



Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom

Competency

Educator demonstrates an understanding of how organizing the physical layout of the classroom can contribute to a positive learning environment.

Key Method

The educator designs the classroom workspace to support engaged instruction and decrease interruptions. The educator understands that the classroom space design engages all learners in a thriving, social, kinesthetic, and cooperative environment that positively affects learning and the community.

Method Components

Educators understand that classroom environments deeply affect learner roles, responsibilities, expectations, and outcomes. Through reflective practice, they recognize the learning needs of each of their students and design the classroom's physical layout to enhance learning and encourage an environment of growth, discovery, and celebration. Educators adjust their classrooms to meet unique learner needs and situations. They design the classroom space with safety, accessibility, learning, and the display of information in mind. The physical layout allows safe and easy access to materials, workspaces, and technology. Examples of learners' work enhance the workspace, fostering reflection and celebration, while displays provide documentation and additional information about current units of instruction. The classroom environment explicitly supports inclusion,

Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom

diversity, equity, and cultural competency, reflecting and celebrating the student body's demographics and the wider community. Classroom design reduces distractions, makes the most use of the available space, and allows for student choice and collaboration.

The Physical Environment

The classroom should be designed to optimize student learning and engagement beyond aesthetics. Factors such as student movement, visibility, and accessibility should be considered. Traffic patterns should be well-defined to minimize disruptions during transitions. Classroom desks and furniture should be arranged so that the teacher has a clear line of sight for all students, so the teacher can easily reach any part of the room quickly.

You've been a learner in many environments and may work well in disorganization, but many people do not. Consider storage in the classroom, as you will have multiple materials to handle. Storage and resources should be strategically placed to promote student independence and collaboration while not being distracting. Keeping the district and school inventory safe and well-maintained is also essential. Clearly labeling materials to be inclusive of all learners is a strategic step in making the classroom fully accessible. Use icons and multiple languages as necessary.

Traffic flows should include routes for students to access learning tools they will often need, submit work, and access collaborative learning spaces. Clearing routing and teaching students how to navigate these routes are essential for classroom well-being.

Four ways to make a practical classroom layout are:

- Clearly **define traffic patterns** in the classroom.
- **Arrange furniture so you can see students at all times** and quickly access all classroom areas. Furniture should be arranged to optimize collaboration.
- **Label materials** with icons and organize them to ensure easy access.
- **Create and teach systems** for completing work, accessing materials, and meeting with peers.

The overall design fosters a positive and inviting learning environment where students feel comfortable, focused, and inspired to learn.

Key elements of effective classroom design:

Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom

- **Access to materials with designated traffic flows:** The physical layout of the classroom allows for safe and easy access to materials and workspaces.
- **Decor is relevant to student learning needs and culture:** Examples of learners' work enhance the workspace, allowing for reflection and celebration. Additionally, displays allow for documentation and additional information about current units of instruction, including anchor charts or other related content references. The classroom environment explicitly fosters and supports inclusion, diversity, equity, and cultural competency.
- **Organized and Clean:** Classroom design reduces unnecessary distractions and makes the most use of available space.
- **Inclusive for all learners:** The layout should be flexible and adaptable to accommodate all students needs and activities. It is ideal to have space for group work, peer work, and individual work.
- **Technology considerations:** Technology access is part of the layout design, which includes clear visual access to the teacher's presentation screen, accessible charging stations, and ease of putting devices away for offline learning.

Learning capacity is enhanced when all of these elements are intentionally used in a classroom. To strengthen engagement and relationships, include learners in the school's physical layout; this allows the space to be welcoming for all.

Supporting Rationale and Research

Barrett, Peter, et al. "The Impact of Classroom Design on Pupils' Learning: Final Results of a Holistic, Multi-Level Analysis." *Building and Environment*, Pergamon, 20 Feb. 2015,

www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360132315000700

Cheryan, Sapna, et al. (2014). Designing Classrooms to Maximize Student Achievement. *Bbs.Sagepub.Com*, Sage, 2014,

ilabs.uw.edu/sites/default/files/14Cheryan_etal_Meltzoff_Designing%20Classrooms.pdf

Cheryan, S., Ziegler, S. A., Plaut, V. C., & Meltzoff, A. N. (2014). Designing Classrooms to Maximize Student Achievement. Policy Insights from the

Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom

Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 1(1), 4-12.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732214548677>

Evertson, C.M., & Weinstein, C.S. (2013). Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues. New York, NY: Routledge.

https://www.academia.edu/823019/Handbook_of_classroom_management_Research_practice_and_contemporary_issues

Marzano, R., & Marzano, J. (2021, June 29). The Key to Classroom Management. ASCD.

<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/the-key-to-classroom-management>

Rands, Melissa, and Ann Gansemer-Topf. (2017, November 1) The Room Itself Is Active: How Classroom Design Impacts. *Eric*, Journal of Learning Spaces, 2017, <files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1152568.pdf>

Turano, Amy A. (2005, November 1). The impact of classroom environment on student learning. Theses and Dissertations. 1089.

<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/1089>

Resources

Readings

[A Veteran Teacher Turned Coach Shadows Two Students Create a Structured Classroom](#)

[10 Best Classroom Setup Ideas Every Teacher Needs to Know to Be Successful](#)

[Classroom Management for an Effective Learning Environment](#)

[Classroom Seating Arrangements | Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning](#)

[Education by Design: Challenging the Traditional Definition of a Learning Space](#)

[How to Create Inclusive Classroom Spaces for Students With Physical Disabilities](#)

Classroom Management

Revised on: May 14, 2025

Physical Layout of the Classroom

[Environmental Engineering: Arranging Your Classroom Environment For Optimal Functioning](#)

[Physical Classroom Structure](#)

[Rethinking the Classroom: Spaces for Active Learning](#)

[Particular Education Classroom Layout: Best Practices](#)

Videos

[Best Practices: High School Classroom Arrangement](#)

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and be proficient in all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

Suggested word count: 400 to 500

Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

Describe essential background information about your classroom to help the reviewer understand the learning environment. Please include the following:

- Grade Level
- Subject Area
- Cultural Influences:
 - What are the cultural groups, languages, or community aspects to consider?
- Relevant Characteristics of the Learners
 - Describe the cultural, social, emotional, academic, linguistic abilities, diversity, behavioral, and anything else relevant to the students in your classroom.

Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom

And

Discuss any special accommodations in the physical layout of your classroom.

How is your classroom design student-centered and celebratory of learning, primarily through the lens of equity and cultural competence?

Passing:

The response addresses all required components as outlined in the overview section. Supporting evidence clearly illustrates deliberate intentions for classroom design. The writing is organized and easy to understand.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following three artifacts to demonstrate your learning.

**Please do not include any information that will make you or your students identifiable to your reviewers.*

Artifact 1: Comparison

Suggested word count: 550-650

Evaluate another learning space in your building that differs from your classroom layout. Describe both similarities and differences between the two classrooms using these five Key elements.

- Access to materials with designated traffic flows
- Decor is relevant to student learning needs and culture
- Organized and clean
- Inclusive furniture, layout, and decorations
- Technology access is considered

Provide specific examples and connect them to how these elements affect learning and classroom behavior.

Artifact 2: Showcase

Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom

Choose one format to visually show your classroom design (note: your choice here will pair with the analysis in Artifact 3)

- Upload a two- to four-minute video showing the physical layout of your classroom. Narrate and caption your film.
- Draw a map of your classroom's physical layout. Label the Key Elements it addresses.
- Create a photo essay showing the physical layout of your classroom (can be a slideshow or a document of 15-20 photos). Caption each photo.

Artifact 3: Showcase Analysis

Suggested word count: 350-450

Connect your choice for Artifact #2 (video/photo/drawing) to a written analysis that includes answers to all seven of the following prompts:

1. What are the strengths and limitations of your physical classroom space?
2. Why did you choose specific decorations and design elements?
3. How do the different zones (e.g., group work, quiet space) support student learning?
4. How does the layout support students with diverse needs (e.g., learning, physical, behavioral)?
5. How does the setup encourage appropriate, respectful behavior?
6. How does the design promote safety, easy movement, and classroom monitoring?
7. How does your layout align with school or district philosophies or initiatives?

Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom

Part 2. Rubric

| | Proficient | Basic | Developing |
|---------------------------|---|--|--|
| Artifact 1: Comparison | <p>The response clearly and concisely compares the two learning spaces to all five elements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to materials and traffic flow • Relevant decor tied to student learning and culture • Cleanliness and organization • Inclusive furniture, layout, and visuals • Integration of technology | <p>Describes two learning spaces but does not respond to all five elements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to materials and traffic flow • Relevant decor tied to student learning and culture • Cleanliness and organization • Inclusive furniture, layout, and visuals • Integration of technology | <p>Describes learning spaces with such little detail that the evaluator cannot form a clear picture of the intention of the learning spaces.</p> |
| Artifact 2: Showcase | <p>The selected visual format (video, map, or photo essay) is presented, complete, and annotated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: Narrated and captioned | <p>The selected visual format (video, map, or photo essay) is presented, complete, and annotated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video: Narrated and captioned | <p>The showcase artifact was not submitted or was not viewable.</p> |

Organizing the Physical Layout of the Classroom

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map: Clearly labeled with key design zones • Photo Essay: Includes 15–20 well-captioned photos <p>The visual artifact provides a comprehensive understanding of how the layout supports the learning environment.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map: Clearly labeled with key design zones • Photo Essay: Includes 15–20 well-captioned photos <p>But the visual artifact does not comprehensively understand how the layout supports the learning environment.</p> | |
| Artifact 3: Showcase Analysis | <p>The written analysis addresses all seven prompts in a clear, organized format. Each response connects classroom layout decisions to learner engagement, safety, inclusion, and alignment with school/district values. The analysis supports the visual evidence with thoughtful explanations and concrete examples.</p> | <p>The written analysis addresses only six prompts in a clear, organized format. Each response connects classroom layout decisions to learner engagement, safety, inclusion, and alignment with school/district values. The analysis supports the visual evidence with thoughtful explanations and concrete examples.</p> | <p>The written analysis addresses fewer than six prompts, or the writing is unclear or unorganized.</p> |

Part 3 Reflection

Suggested word count: 400 to 600

Use the word count as a guide to write a personal reflection about your work on this micro-credential. For tips on writing a good reflection, review the following resource:

Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

Please reflect on your professional learning as you complete this micro-credential. Be sure to address the following questions in your response:

1. How has the examination of your classroom space impacted your current practice?
2. What changes, if any, did you make to the physical layout of your classroom? Use the Key Elements in the Method Components to strengthen your reflection response.
3. What impact have your choices in addressing the Key Elements of Effective Classroom Design had on student engagement and behavior?
4. How does the physical layout of your classroom support the diversity and inclusion of students with specific learning, physical, or behavioral needs?

Passing:

The response addresses all guiding questions with descriptions that relate to the educator's current setting. Personal examples and supporting evidence convey a complete message. The writing is concise, organized, and free from significant errors.