

Classroom Layout.

Classroom layout is very important for a well-running classroom. You must have easy access to all students and you must have a “stage” area for acting out stories, as well as having easy egress and ingress to the classroom.

There are two types of layouts that work best in CI classrooms: two-sided with a middle aisle and a horseshoe or semi-circle. With the two-sided classroom, you’ll divide the desks into two sides facing each other with an aisle in the middle and a “stage” area at the front of the room. The horseshoe or semi-circle has two rows in a horseshoe or semi-circle placement with the “stage” at the front of the room extending inside the horseshoe.

A current trend in CI classrooms are deskless classrooms. It allows for easier access to students and creates a more intimate learning environment. There’s no place for students to rest their head or hide their cell phone. Deskless classrooms also allow for easy groupings and rearrangement creating a unique learning environment that makes for easier classroom management. For writing, students use clipboards, whiteboards, or their notebooks as a writing surface.

Alternative seating gives students choices. Some students do better in non-traditional seating. You can offer yoga balls, bean bags, and/or wiggle seats. Yoga balls allow students to focus on balancing and energetic kids can bounce in place diffusing some of that built-up energy. Bean bags allow kids to relax and be comfortable while wiggle seats can help students who need sensory input or help calm kids who can’t sit still.

My rules for alternative seating are you may sit where and however you like as long as you’re paying attention, you may not use yoga balls for locomotion, no kicking, hitting, rolling on, jumping on yoga balls or bean bags, no throwing of bean bags or yoga balls, and first-come, first serve.

Classroom Posters.

You’ll want to have a variety of posters displayed around your classroom. Types of posters include question-words, super verbs, word walls, cultural, memes, and class rules.

Question-word posters allow you to point-and-pause as you ask questions, gives visual support to the words, and helps students acquire these abstract words.

Since the super verbs are very high-frequency and will come up often, you can easily refer to them, pointing and pausing to allow students to visualize how the verbs work.

Word walls are for those difficult-to-teach words like transition words, conjunctions, prepositions, personal pronouns, and possessive adjectives. As you use these words you’ll point to them, pausing to allow them to register with each student. Students have unrestricted access to the word wall even during assessments.

And to add to the overall classroom atmosphere, you’ll want to include cultural posters, memes, and your classroom rules.

Grade Book.**Setting up your grade book.**

To set up your grade book for the year, you'll need to create five categories: speaking, writing, listening, reading, and culture. You'll also need to set the weight percentages of each category: speaking = 30%, writing = 30%, listening = 15%, reading = 15%, and culture = 10%. These are very specific percentages for a reason and they align with Bloom's Taxonomy. We'll discuss more about these in the Proficiency-based grading class. These are the only categories that will make up the student's academic grade. We never include participation, effort, behavior, homework, etc in a student's academic grade. They can be tracked, just not for a grade.

Entering grades.

For level 1 classes, you won't assess speaking or writing for the first grading period. You'll leave those two categories blank for the first grading period. This is their "silent period."

Only grades that indicate if language has been acquired are entered into the grade book. Both formative and summative assessments go into each category. You'll weight summative twice as much as formative.

You'll only enter three grades per category per grading period per student. That means you'll have two formative and one summative per category. The summative grades will be part of the quarter or trimester exam.