



TIME SAVERS AND ORGANIZATIONAL TIPS



TEACHERS

At Elmer's, we know you work hard to make every second in the classroom a valuable learning experience. Here are some organizational tips and handy resources that will help you save time and maintain your classrooms focus.

UTILIZE DAILY ROUTINES TO MAXIMIZE YOUR TIME

- Make sure students know expected behavior for each routine
- Practice daily routines so students use them well and do so automatically
- Streamline routines to maximize the use of your time. For example, attendance and lunch ordering can be done at the same time with the use of clothespins or cards with students' names on them. Some daily routines could include:
 - Student arrival
 - Lining up
 - How to move through classroom centers
 - Turning in Work
 - Preparing for dismissal

Purposeful Planning: We all know the need to be flexible when teaching in a classroom. Often students change the course of lessons as they ask questions and work through the lessons planned. However, don't underestimate the value of purposeful planning!

- Take some time each week to map out your week, make to do lists, write names of students who will need extra attention, parents who need to be contacted, and colleagues who need to be followed up with.
- When planning, make a separate list of materials that need to be gathered for lessons and start a pile of materials that need copied, or otherwise prepared.
- Begin gathering materials for lessons days ahead
- Anything that can be planned or prepared for ahead of time, leave for parent volunteers
- Utilize systems for grading or other weekly tasks. For example:
 - Monday, hold individual student conferences
 - Tuesday, Plan for next week
 - Wednesday, Grade
 - Thursday
- Gather lesson materials
- Friday, Grade
- Make your own planner using a 3 ring-binder and tabs to create a customized organizer.

MINI LESSON BINDER

- Create a binder of mini lessons that you can pull out at anytime
- Create a check off sheet or a way to indicate when these lessons have been taught
- Indicate which lessons may be need to be taught again or reviewed
- Work with colleagues- each prepare 10 mini lessons, copy and share



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BINDER FILES

- Tired of sifting through filing cabinets? Create subject binders and use tabs to sort files. Place your most commonly used files in these binders.

LESSON PLANNING

- Create a template and use a computer to write your lesson plans. Pull up the same template each week, add in new lesson plans and hit “save as” to create a new file. Add in regular routines and procedures to eliminate re-writing these out each week.

Substitute Binder: Preparing for a substitute is often more work than it’s worth to be off for the day! But preparing ahead of time will leave you feeling less stressed when you need to take that sick day or professional day. Your substitute will appreciate having all of this at his/her finger tips while you will appreciate not re-writing it all each time you need to be out of the classroom. Use tabs to organize the binder and include:

- Class list
- Seating chart
- Weekly Schedule
- Fire drill and other emergency information
- Student allergies and information on how to respond
- Regular Routines
- Classroom rules and incentive and/or behavior plans
- Lunch routines
- Helpful notes about students
- Grading requests: would you like your substitute to grade finished work? If so leave notes about how you’d like things marked and your grading scale
- Extra lesson plans, read alouds, instructions to games, etc... These plans, books and games are only used when substitutes come making them special and new to the students.

CENTERS

- Spend time teaching your students HOW to move through centers
- Share with them your expectations for how they are to work during centers
- Come up with an “attention call” so that when your students see or hear this they automatically pay attention to you- don’t forget to practice
- Build in a few centers that with the exception of materials, the center stays same
- Explain activities thoroughly and leave examples for finished product when possible
- Make and hang charts with information such as: What To Do When I Finish Early? and What To Do When I Need Help? Students can refer to the charts whenever necessary. For non-readers, use pictures instead of words. Be sure students know and practice procedures
- To eliminate unnecessary interruptions, have all materials ready and available

PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES

- Choose up to five students a week to make purposeful contact with and write detailed notes about progress in their file, in addition to any regular personal assessments. Take digital photographs of these students at



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work on various occasions. At the end of nine weeks you will have at least two very detailed notes to refer to, as well as any other documented notes and photographs. (Utilize high school students and parent helpers to pull photos off of cameras and print in documents for you)

- Two weeks before conferences are to be held begin taking the time to summarize the nine weeks for every student focusing on a couple of students each day.
- Share student work that shows student progress over time such as journals, writing samples, and reading assessments
- Using a simple note form, ask parents to send in questions they would like to have answered at their conference prior to their conference date so you can be prepared with answers
- Conference week can be an exhausting, busy week with many late nights. With a few colleagues, plan to each make multiple dishes of one meal and swap at the beginning of the week! Or, ask your PTA to provide a pot luck for the staff one night that week

BULLETIN BOARDS

- Cover your bulletin boards with several sheets of desired colored paper at once so that when it comes time to change the display you can simply pull one off to reveal the next color
- Store bulletin board displays in large baggies or files to reuse
- Take a picture of a bulletin board you use from year to year so that a parent can refer to the photo while putting up the display for you
- You don't need to regularly change EVERY bulletin board. Use some of them to display information that will stay up long term
- Let students create a bulletin board display

SHARE THE LOAD

- Students love to be engaged in helping out around the classroom. Your classroom is made up of students who are natural organizers, artists, filers, sorters, cleaners, “techno-savvies”, and great at working with their hands. When you have lists of jobs to do, ask yourself, “can any of these tasks be done by any of my students?”
- Share lessons with colleagues
- Share information
- Have a pile of professional articles you have been trying to find time to read? Find a group of colleagues to join you. Everyone should choose one article to read per week. Over lunch or your regular meeting time, spend a few minutes sharing important information.
- There are plenty of responsible middle school and high school students who would be willing to help during study halls with a variety of tasks.
- Utilize Parent Volunteers
- Plan ahead for parent volunteers.
- Parents want to know that the time they are giving is not going to waste.
- Be ready for them when they arrive.
- Leave instructions to decrease or eliminate any need for verbal explanations.
- Have a designated spot for them to work
- Leave supplies in this area permanently



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Time Fillers: If you added up all of the down-time during the school day, you might be surprised at how much time the students spend waiting. Waiting in line at the restroom, waiting for gym to start, finishing work early, etc... Try some of these time fillers to maximize the time students spend at school. Post your favorite time fillers by the door with sticky tack so you can easily remove the list and take it with you wherever you go.

- Visit this link to find a variety of educational ways to fill small gaps of time
http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/archives/fillers.shtml

BRINGING TOO MUCH WORK HOME?

- Visit here for tips and time saving ideas to cut down on the amount of week night and weekend work!
<http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3749743>

INTERNET RESOURCES

- Find endless time saving printable tools and organizational ideas at these websites. Some require membership fees.
- Teachnology - http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/
- Time Savers For Teachers http://www.teacherhelp.org/teacher_timesavers.htm