

COMPILATION: circle whiteboarding (board meetings!) - physical aids

Date: Mon, 2 Oct 2000

From: Jim Schmitt <jschmitt@ECASD.K12.WI.US>

After reading a week or two ago about whiteboarding with students in a circle, I decided to try it. My room is not designed to easily facilitate this, but my students shifted themselves out to the edges as best they could so that they could see each other. I will say, after 1.25 years of modeling, this move provided the most significant improvement in student discussion. **EVERY student got involved in some way, and the conversation was richer than any we have ever had!** For the first time, I had to cut them off so that we could somehow finish! Comments from the students afterwards were glowing. They felt more relaxed, less threatened (they sometimes feel foolish up front), and more included in the process.

The only difficulty we had was making changes to the boards. I thought of a traveling easel that they could hang the board on to free up their hands.

Date: Wed, 4 Oct 2000

From: Brenda Royce <BRRoyce@attbi.com>

Subject: WB Easel

I tried 'board meeting' style WB sessions this semester for the first time and like it, even though space is cramped. I have lab tables around the periphery of my room with desks in the middle. My students almost spontaneously solved the problem of an easel by leaning the boards on tall ring stands on the lab tables. Most of mine have tripod bases with a raised button at the end of each leg of the base forming a very nice easel. Even the other non-tripod stands work quite well. **I have gotten more discussion out of this formation**, though some students can now hide behind the WB (always the least engaged), so I have to draw them out to the front, but I don't think any more than when they stood in front of the class.

Date: Sun, 8 Oct 2000

From: Thomas J Gordon <tomgordon@JUNO.COM>

Go to the people who teach ART in your school OR to someone in the middle school or in the elementary school and borrow two or three easels to temporarily try out for use when whiteboarding. If they work out, you can order your own.

[LATER CONTRIBUTION: The above was re-posted in July 2002. This idea resulted. JJ]

Date: Mon, 22 Jul 2002

From: John Crookston <crook1@CHARTER.NET>

My version of this evolved into putting 18" strips of Velcro on the backs of each whiteboard (center the strips on the back about 1/2" from the top) and mounting the other half of the strips on the walls above each table in the lab part of my classroom (high enough so the bottom of the whiteboards are above the heads of students as they sit at the lab tables). This makes it possible to mount the finished whiteboards above each table for all to view. The 18" Velcro really holds the whiteboards to the wall provided you hold the WB by the bottom corners and gently slap the top against the wall-mounted strip. My classroom has a lab section of 8 tables arranged into two rows of 4 tables each with aisles between the rows and walls. The "circle" is formed by mounting the prepared whiteboards on the walls. The wall-mounted whiteboards are thus on the outside of the "circle".

Some of the benefits of doing this:

(1) Now the whiteboards are up off the tables and can be seen by almost everyone sitting at the tables.

(2) The tables are now free of the whiteboards sitting on tripods serving as easels, which makes room for using the tables as a work surface for any changes or revisions to worksheets as a board meeting progresses,

(3) The presenter from each group stands up and goes over to the whiteboard to make his/her presentation--students prefer doing this over having to stand in front of the class to present.

(4) **Students tend to stay more on task and the discussions are usually more focused** as noted by others who use the circle approach.

The Velcro strips were purchased at Wal-Mart, and I've also seen Velcro sold as rolls that can be cut to size.
