

Artroom Overload

Heather White

Have you ever wanted to hang a “no vacancy” sign outside of your artroom? Most art teachers have to deal with an unusually large number of students per class at some time during their career. Below are some strategies I have developed to help cope with this situation.

Get Organized

I have students write their names and teacher codes on every paper they receive. I also have them write and circle their table number on the back of their artworks. This speeds up the process of returning finished artwork.

Substitute Materials

Substituting materials can alleviate some clean-up issues. Washable markers, water, and brushes can be substituted for paints. Having back-to-back classes work with paints saves time spent hauling out and putting away supplies, but it requires creative management of the drying rack.

Occasionally, I substitute air-dry modeling medium for earthenware clay. During one class period, I present the project to students and have them practice with modeling dough. Students use the air-dry modeling medium during the second class to create their projects.

Control Chaos

With large groups of students, it is essential to keep them in their seats as much as possible. When students have to get up from their seats, they will gravitate like magnets toward each other, disrupting the order of your carefully planned seating chart and leaving a big mess for later. I try to minimize this issue by assigning a

helper from each table to take care of putting away supplies.

Cure Sink Crowding

To cut down on crowding around the sink, I send home a letter to parents at the beginning of the year requesting that each student bring in one container of hand wipes. Students can wipe their hands first and the table second; one student passes around a trash can for collecting the wipes so almost everyone remains in their seat. If getting the wipes from parents is an issue, use a craft knife to cut through a roll of school-provided paper towels. Separate the towels, dampen them, and keep them stored in a bucket or plastic bag until needed.

Be an Advocate

Perhaps the most important thing to do is work with principals, district administrators, school board members, and state and national art education associations to place size limits on art classes. It is our job to make art objectives meaningful and to lend credibility to the value of art programs. We need to demonstrate the ways that art fulfills many of the same classroom objectives taught by core classes. If what we teach in the artroom has measurable value to the overall education of our students, we should no longer be content only to have art included in the curriculum. ☺

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Heather White is a former art teacher at E.P. Razor Elementary School in Denton, Texas. Hlmwhite1@verizon.net



Preparing a tray of items for each table makes passing out and picking up materials easier and quicker.