recognised locations make students more independent and more in control of their learning.
- Simple language in the instructions for the task ensure that the student knows exactly what he/she is doing.

Notes

Teaching and Learning Materials

Suggestions for the Advance Organiser

- White space (i.e. blank space surrounding print) for guidance notes should be left on the organiser for student and teacher. This document uses wide margins and 'notes' space to create white spaces for the user to customise and adapt the information.
- White space for targets should also be left on the organiser for student and teacher.

Suggestions for Worksheets


- Produce only one sheet which can be customised using white space either on the sheet or in a jotter
- Worksheets should not always be colour-coded according to progression. Consider colour-coding them according to skills, for example, and numbering them according to level of support.
- Concentrate your extremely valuable time on devising *support* materials rather than *assignment* sheets.
- Try to limit the line/length to approximately 5 inches and use a serif font. Any line/length longer than this can make the eye become 'tired' and the student who finds reading a *chore* will *scan* rather than *read* the text.
- Leave text with a ragged right hand edge. Students with reading difficulties find reading text which has not been fully justified easier to read.

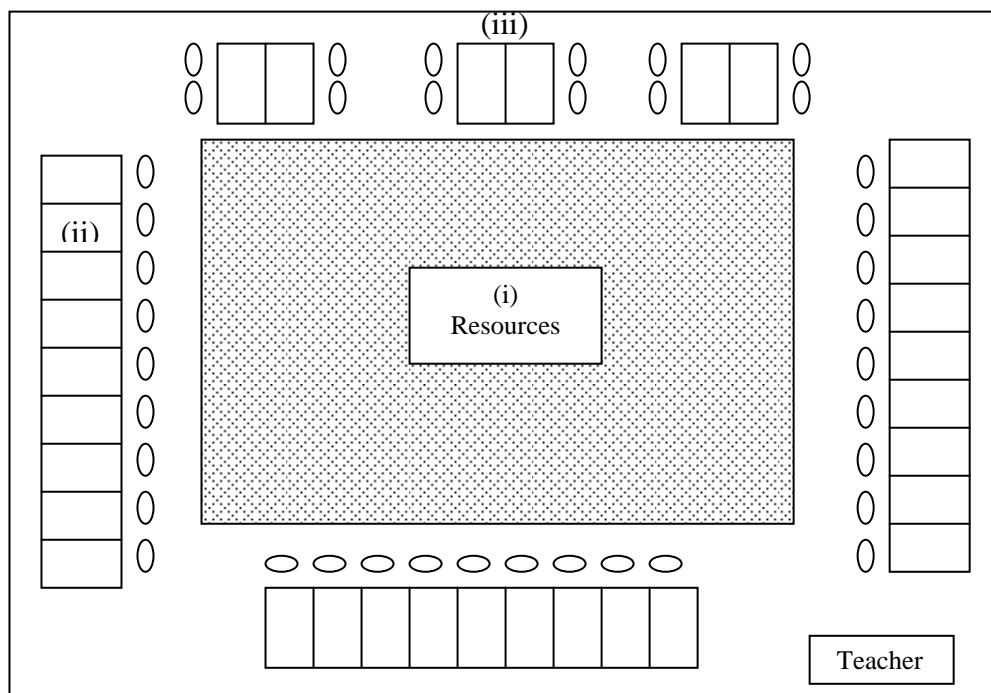
- Avoid block capital letters. Using upper case to emphasise text can make it more difficult for students with learning difficulties. (The exception to this is students with dyslexia - take advice).
- This document has been produced with 1.5 line spacing and using New Century Schoolbook - a serif font. This makes the document easier to read because the shape of the letters leads the eye naturally onto the next letter. The margins are set to 0.5 inches and the line/length to 5.25 inches. *Italic style has been used for emphasis.*

Classroom Organisation

Three models of classroom layout follow. They can be easily adapted to suit your circumstances and needs.

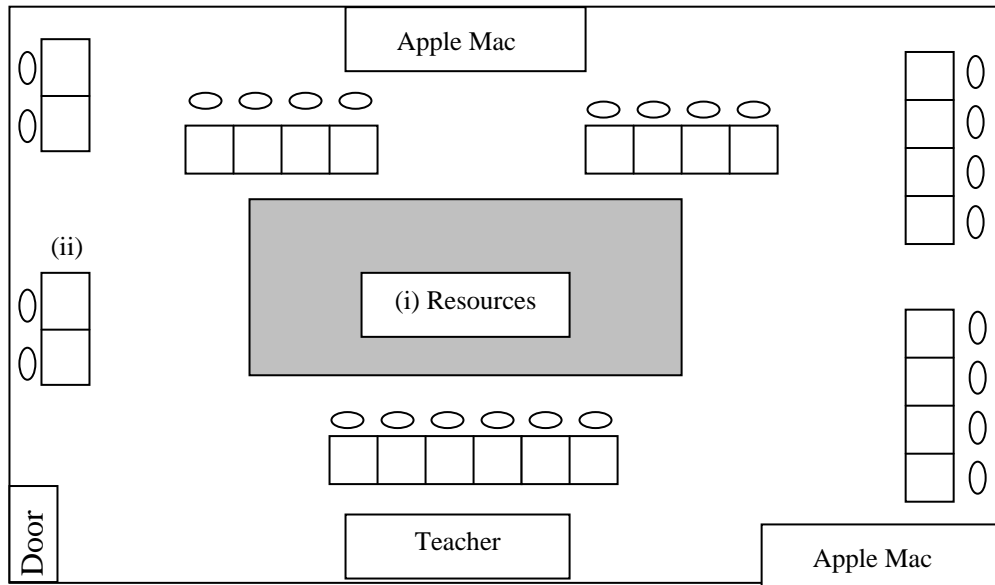
- Resources in a recognised easily accessible area.(i)(see diagrams)
- Groups of desks are placed in such a way that distractions are limited.(ii)(see diagrams)
- Study carels for certain things.(iii)(see diagrams)
- Creation of psychological space.(see diagrams)

 Students move through open space.



Notes

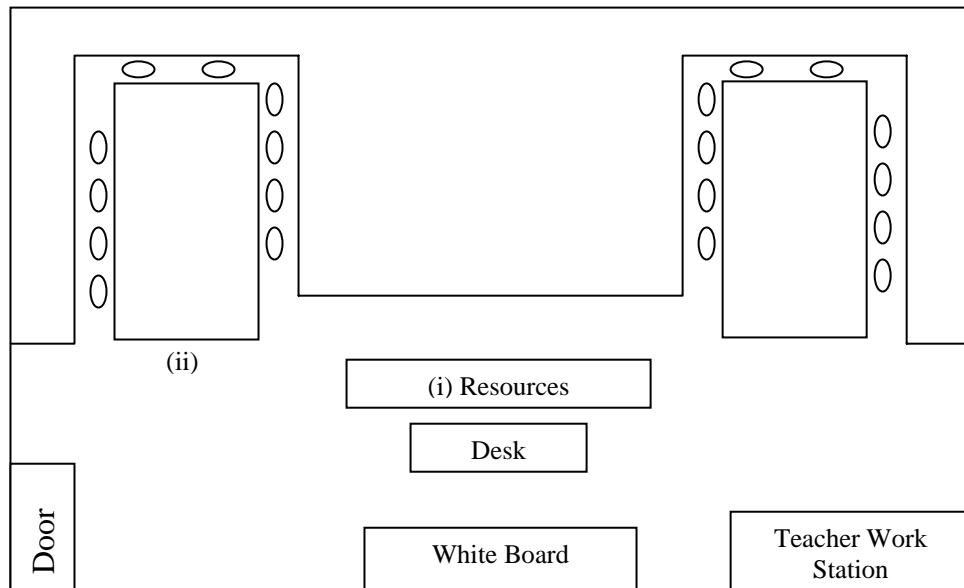
The classroom layout shown below is used in an English classroom



The teacher using this plan felt it was more practical for his classroom and overcame his uneasiness regarding students facing the wall and not the teacher, while still maintaining the general ethos of the plan.

Notes

This is a classroom layout for a Computing Class. Note the potential for multi-level teaching.



Notes

Wise Words from Chris Dickinson

- The status of an expert increases in direct ratio to the distance he is from home.
- Noah was an amateur; it was an expert who designed the Titanic.
- Differentiation by resources can result in a “News of the Word” curriculum. Worse still, it can come in the shape of a “box” or Teaching Pack 1”.
- Differentiation by outcome is the result of differentiation; it is not a teaching strategy.
- Using large print or block capitals is just shouting on paper.
- A child thought the Vikings were cannibals and drank blood. It said in the book that they were “bloodthirsty”.
- If you are going to eat an elephant take it in bite-sized chunks.
- By all means reinvent the wheel but round with spokes is still a good model.

This policy will be reviewed in 2007/08