

Materials Management

by Jim Jones, Coachella Valley Unified School District

When we think about classroom management, we generally think about student management, but it is much, much more than that. Also included is a pertinent topic, especially when many school districts are adopting new materials.

Just managing the materials is not enough. It is important that the students are familiar with the materials—knowing their proper names and their proper use. This is important for all learners and especially critical for ELs. Some teachers, part of an MSP grant in San Diego and members of the K-12 Alliance, have provided a procedure for doing this through the “Kit Party” for materials management.

Prior to the start of our new school year, teachers in my district were invited to a Kit Party to learn about their new curriculum. They were given the opportunity to get to know their materials and to learn ways to present the equipment to their students. The first part of the procedure includes an opportunity for the teachers to become familiar with their instructional materials: Teacher participants used a scavenger hunt activity to learn about how the teacher's manual is organized and how the resources will help them teach science.

During the six hour training, the participants were also actively involved in an overview of the curriculum which included using the hands-on materials to try out the activities. Prior to the hands-on activities, the teacher/presenters walked the participants through the conceptual flow of the units, allowing the participants to know the concepts that are covered and how the unit connects them together to give the students the "big idea."

Back in their classrooms, the teachers get their students involved. Labels naming the kit materials are scattered on the science table or displayed in a pocket chart. Brown bags with the materials inside are used as props for describing a "hidden object." Each student takes a turn reaching into his/her brown bag and describing the object. It is okay for the person to look at the item but not to show it to the other members. As many descriptive words as possible are used.

Other students guess what the item might be and how it is used. Once they guess, the appropriate word card label is matched with the item. The object is placed in a clear plastic bag. This process continues until all items have been matched with the labels. The items are then displayed on the bulletin board for students to easily view the materials and build academic language associated with the content for the unit of instruction. During instruction the students are encouraged to utilize the correct names for the materials they are using. The teachers are very careful to use the correct names as well. Having them on display greatly

assists the students.

The students truly become scientists, using the language that scientists use. They are actively engaged and using the tools of science as they learn the scientific concepts presented in the units.

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