

# Creating a Workable and Inviting Art Space

**Pam Stephens**

**T**eaching a nonstop and often chaotic schedule of art classes requires a certain amount of order and organization. Keeping supplies and tools at hand, offering easy-to-access storage, and having clear paths for movement in and around the artroom are but a few points to keep in mind when creating an environment that invites learning. Included here are a few of the best organizational tips garnered from art teachers around the country.

## First Day

It is especially important for beginning teachers to learn the names of every student. Seating charts save the day for teachers with less-than-photographic memories. If rosters are available prior to the first day of class, make the charts and immediately implement them. As the names and personalities of students become apparent, seating restrictions can be lifted.

## Arranging Tables

Many art teachers suggest arranging tables so that they form an “L” or “U” shape in the room. If possible, place students on the outside perimeter so that everyone faces the teacher. This helps with classroom discipline and allows ease of movement throughout the space.

Some teachers suggest numbering, naming, or color-coding tables. Table names can offer more art learning if the designation is something art-related such as an art style or title of an artwork. For example, the Impressionist Table or Mona Lisa table would have a label that shows an example of Impressionism or a reproduction of the daVinci painting.

## Supplies and Tools

For frequently used art supplies, provide tote trays at each table. Include pencils, erasers, scissors, glue, rulers, and other supplies that students use on a day-to-day basis. Assign one student



*Cassie Stephens' elementary artroom in Tennessee has plenty of open space.*

at each table to keep the tote tray in order and to make sure that all supplies are returned at the end of class.

The über-organized art teacher will create something that uniquely identifies the contents of each tote tray. If tables are already named or color-coded and labeled, each object in the tray might show an example related to the name. Rather than doing this project yourself, provide the materials for one of your classes to label the objects.

## Storing Student Work

Assuming that most classroom space includes shelves, many teachers suggest that each group of students have one shelf dedicated to their flat work. The shelves or cabinets should be labeled to clearly show what is stored there.

Each table in every class should have its own folder clearly marked with the name or color of the table and the name of each student. Durable folders can be made from taping together two pieces of poster board. For teachers with limited supply budgets, newsprint or newspapers work well as folders; however,

these will need frequent replacement.

Three-dimensional work poses additional storage problems. Without exception, art teachers suggest that only one grade level or class at a time work with sculptural projects. Several teachers advise placing three-dimensional artwork under an unused table and then wrapping the table with plastic or butcher paper so that the artwork is out of harm's way. Other options include dividing a counter top with tape to indicate specific classes, or placing artworks along a wall where there is limited traffic.

## Personal Choice

Classroom organization reflects the teacher's personality. Each room is its own little world. How do you organize your artroom? Please share your tips with us on the *SchoolArts* Facebook page. 

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