

THE CLASSROOM TEACHER'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

Practical Strategies, Management
Techniques, and Reproducibles
for New and Experienced Teachers

Third Edition

Ronald L. Partin

Foreword by
Stephen G. Barkley

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FOREWORD

I guess it's to be expected that a man as multifaceted as Dr. Ron Partin would likewise create a multifaceted book filled with strategies, techniques, and useful materials for beginning and veteran teachers alike. An educator, guidance counselor, scholar, and consultant—among other interests and avocations ranging from bluegrass music to genealogy—Ron is best known to me as providing the backbone to multiple graduate courses developed by Performance Learning Systems, Inc., for over thirty years.

Ron conducts research in all facets of education, guiding the legitimacy and credibility of PLS courses internationally. He has coauthored graduate courses and penned many rich articles to benefit teachers. First and foremost, Ron's intention is to assist the classroom teacher to impart knowledge to students.

This third edition of *The Classroom Teacher's Survival Guide* provides a rich recipe book or, depending on your generation, a drop-down menu of multiple options for teachers to use immediately and with tremendous success. It's a virtual bible for K–12 educators, parents, home schools, administrators, coaches, and others. I have been known to use some of the techniques in my own instruction of teachers!

Beginning teachers, in particular, will find *The Classroom Teacher's Survival Guide* a life raft of support as they navigate their first years of school, as it is comprehensive, user-friendly, and provides practical strategies and tips for the everyday problems of organizing and managing a classroom. It's no wonder that some districts in this country consistently order *The Classroom Teacher's Survival Guide* for all their beginning teachers. Nothing could get them off to a better start.

Veteran educators will find these cutting-edge concepts and practical ideas a stimulus to meeting new challenges and finding more enjoyment and satisfaction in their teaching, as this third edition taps into the newest research and trends toward technology, globalization, and multicultural teaching.

Turn to any chapter or any page in this book and you will find ideas, activities, tips for successful teaching, checklists, forms, certificates, and, of course, substantiating research. Ron has included books, online resources, and Internet sites for virtual field trips, as well as advice, suggestions, and encouragement in a wide range of topics, including parent conferences, cooperative learning, alternatives to lecturing, homework ideas, learning modalities, and how to use action verbs in developing lesson plans. And that is just for starters.

Because Ron is so well versed in the current research about teaching, learning, and education now and in the future, his approach incorporates many real-life, interactive, and technology-based exercises for students that are also filled with fun and that are reality based, enriching, and empowering for students.

As I travel around the country—and now internationally—presenting and instructing on behalf of good teaching, coaching, and sound learning, I am constantly met with educators seeking creative ideas to use with their students. Passionate and dedicated to teaching, these educators thrill at resources or suggestions for activities or lessons they can readily and immediately adapt to their classroom. Ron's book answers these needs and then some.

Mentors, coaches, staff developers, and supervisors can also find ideas, suggestions, and creative options for the educators they support. Oftentimes the coaching relationship calls for a teacher or administrator to observe his or her peers on whatever the person being coached wants to focus on, whether delivery, classroom management, reading, or other topics. To have a lesson or teaching tips at the ready augments this process and allows more in-depth time for feedback and coaching.

Written with humor, peppered with quotes, current in its examples, research, and references, *The Classroom Teacher's Survival Guide* belongs in every new and veteran educator's classroom or office.

—Stephen G. Barkley
Executive Vice President, Performance Learning Systems, Inc.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ronald L. Partin, professor emeritus and former coordinator of the graduate guidance and counseling program at Bowling Green State University, holds a Ph.D. in educational psychology and counseling and has more than thirty years' experience as an educator, scholar, and consultant. As a counselor educator, he taught courses in counseling, educational consultation, group dynamics, and learning psychology. A former high school teacher and coach, Ron is in frequent demand as a speaker, trainer, and consultant. He uses his classroom experiences to teach and motivate, with his everyday examples and ready-to-implement techniques.

Ron is the author of numerous journal articles in the areas of time management, goal setting, creative problem solving, stress management, and effective teaching skills. He is the coauthor of *Classroom Management: Orchestrating a Community of Learners*[®], a graduate training program completed by over fifty thousand teachers nationwide.

Ron is the coauthor of *The Social Studies Teacher's Survival Kit* (Prentice Hall, 1992) and author of *The Prentice Hall Directory of Online Social Studies Resources* (Prentice Hall, 1998) and *The Social Studies Teacher's Book of Lists* (Jossey-Bass, 2nd ed., 2003).

Ron serves as research editor for Performance Learning Systems, an educational services company. Ron is known for facilitating fun, interactive workshops and has been invited to present programs to over four hundred schools, businesses, and professional organizations.

Ron and his wife, Jan, are now enjoying their second adulthoods as residents amid the mountains of western North Carolina. Their twin sons are both gainfully employed and are excellent parents. Ron collects hobbies: woodworking, genealogy, golf, square dancing, bluegrass music, gardening, stained glass, and travel. His overwhelming passion continues to be helping teachers thrive in the classroom. He may be contacted at rpartin@bgsu.edu.

*Dedicated with love and pride to our grandchildren,
Braedon, Jacob, Brooke, Aaron, and Drew*

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The greatest source of ideas for this book were the hundreds of teachers who participated in my workshops and classes over the past thirty-five years. Where known, the original or published sources are credited for any ideas used. This project would have been much more difficult without the emotional support and encouragement of my wife, Jan.

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Creating a Supportive Learning Environment from Day One

1



THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

The foundation for a successful school year is laid on the first day of school. Everything you do on that day sets the tone for the rest of the year. Spending time planning and organizing the first day's activities is one of the most valuable investments you can make as a teacher.

Your three primary objectives for the first day of school are to get acquainted, establish your expectations, and stimulate enthusiasm and interest in what you will be teaching. The best advice for the first day is "Be prepared." You want to convey to your students that you are organized, are in control, and know what you are doing. It is wise to develop a checklist of items to cover the first day. (See the sample checklist at the end of this section.)

This chapter will address the key things you can do to assure the first day gets the year off to a positive beginning.

ARRANGING SUCCESSFUL CLASSROOMS

Before the first day of school, spend time organizing your classroom for maximum efficiency. The physical arrangement of your classroom can influence your students' behavior and learning. The placement of desks, bookshelves, pencil sharpeners, and cabinets can influence traffic flow, student interaction, as well as noise, attention, or disruption levels. The impact of the room arrangement is too important to leave to chance.

Plan the classroom learning environment before the beginning of the school year. Your goals for the class must guide your choices. Whether you wish to maximize group interaction with lots of small-group activities or lecture most of the time, the physical arrangement can help or hinder. Students get a pretty good picture of what their year is going to be like from the decor and arrangement of the classroom as they enter for the first time.

More than creating aesthetic appeal, each piece of furniture redefines a part of the classroom space, directing attention, pupil interaction, or traffic flow. Overlooking the importance of even casual rearrangements within the classroom is easy. Something as simple as the placement of a new pencil sharpener, a new bookshelf, or an area rug can have a significant impact on the learning events of your classroom.

The environment you see may be quite different from what your students perceive, especially younger ones. When no one else is around, crouch down to the children's eye level and view your room as they see it. Waddle around the room to see how the furniture directs your attention and movement.

Draw your current classroom arrangement to scale on graph paper. Include all the furniture, windows, doors, bulletin boards, electrical plugs, cabinets, wastebasket, and pencil sharpener. Observe your class for a day, noting on your drawing the traffic patterns. Indicate any bottlenecks. Are there any areas that invite students to stop and talk? Does the present arrangement direct students through work centers or group activities? Are there dead spaces that no one ever enters? Be sure to place electrical equipment so that students cannot trip over the cords.

Arrange any special areas in the room. Some teachers have reading areas, perhaps with stuffed furniture, a rug, or pillows. Have the necessary supplies and materials sorted and organized for any learning centers, art area, writing area, labs, and so on.

Give special attention to minimizing unnecessary noise in your classroom. Where possible, use soft, quiet, sound-absorbing materials: carpeting, rubber, sponge, cardboard, and cork.

STUDENTS' DESKS

The single most important decision influencing the physical classroom environment is the students' seating arrangement. Ideally, the arrangement of students' desks should not be permanent, except for large lecture halls or laboratories. The purpose of the learning activity should dictate the most favorable seating pattern. Unless furniture is bolted to the floor, it can be moved during the day as the lesson dictates. The custodial staff's ease of cleaning should play only a minor role in such decisions. What to do:

- Traditional seating in rows has endured because it is very functional for many classroom purposes. Particularly early in the year, seating students in rows enables you to observe behavior more easily and minimizes distractions. Research has shown that row seating produces higher levels of on-task behavior in elementary classrooms.
- The greater the distance between students, the less they will distract each other. However, theater or row seating can facilitate independent seatwork, lecture, movies, and tests.
- If your class uses several seating arrangements regularly, teach your students how to move from one to another as quickly and quietly as possible. You may want smaller children to help each other carry desks without dragging them across the floor.
- Seating students in clusters or around a table facilitates group interaction. This arrangement enhances small-group discussions and cooperative learning, but it also invites chatting and socializing.
- Whole-class discussion is facilitated with a circular, semicircular, or open-ended rectangular seating arrangement. Traditional rows are probably least supportive of student-to-student interaction.
- Performance classes, labs, and special activities such as story time might dictate atypical seating choices or even no seats at all. The important thing is to monitor your seating pattern's effects. Don't be afraid to experiment with different arrangements to achieve different results.
- After a few weeks, experiment with other seating arrangements. Simply changing the seating patterns, even which direction the seats face, will influence your group's dynamics.



- To minimize the tendency to look primarily at the students in the front and center of a classroom, make a conscious attempt to scan the back corners, where the more disruptive students tend to cluster. It is often wise to move such students to the front center, as that is the natural region of most eye contact. Interestingly, some researchers have discovered that students' test scores increase after they move to the front center. However, avoid seating two troublesome students next to each other.
- Give careful consideration to the direction students normally face in your chosen seating arrangement. As they will attend most to whatever is in their direct line of sight, try to arrange for students to face away from windows and doors to minimize distractions. Facing windows or bright lights creates excessive glare, causing eye-strain.

If you have several learning centers or areas in your room, separate noisy from quiet areas. Plan your seating so that you can move freely among students when providing individual assistance. Avoid seating arrangements that hide some students behind bookshelves or cabinets. Avoid creating mazes that force students into long, winding traffic patterns to reach the pencil sharpener or wastebasket.

SEAT ASSIGNMENTS

You must decide before school begins whether to assign students to specific seats or to allow them to select their seats. Most teachers prefer to assign seats at first. It is best to announce that the initial seating assignments will be temporary. After having learned their names, established behavioral control, and taught students your desired procedures and routines, you might allow them to choose (or assign them) different seats. However, if you have several difficult students, it is best to maintain control over the seating pattern, separating troublemakers from one another and keeping them where you can easily

monitor their behavior. You need not single them out or draw attention to the fact that you are putting them where you want them. Whatever seating pattern you select, always be sensitive to the special needs of hearing- or visually impaired students.

If you use printed seating charts, use a pencil to fill them in, as they will change. Keep any seating charts current in case a substitute must use them in your absence.

Hot Tip for a Seating Chart

Becky Laabs, a veteran art teacher at Bowling Green City Schools (Ohio), devised a creative and handy seating chart that you can make too. On the outside of a manila folder, sketch your classroom-seating layout, with a small rectangle to represent each student's seat. Cut out small pieces of cardstock and print a different student's name on each one.



Attach each name to its appropriate spot with Velcro. Future changes in assigned seats will be easy to make, simply by switching the removable rectangles. Make a different colored folder for each class, if you have more than one.

Store daily lesson plans, papers to be returned, or other items inside the folder for easy access. The folder will prove especially valuable to any substitute teachers during the year.

Another option is to tape or staple a clear transparency over the master seating chart. Names can be easily changed using an erasable marker on the transparency film.

KEEPING DESKS CLEAN

Some students' desks begin to resemble an attic, hiding assorted old papers, tattered books, pencil stubs, broken crayons, pens, and miscellaneous treasures. Teachers have resorted to a range of tactics for encouraging students to keep their desks tidy, from spot checks to formal inspections with checksheets. Some choose to ignore the mess and allow students to suffer the consequences.

One strategy that many teachers adopt is to institute visits by a desk fairy, a mythical creature that visits their desks after school. If the desk is orderly, the fairy leaves a special surprise such as a certificate, sticker, or ribbon.

THE TEACHER'S DESK

Not all teachers require a desk. If your room is crowded and you spend little time at your desk, consider removing it or replacing it with a small table and a filing cabinet. Some prefer an old-fashioned writing desk, which makes monitoring students easier. A high stool eases the burden on the feet.

If you do have a desk, the next choice is where to place it. It does not have to be at the front center of the classroom. If you do not usually sit at your desk during class, place it in a front corner or even at the back of the classroom. It is best not to place it near the door, thus inviting people to grab things off it as they leave the room or to interrupt or distract you as you work there. Make sure your desk does not block any student's view of the chalkboard.

Germs at Your Fingertips

A study by University of Arizona microbiologist Chuck Gerba revealed that the average desktop has four hundred times more bacteria than the average toilet seat. And the office telephone is even worse.

After collecting seven thousand bacteria samples from a variety of office building surfaces, Gerba found that bathrooms had the lowest levels of germs of all. The average keyboard had a count of three thousand bacte-



ria per square inch, compared to the office toilet seat, which measured only fifty per square inch. His explanation: "People use disinfectant to clean that."

The telephone had the highest bacteria counts, closely followed by the desktop itself and the computer keyboard. Water fountain knobs and microwave oven door handles also harbored high levels of germs. The report concluded: "The oily grime that collects on keys and headsets becomes a breeding ground for bacteria, increasing the risk of colds and other infections spreading through an office. They get this contaminated because they're rarely cleaned."

The area where you rest your hand on your desk contains some ten million bacteria! While the research examined business offices, it is unlikely that cleaning patterns are any better in schools.

Gerba suggested that regularly cleaning the desktop greatly reduces the number of germs. Daily use of disinfecting wipes decreased the bacteria count by 99 percent.

Other teachers have an open-desk policy, inviting students to help themselves to staplers, tape, and other materials. Of course, a locked drawer or closet might be reserved for private belongings or confidential records. Whichever practice you adopt, communicate your expectations to your students at the beginning of the year.

Source: Gerba, C. (2002). Office germ study. Available from www.shinytech.co.il/en/news/office_study.pdf.

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Note to the reader: This book intentionally omits the standard <http://> prefix from all Web site addresses. Most Internet browsers do not require users to type that prefix into the address bar.

Teachers have different perspectives on the ownership of their desks. Some prefer to define their desks as private territory, off-limits to students. They may even arrange bookshelves and filing cabinets to create barriers from others' intrusions.

BASIC CLASSROOM SUPPLIES



Address book	Note cards
Attendance forms	Old towels
Chalk	Paper
Cleaning rags	Paper clips
Clock	Paper towels
Desk calendar	Rubber bands
Dictionary	Rulers
Disposable tissues	Stapler
Eraser	Staples
Extension cord	Tape
Felt pens	Tardy slips
File folders	Teacher's manuals for texts
First-aid kit	Thumbtacks
Glue	Tool kit
Grade book	Whistle
Hole punch	Yardstick

SEVENTEEN TIPS FOR MAKING OUTSTANDING BULLETIN BOARDS

Well-designed bulletin boards can be effective learning and motivational tools. Their value as an instructional device should not be overlooked or left to chance. Preparing bulletin boards can be time-consuming. Enlist others' help. Occasionally allow students or parent volunteers to help create attractive bulletin boards.

Don't assume that attractive bulletin boards are for elementary classrooms only. They are just as effective with middle and high school students. For inspiration and ideas, check Web sites and professional journals. Here are some tips for constructing great bulletin boards:



1. From a roll of colored paper, tear a piece to the approximate size of the bulletin board to make a cover. Mold this to the bulletin board by hand and temporarily pin it to the board. With a small pin or razor knife, tear or cut along edges to remove the excess paper. You are ready to place objects and letters on the board.
2. Make two to three covers for bulletin boards at once, placing one on top of the other. When it is time to change displays, simply pull off the top display, revealing the next one beneath it.
3. Rather than repeatedly correcting students for the same errors, create a bulletin board display explaining the error and the correct procedures.
4. You need not decorate every bulletin board. Use blank ones for announcements, posters, student work, newspapers, magazine articles, and so on. Use some class time to have students brainstorm ideas for bulletin boards.
5. Generate graphics and letters with computers. Special software is readily available in most schools for printing banners and posters. Use letters of various sizes. Large ones grab the students' attention and get them to read the rest.
6. Give your students time and materials to cut out bulletin board letters of various styles and sizes. Store these in envelopes for future use.
7. Project coloring-book images onto large sheets of paper taped to the wall. Trace and color the images to make large characters to include in your bulletin boards.
8. Use some bulletin boards to teach or reinforce a skill or concept. Make them interactive, engaging students in tactile or kinesthetic learning.
9. Reserve one section of a bulletin board for students to use to post interesting articles, invitations, unusual quotations, pictures, cartoons, and other items of interest.
10. At the end of the school year, whenever students have some free time, let them create a bulletin board for you. It will be ready for the fall, welcoming the new class back to school. You might want to have them cover it with newspaper to protect it during the summer.
11. Develop interactive bulletin boards. Use pockets and flaps to hide answers to questions displayed on the board. Post a daily question, riddle, or puzzle for students to explore when they enter the room. Some displays might pose a question to which students write their answers or estimate in a block on the bulletin board. These are especially valuable if they relate to a topic to be studied that day.
12. Hang a clothesline across one wall of your room. Attach students' papers to the line with clothespins.
13. Velcro or flannel boards can be incorporated into manipulative boards that invite students to experiment. Bulletin boards can be dynamic, inviting students to interact

Internet Sources for Bulletin Board Ideas

Bulletin Board Ideas from Teacher Vision
www.teachervision.fen.com/bulletin-board/curriculum-planning/6515.html

Bulletin Boards Across the World
www.gigglepotz.com/bulletin.htm

Bulletin Boards and Tips for the K-3 Teacher
www.teachingheart.net/bboard.html

Classroom Displays and Bulletin Boards
<http://my.att.net/p/s/community.dll?ep=16&groupid=20303&ck=>

Interactive Bulletin Boards for Secondary School Mathematics
<http://faculty.kutztown.edu/schaeffe/BulletinBoards/bbs.html>

and reform the display. Self-checking questions can be displayed, with answers covered by flaps.

14. Shop fabric stores after holidays to purchase inexpensive fabrics with holiday themes. These make excellent backgrounds for seasonal bulletin boards and can easily be reused for many years.
15. Think of creative materials and ideas to incorporate into unique borders. Discarded fabric, game pieces, silk flowers, ribbons, leaves, greeting cards, or photographs can all be incorporated into attractive borders.
16. Go 3-D, attaching objects to your bulletin board display. Objects such as feathers, dried flowers, discarded ties, masks, hats, and costume jewelry can all be incorporated into your bulletin boards. Strive to use multiple textures to make the bulletin boards more attractive.
17. To help maintain interest, alter some part of a bulletin board every day or once a week. Changing a featured quotation or startling statistic each day keeps the students motivated to keep looking at it. Remember, a bulletin board is more than just wall decoration. It can be a great motivational device and instructional aid.

HELPING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

An ever-growing number of classrooms include students for whom English is their second language. Many of these English language learners (ELLs) may struggle with their schoolwork. Teachers can make a difference in easing their transition.

Here are some tips successful teachers have implemented to help their English language learners:

- Pair ELL students with native English speakers for some learning experiences. Assure that the ELL students have access to translation dictionaries.
- The first few weeks, allow ELLs to work with selected buddies. You might use older students for limited tutoring with younger students.
- Use parent volunteers to help students improve their English skills.
- Use as much visual communication (for example, props, cues, and text) as possible to reinforce your verbal content.

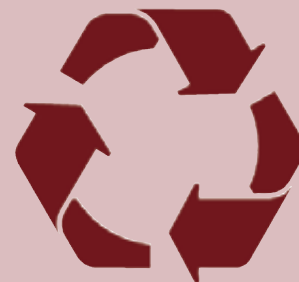


- Allow students to record your oral presentations to review later.
- Simplify your language in explaining abstract concepts.
- Try to avoid using slang.
- Idioms particularly create problems for ELLs. Check out the Pocket English Idioms Web site (www.goenglish.com/Idioms.asp) for examples of common English idioms. When you do use idioms, clarify for your students what they mean.
- Use gestures and visual expression to reinforce your speaking.
- Nurture an atmosphere of acceptance. Model appropriate behavior and do not tolerate disrespectful treatment of any students. Encourage empathy in the rest of your students.
- Be sure ELLs can see your face when talking.
- Be sure to enunciate clearly, yet naturally, when speaking. Avoid speaking louder. That doesn't help.
- Offer encouragement and praise as much as possible.

Go Green: Eco-Friendly Classrooms

Strive to model good environmental stewardship in your classroom.

- Provide bins for recycling paper, aluminum cans, and plastic.
- Create a tray for used papers that have a blank side. Encourage students to use the old paper whenever feasible.
- Minimize paper use as much as possible. For example, allow students to submit some assignments or projects electronically.
- Include environmental issues related to the subjects you teach.
- If relevant to your subject, help students do a classroom energy audit.
- Turn off lights and electronic equipment when not needed.
- Decorate your room with plants.
- Have students brainstorm energy-saving ideas for use in the classroom.
- Recycle printer ink cartridges.
- Use non-toxic cleaning supplies.
- Use rechargeable batteries where possible.
- Use acid-free glue.
- Open the windows when possible.
- Use school supplies made of recycled materials.
- Check out Live Green Teacher Grants at <http://livegreen.discoveryeducation.com/> for funds to support your eco-friendly projects.
- Dispose of old computers through the Dell and Goodwill's Reconnect electronics recovery program. See www.reconnectpartnership.com/ for more information.
- Encourage your students to get involved with the Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC), a "grassroots coalition of student and youth environmental groups, working together to protect our planet and our future." See www.seac.org/ for more information.



THE ROOM ENVIRONMENT

Your classroom's physical arrangement can minimize off-task behavior and invite learning. Experiment with changing your room setup, including the arrangement of students' desks, making it a regular part of your preparation. It pays dividends.

- Be creative in arranging your room. You need not be bound by the traditional configurations, with everything arranged in a rectangle. Filing cabinets or bookshelves do not have to be placed against the walls. Placed at right angles to the wall, they create study areas or redirect traffic.
- Plan the traffic patterns you wish to create. Keep high-traffic areas, such as the pencil sharpener, clear of obstructions. If a student's desk is immediately in front of the pencil sharpener, a disturbance is inevitable when other students use the sharpener. Avoid patterns that create congestion by funneling many students through a small path.
- When working with small groups, place their chairs so that the students face away from the rest of the class. This prevents their being distracted by the rest of the class, and it allows you to monitor all students. If an aide is working with small groups, you may use a portable chalkboard to screen the small-group activity from the rest of the class.
- Keep the room tidy. Before allowing a class to leave the room, have students pick up litter around their desks. A cluttered and dirty environment invites further abuse. Similarly, have any graffiti removed immediately. Research has shown that graffiti's presence serves as a stimulus for more graffiti.

Suggestions for Improving Classroom Acoustics

- Close the classroom door to eliminate ambient hallway noise.
- Keep windows closed if possible.
- Cover hard surfaces with sound-absorbing materials (acoustic tiling, carpeting, cork, or cloth).
- Ideally, floors should be carpeted and windows curtained.
- If floors are not carpeted, cover chair feet with slit tennis balls.
- Use felt or cork pads on desk lids to minimize noise from opening and closing.
- Turn off computers and printers when not in use.
- From the beginning of the year, set noise rules: indoor voices only, no slamming books or doors.
- Get every student's attention before talking.
- At the beginning of the year, establish a nonverbal cue to signal that students are to stop talking and listen.

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Removal may involve some additional effort at first but saves time and damage later. Avoid creating an impression that abuse of the room is acceptable.

- Use posters, decorations, banners, signs, artifacts, and displays to create an inviting atmosphere. Changing them periodically to reflect the topic your class is studying is especially effective.
- Before school begins inspect your classroom to identify any broken, dirty, or unsightly clutter. Broken windows, hinges, desks, shades, or locks should be repaired or replaced. It may take time, but see your principal about how to get these things done. Don't give up easily if you encounter delays. Doing some smaller tasks yourself may be easier.

NOISY CLASSROOMS IMPEDE LEARNING

A series of research studies by University of Florida professors Gary Siebein and Carl Crandell revealed that noisy classrooms seriously impair students' learning. Observations in forty-seven Florida elementary, middle, and high schools revealed that most had background noise levels between forty and fifty-five decibels. Most people have difficulty hearing once background noise reaches fifty decibels.