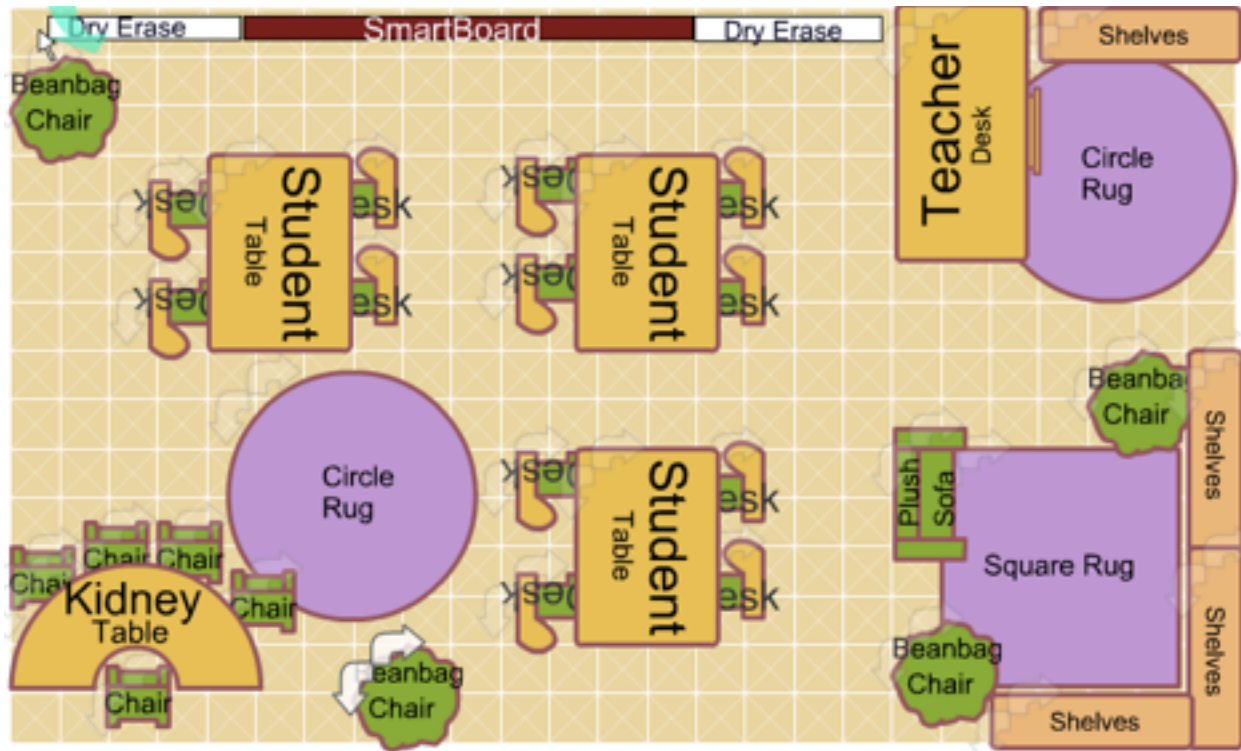


Creating a Brain-Friendly Classroom for 2nd Grade

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The Physical Classroom



The image above demonstrates the layout of the “brain-friendly” classroom. The group seating helps students to collaborate and socialize when appropriate, while the beanbag chairs, sofa and rugs allow students have a comfortable environment that results in better work. The colors shown in the diagram are not those of the actual brain-friendly classroom. Instead, the walls would be a light blue, resulting in a calmed mood for the students in the classroom. At the same time, the decorations and seating in some areas should be brighter, more vivid colors such as orange, red, bright green and purple to stimulate brain activity. There is limited technology in this classroom, because portable technology can be brought in when necessary. The teacher has access to a computer, along with the SmartBoard in the room which acts as both a screen and an interactive tool for students. There is a lamp on the teacher’s desk and in the area with the square rug and comfortable seating. When lights are off, lamps light up the right side of the room while natural light from windows would light up the left side of the room.

The Emotional Classroom

In a brain-friendly classroom, students treat each other respectfully and in a way that promotes friendship and safety. The classroom is fear-free because strict guidelines have been set for students about negative behaviors, meaning that students know if they or one of their peers does one of these behaviors, they will be punished fairly. This means their punishment for a particular behavior will not harm their physical or emotional well-being and will be appropriate for the behavior they have done, along with being the same punishment that any person in the class would have received. The emotional environment is friendly because students have a strong sense of community in the classroom, along with little to no stress or fear. The emotional environment will be adjusted to the overall emotional environment of the class as a whole in order to best cater to the group's sense of security. Music will be used in the classroom only during downtime, so it does not distract students who prefer not to work with music playing. When it is played, music will be appropriate for the situation. For example, during free reading time quiet and calm music will be played. During a creative time, more upbeat music can be played.

Lesson Elements

Each lesson will begin with some type of attention-getter. This could range anywhere from humor to emphasizing the importance of the lesson in a student's academic or daily life. Novelty, humor and other brain friendly strategies will be used in order to help students stay interested and engaged with the lesson while also helping them remember it more clearly because they are paying more attention. Students should engage in groups for academic activities such as discussions, projects and brainstorming. They should also be allowed to engage with other students in social situations where appropriate and when they need assistance from another person on an academic issue. Allowing students to help each other is effective because people are said to remember a much greater amount of information that they teach to another person than they do when they are simply reading or hearing that information. Material will be made meaningful and interesting to students by relating the information to their lives and to other aspects of their academics. Knowing that they will use this information again in the future can help students remember it because they put more effort into learning if they know they will need to use it later.

Feedback

Students will be given feedback in a way that helps students see exactly what they should work on, but in a way that focuses on what they did correctly as well. For example, if a student completed a project with good content but in a sloppy manner, it would be helpful to remind the student that their content was good while also letting them know that they should work on creating neater projects. By doing this, the student realizes that they need to work toward improving in one area, but also that they are strong in another area, improving their self-efficacy and motivation to keep doing well. This feedback could come in the form of notes on papers, stickers on assignments where a student did really well, or a “brag board” in which the teacher points out what was good about a particular assignment by hanging it on the board.