

# The Ultimate **Classroom Setup Guide**

Boost Engagement,  
Strengthen Inclusion,  
Unleash Learning

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# Introduction

Dear Amazing Educator,

If you've ever struggled to set-up your classroom successfully or are looking for new inspirational ways to strengthen your current classroom setup, this Ultimate Classroom SetUp Guide is for you.

It's for you because you want to inspire the best in your students and you know that your classroom learning environment can play a vital role in making that happen.

A well designed classroom can help build positive relationships, inspire the best in students, support learning in powerful ways, minimise classroom disruptions and reduce the amount of stress for both you and your students.

**Simply put, your classroom is one of the most powerful teaching tools at your disposal.**

Yet the reality is, as a teacher, you are juggling so many things at the same time, it is easy not to set up a great classroom, to let it slip, or if you are new to the profession, simply feel so overwhelmed and to not know where to start the process.

That's why I've designed this e-book to be a simple guide for creating the ultimate classroom environment.

This guide is designed so you will have tools to quickly set up a classroom that not only unleashes learning for all the students, but also eases your stress, and helps you feel more well planned, organised and inspired.

Whether you are a current or new teacher, principal, school leader or support provider, we hope this guide helps support consistent and effective teaching for all the students you work with.

**Your work is helping our world get better. Your classroom, when set up well, is a powerful tool for helping that to take place.**

I hope this e-book helps maximize your classroom set-up success!

With deep respect,



Dr. William DeJean  
Founder, Unleash Learning



## Know Your Why

If I had the privilege of working with you and you asked me to help you set up your classroom, rather than go to your classroom to set it up, I would first take you out for coffee (my treat!).

Over coffee, I would ask you all about your teaching, I'd ask you to tell me what brought you into the profession, why you chose the subject you teach (mathematics, English, world language, elementary school).

I'd ask you all about the students you work with. What you like about them. What sometimes drives you crazy about them. What they do that causes you to laugh. How they teach you as much as you hope to teach them.

As we finish up, I would want to speak to you about what you hope happens for your students because you are their teacher. What kinds of outcomes do you envision? What do you hope they become because you worked with them? What knowledge, ideas, pieces of information or skills do you hope they will learn from your class for years and years to come.

**There is something that brought you to this profession. The reason is bigger than standards, tests, state mandates or even the school where you teach.**

Our conversation together would probably reveal to me the reason why you're doing the work in the first place. There is something that brought you to this profession. The reason is bigger than standards, tests, state mandates or even the school where you teach.

And there is a clear intention for the work you do.

After we are done, we would go back and set up your classroom. That's because when you know exactly why you are doing the work you do, you can create a classroom that intentionally supports that vision.

That “why” will impact what is on your classroom walls, how the table and chairs are organised, what the classroom looks like and the ways you continue to set up the room to enact your vision.

### Questions to consider

- What are the greatest outcomes you can envision for the classes you teach?
- What do you hope all your students will remember or learn for many years after they have been in your classroom.
- How do you want your students to engage with each other throughout each class you teach?
- Who do you hope your students become because you were their teacher?
- How will your classroom positively impact your students and our world?
- What are the content, ideas, information and experiences you want your students to have in your classroom?

**Answering these questions is the first step in setting up your classroom well.**



## Make It Inspiring

There's plenty of research that suggests that positive emotions are important to fully unleashing learning for all students. But you don't need research to tell you what you already know to be true. When you feel safe, connected, inspired, encouraged, supported, included and you feel well, you let your guard down. When your guard is down, you're more likely to be open to the learning that is taking place.

To make this happen doesn't mean you have to be positive all the time or try to make your students feel a certain way. Rather your classroom can do this for you.

As we discussed before, your classroom is a powerful tool that helps to unleash learning, and using it well can do a lot of the work for you. Making it inspiring is a tool that you can use.

### **Here are some ways to think about making an inspiring classroom:**

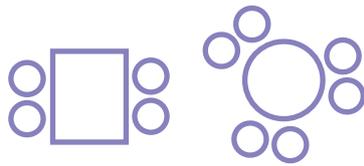
- Put plants in your classroom.
- Put motivational quotes on your classroom walls.
- Make sure the lighting is not too bright or too dark. If the lighting is bad, bring in lamps to create the lighting that creates a positive atmosphere. You can get cheap lamps at thrift stores or garage sales.
- Make sure the room is clean.
- Ensure there is no "tagging" in the classroom. Tagging is negative things students from previous years might have written on the desks, walls, etc.
- Find famous people from history, science, the arts or your content area whose life stories are powerful and inspiring. Put them on the walls of your classroom.
- Ensure diverse representations fill your classroom (women, men, students of colour, Aboriginal and Indigenous communities, different languages, faiths, ages and abilities).

- Consider putting positive statements on the windows of your classroom so they can be read from the outside.

**Your classroom doesn't have to be perfect. Rather, simply find ways to make it an inspiring location for all your students. We promise, this is essential for learning.**

Want to see how one teacher set up an inspiring classroom?

[Click Here To Watch It](#)



## Use A Seating Plan

If you attend a wedding, there's usually a seating plan for the reception.

If you're part of an orchestra, the conductor decides where each member of the orchestra sits.

If you go to a restaurant, the tables and chairs are set up perfectly well before the diners show up for their reservation.

That's because an effective seating plan proactively creates the conditions for a positive event to happen.

The same is true for your classroom.

**An effective seating plan is essential to unleashing learning for all your students.**

A seating plan, when designed well helps:

|  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Students to work well together   | Support all students feeling safe  |
| Build a classroom community  | Support effective collaboration    |
| Avoid conflict   | Eliminate or minimise distractions |
| Support all your students "lifting the weights" throughout the entire class. | Lessen your stress levels          |

If you want to bring out the best in all your students – I know you do!- a seating plan is essential for making this happen.

### **A few reminders about your seating plan:**

1. It is not a punishment for students
2. It's about where students sit and where you place table and chairs
3. You don't have to explain to students why you are using one
4. You can be playful, funny, encouraging and positive when you assign students their seats
5. Ensure you use a seating plan from the first day of class
6. Change where your students sit throughout the semester or term to mix things up
7. Stick with it

I've seen many teachers move from good to great, simply by creating (or modifying) an effective and consistent seating plan.



## Put Your Walls To Work

You know the outcomes you are working towards. You are clear about the ideas, concepts, skills and knowledge you want to unleash for all your students. You are passionate about who your students will become, how they will grow, and how they will engage with our world after they leave your class.

That's why the physical presentation of your classroom is a tool that unleashes learning for every student you work with.

But what do you put on the walls?

There are 3 specific purposes your walls are designed for:

### 1. Learning

The walls of your classroom are designed to help support the content, ideas or topics you want your students to remember. If you're a mathematics teacher, what are the main mathematical ideas you most want your students to know for a very long time? The walls are a way to surround your students with these concepts and ideas and help them keep it front and centre for their time with you.

### 2. Inspiration

We spoke earlier about the power of positive emotions. Your classroom can be an inspiration centre without you even saying a word. To do this, find quotes, posters, or phrases that you believe will inspire your students to dream big. Put these quotes on the walls of your classroom (or even the ceiling if you think that will get their attention). Your classroom walls can inspire the best in each of your students.

### 3. Inclusion

Who are the most famous female mathematicians you know? Who are the most famous African-American scientists? Which Aboriginal or Indigenous people of history do you want all your students to know? Diversifying your walls is essential for so many reasons. First, it helps paint a much bigger picture of the world we live

in. And second, it's hard to become what you don't see. Your classroom walls can be a vehicle that helps all students say - hey, if they did it, I can do it too!

Your classroom walls can help create a socially inclusive classroom. Want to learn how?

[Click Here To Watch It](#)



## GET THE MUSIC READY

Have you ever noticed that music is playing at your favorite supermarket?

In fact, I've heard the supermarket plays certain kinds of music during specific times of the day and certain times of the year.

That's right, they use music to create a certain kind of mood for you.

A supermarket wants you to shop, so they use music to boost your mood to do just that.

Romantic music - oh, I love my partner, I will buy the steak.

Holiday music - oh...my kids will love these special treats.

You can do the same thing by using music in your classroom.

You can use music to create the conditions that "sell" the knowledge and/or experiences that help to unleash learning.

Here are some times to use music:

### **1. As students enter the classroom**

Find upbeat music that will get them into a positive mood and put a smile on their face as they walk into your classroom.

### **2. When they're working with a partner or team**

White noise or soft music helps people feel and less self-conscious. With the music playing, no one can hear me talking to the team, discussing an idea with a partner taking a risk with the ways I'm participating in the group. Music, when used well, can create safety and lessen fear.

### **3. To transition into a new section**

You can use music to help transition students from one activity to the next. For

example, play music while students are working in groups and you want them to end their discussion. Or you can use music when you want to help students transition to the next part of a lesson or activity.

#### 4. When students leave

Help them feel positive as they leave your classroom and you're associating that emotion to your classroom for the rest of the day. The same upbeat music you used to welcome the students, can be used when they are leaving.

What does this have to do with classroom set up?

Setting up music is essential to your classroom success.

If your music is on your computer or phone, ensure it's located someplace in your classroom that you can easily access.

**Set up speakers.** You can find relatively inexpensive Bluetooth speakers. Make sure they're located in a place in your room that ensures your students are surrounded by the music.

**Create your playlist.** On most computer music players, it's easy to set up your playlist. Create opening and closing music. Find reflective music. Find your music for when students are working together.

## About the author

### Dr. William DeJean

Dr. William DeJean is the founder of Unleash Learning ([www.unleash-learning.com](http://www.unleash-learning.com)), an evidence-based approach to teaching and learning that boosts student engagement and helps create consistent and effective teaching for every student in every classroom.

William started his career as a high school teacher, inspiring students to become the first in their families to attend university. For his successes, he received numerous recognitions, including being selected Teacher of the Year among 26,000 teachers in San Diego County.

William, who holds a Doctorate in Education, brings many lenses to the schools he works with. He has taught at universities in the United States and Australia, he is an internationally recognized researcher, he consults across a range of schools, networks and regions throughout Australia and the US, and he is a sought-after keynote speaker, including appearances at TEDx Canberra, Happiness and It's Causes and the Young Minds Conference.

## Tools to support you and your entire school

Unleash Learning™ is for principals, teachers, schools, regions and networks looking to boost student engagement and to create consistent and effective teaching for every student in every classroom.

[Click Here To Contact Unleash Learning](#)