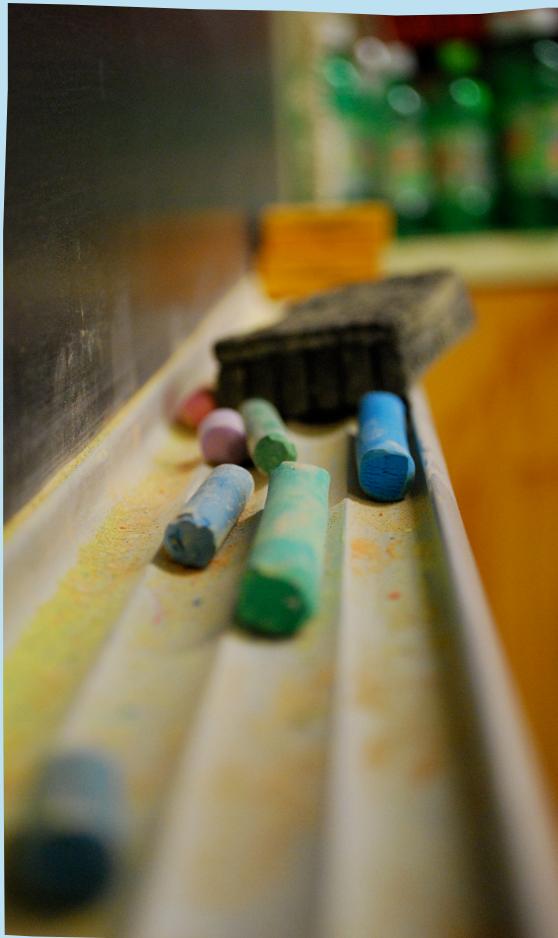


SETTING UP AN INTERMEDIATE CLASSROOM



By: Amy Cameron

RESOURCES

There are many resources that are available to teachers of intermediate students, and many resources that should be made available to students. They fall under several categories.

READING MATERIALS

Depending on the size of the school, grade level teams often share class sets of novels and other books. This is great if you are doing a class novel study, however each classroom should also have as large a library as possible. It should include as many different types of reading materials as possible. There should be books by and about different cultures and groups of people.

Types of Books to Include in an Intermediate Classroom Library

- book series (e.g., Harry Potter, The Hunger Games, Twilight)
- science fiction/fantasy
- newspapers
- magazines (type will depend on the interests of your students (e.g., gossip, car, skateboarding, science, etc.))
- mysteries
- graphic novels (e.g., the Bones series)
- audio books
- Young Adult novels
- non-fiction
- fiction (different types - some focused on action, others on emotion)
- humourous books
- comics
- baseball cards
- instruction manuals
- recipes
- CD Roms
- plays, Readers Theater scripts
- dual-language books (this is very important for English Language Learners)
- books about art
- travel guides



(Bomer, 74-77)
(Me Read? No Way!, 8-9)

WRITING & ART SUPPLIES

A well stocked classroom can save you and your students time and stress. Any items that students use on a regular basis should be readily available.

Materials should be organized in a way that makes sense to you and your students (e.g., in accessible bins, or labeled drawers, etc.)

Important Materials to Have Available

- lined paper
- pencils
- blank paper (of various sizes)
- notebooks
- rulers
- scissors
- manilla tag
- construction Paper
- newsprint
- scissors
- glue
- paint
- paintbrushes
- pencil sharpeners
- sticky notes
- liquid paper
- coloured pencils
- stapler(s)
- hole puncher(s)
- markers
- pens
- tape



PEOPLE

A teacher should not be an island unto herself, and there are a number of people who can and should be used as resources to help classroom teachers.



People as Resources

- In School Support Program Teacher (ISSP)
- English as a Second Language Teacher (ESL)
- Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT)
- Librarian
- Contact Teacher
- Behavioural Teaching Assistant
- Administration (principal, vice principal)
- Other classroom teachers



TECHNOLOGY/MEDIA

Having technology available and using it in purposeful ways in the classroom is extremely important. Most students use technology outside of school, so in order to make learning experiences as authentic as possible, teachers should use technology as often as possible in the classroom. “For a significant percentage of the population, the Internet is their chief environment for literacy, and that literacy involves a much more active set of composing practices than made sense in book/print culture” (Bomer, 8).

Many schools are now allowing students to bring their handheld devices to school. Teachers should show students how to use these as tools in their learning (e.g., to use them as a source of information, or to add media to assignments/presentations, etc.)

TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES



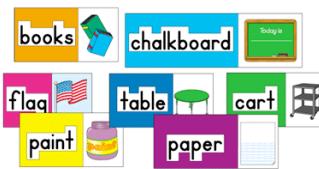
- classroom computers (usually 1-3 per classroom)
- document camera
- LCD projector
- projection screen
- teacher computer (desktop, laptop, or tablet)
- CD player
- CDs and MP3s
- Portable computer carts: enough computers (laptops or tablets) per cart for one class. Depending on the size of the school, there may be more than one cart.
- Student handheld devices (e.g., Android phones, iPhones, Blackberry phones, iPods and music players, etc.)



VISUAL AIDS AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS

Think carefully about where items will be placed, especially what goes on the walls. Students, “spend most of their days facing the front of the classroom, be very deliberate about what you place on the walls up front” (Lewis, 2012). You want your students to know where to look for information, but you don’t want to overwhelm them with too much in one place.

There are a large variety of visual aids that teachers use. They can be written, technological, or physical. They allow students to become more independent, as they learn to look for information and solutions themselves.

What is it?	What does it look like?	How does it help?
Anchor charts	Charts created by students and teacher together. They will look different depending on the topic (e.g., how to figure out the author’s message, how to write a journal entry, what are characteristics of fairy tales, sentence starters, graphic organizers, etc.)	These give students somewhere to look to remind them of important information on how to do things. Creating them together means that students are more likely to understand what’s written on them.
Word wall	A list of words -- either words that students use regularly and need help with spelling, or a list of words related to a specific topic of study. On the wall in an easily visible location.	Can help students with spelling, or when they get stuck on a word. It can reinforce concepts and ideas that they are learning about in other curriculum areas.
Bulletin boards	Large corkboards that are decorated with helpful information or student work.	Great for displaying student work, which gives students something to work towards. They can also be a place where important information (e.g., school calendar) is displayed, or information from other curriculum areas.
Projection screen/document camera/LCD projector	<p>These three items are often used hand-in-hand. The projection screen is a large screen onto which information (text or video) can be projected.</p>  <p>Document cameras allow texts/images to be projected onto a screen, and LCD projectors allow teachers to display what is on a computer screen to the whole class.</p>	Projecting information onto a large screen can help students with different learning styles. Some students have a hard time concentrating on small texts, or perhaps you are limited in your photocopying and want an inexpensive way to share information with all of your students!
Daily agenda, homework, and important information	There should be a place dedicated to important information for students. Often a portion of whiteboard or blackboard is saved for this.	When students know where to find important information, they are less likely to forget to do important things (e.g., like homework or what subjects they have that day.)
Labels	Small cards with images and words printed on them. 	These are particularly helpful for English Language Learners. By labeling all items in the classroom with pictures and words, you help them make the connection between English and the item, and allow them some independence.
Rules	A chart of list of classroom rules, created by students and teachers. Some teachers ask students to sign it as an agreement that they will follow them.	Creating them together means students feel like they have a say in their classroom. Hanging them means they can easily be referred to if one is broken.

What is it?	What does it look like?	How does it help?
Computers	Vary -- can be desktop computers, tablets, handheld devices, etc.	 <p>Students who have a difficult time writing are sometimes more excited about it when they can type it. Either they find the technology exciting, or they are better able to type than print/write.</p> <p>Students can use these to find answers to their questions before asking another student or the teacher, allowing them to become more independent in their learning.</p>
Books/Reading Materials	Includes dictionaries, fiction books, non-fiction books, CD Rom's, information found on the Internet, etc.	 <p>Students can use these to find answers to their questions before asking another student or the teacher, allowing them to become more independent in their learning.</p> <p>Having a wide variety of reading materials can help students learn to love reading.</p>
Chalkboard/Whiteboard	Large boards which students or teacher can write on, and easily erase. Chalk can be used on blackboards, and special erasable markers are used on white boards.	 <p>These allow you to share information with all students. Being able to erase the information is important, as it is very interactive--you can demonstrate your thought process to students as you write, or have students write their ideas on the board and then have others go up and add their thoughts</p>
Name Tags	Strips of paper with student names on them, usually affixed to desks with tape.	<p>These will help you and your students learn names quickly, and is also helpful anytime an occasional teacher is with your class, or another teacher or administrator drops by.</p> <p>(Lewis, 2012) (Me Read? No Way!, 2004)</p>



DESK CONFIGURATION

No two intermediate classrooms are going to look exactly the same. Every teacher is going to organize her classroom the way that makes sense for her and her students. The basic organization of the room will stay the same through most of the year, but the desks should be organized in a way that they can be moved around to accommodate different learning styles and activities.

One of the most important things to keep in mind is leaving space around the desks so that people can move around the room (Lewis Desk, 2012). You and your students should be able to walk around the room without bumping into each other and having to ask someone to move every few steps. This is particularly important if you have any students with disabilities in your classroom.



In order to, "emphasize cooperative learning on a daily basis, you'll probably want to move the student desks into clusters for easy discussion and collaboration" (Lewis, 2012).

The picture to the left shows desks organized into small groups. This configuration works well for workshops, small group activities, and independent work. The teacher may choose to have students move their desks into one of the other above configurations, depending on the activities for the day.

WAYS TO ORGANIZE DESKS	POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
Rows	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* The teacher can see who is working, and who is not.* Works well for independent work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Difficult for students to talk to each other* Doesn't work well for group work
Small Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Group work and collaboration is easy* Students can share supplies, so there can be less clutter on the desks* Makes it easier for a teacher to circulate and see how students are working	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Students may distract one another during independent work times
Circle or Horseshoe Shape	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Everyone can see each other during large class discussion* The teacher can see who is working, and who is not	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Students may distract one another during independent work times* Often takes up a lot of space, and makes it difficult to move between desks

NOTE:

It is also very useful for teachers to have some kind of area that they can conference with students in. A horseshoe table, a long rectangular table, or even an extra desk placed somewhere relatively quiet can be useful for this.

Take into account where YOUR desk will be (Lewis, 2012). If it is somewhere that you are going to spend a lot of time during the day, you don't want it hidden away in a corner.

You should be visible and accessible to your students. If your desk is an area you are only going to spend time at during planning times, or before and after school, then go ahead and hide it away in a back corner.

LANGUAGE AND MEDIA AREAS

LANGUAGE AREAS: READING AND WRITING

The reading/writing area is an extremely important part of the classroom. Students should have a quiet area that they feel comfortable going to work and read in. Most classrooms are limited in space, so it is often necessary to combine the independent reading and writing areas.



These are often off to the side, or set up with book shelves for walls to provide some privacy and quiet to the students using the area. Providing a sofa, comfortable chairs (e.g., beanbag chairs), and/or pillows to sit on can help students relax in this area. Providing a lamp allows them to adjust the lighting.



Having a desk or small table stocked with writing supplies is useful for students who go to this area to write, or who are struck by a thought they want to write down as they are reading.

LANGUAGE AREAS: CLASSROOM LIBRARY

The classroom library can be organized by “genre, reading level, alphabetical order, or other criteria” (Lewis, 2012) but should make sense to both you and your students.

Having a wide variety of different kinds of reading material can help students from all different kinds of backgrounds get involved in and excited about reading. In your classroom library, you should have comic books, graphic novels, picture books, car manuals, recipe books, etc. “In building a classroom library, it’s also important to look especially hard for books by and out Latinos, African Americans, Asians and Asian Americans, immigrants, and gay and lesbian youths” (Bomer, 77). This way students from different backgrounds and experiences can still relate to what they are reading.

A detailed list of possible items to include in a classroom library can be found on page 2 of this document.

MEDIA AREAS

Setting up an area or areas in the classroom where students can easily access media is just as important as having a literacy center where they can go to read and write. The literacy and media center can be combined if space is really tight, but if possible, it's better to have them as separate areas. This allows more students to work independently at one time.

COMPUTERS

If you have student computers in your classroom, then it makes sense to set up the media center around these. If students argue over who gets to use this area, consider posting a schedule where students sign up for specific time slots. You can create small boxes or envelopes that can be posted to a bulletin board, where students can store USB drives in order to save any work. These can also function as digital portfolios. Any DVDs or other media that students might need while using the computers can be stored in this area.



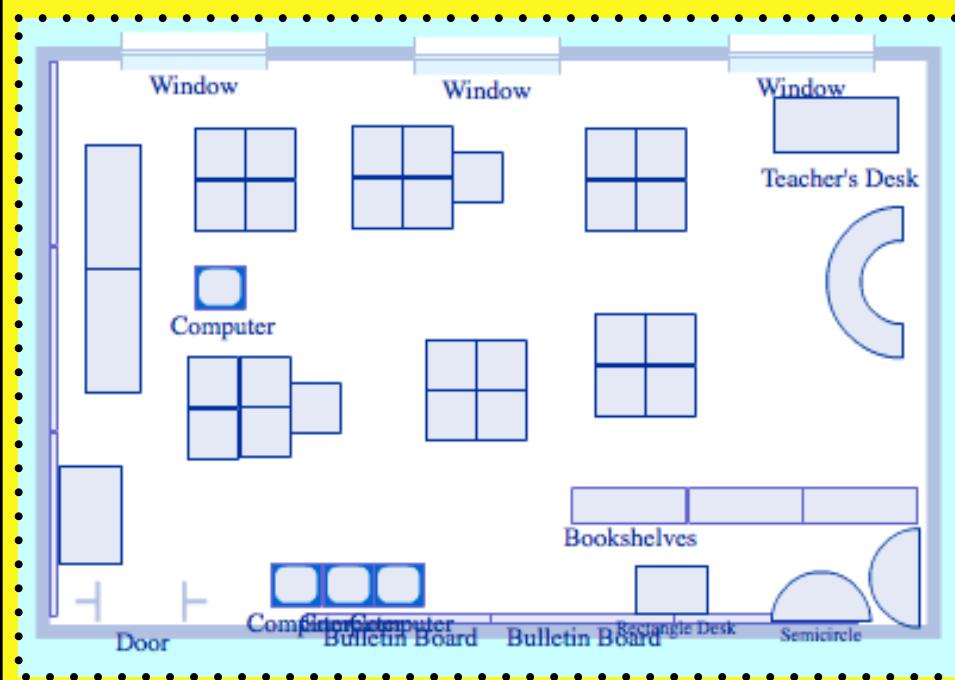
MUSIC

If you have a CD player/MP3 player for student use, this can also be placed in this area, particularly if you have headphones available. Students can listen to music while they work, or listen to podcasts or audiobooks.

POSSIBLE SET UP

As mentioned earlier, no two teachers will set their classrooms up exactly the same. Good teachers will maintain flexibility, and change the room to meet their students needs or to accommodate different activities.

Here is just one layout possibility for an intermediate classroom.



Note that the teacher's desk is at the back of the classroom, and is not overly imposing. Instead, there are tables at the front of the classroom that can be moved around as necessary.

There is a table at the front labeled "Computer," which would include a computer, document camera, and LCD projector.

The computer area in this classroom contains 3 computers, and would also be the Media Center.

There is a shared reading/writing area behind the bookshelves. It includes beanbag chairs and a fully stocked writing desk.

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