

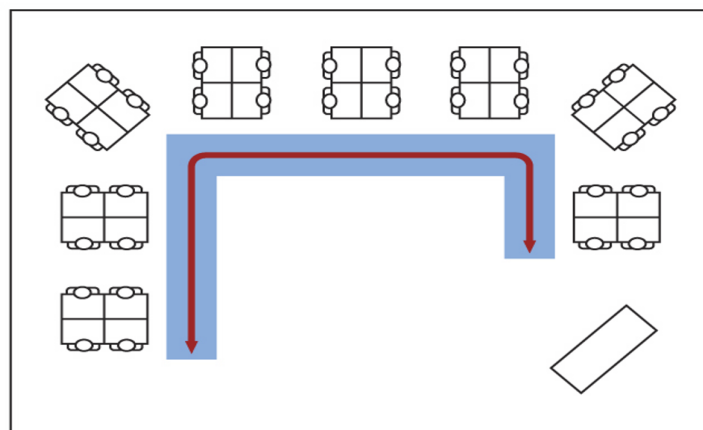
Classroom Tips from Ron

Give Them Their 80 Tip #5 – Configure Classrooms for Learning, Not Cleaning

In typical room arrangements in schools all over the country, straight rows of desks predominate.

These arrangements tend to do two things when it comes to movement:

- 1) It is often difficult for teachers to move around quickly and efficiently, due to the barriers created by the rows.
- 2) It is often difficult or impossible for students to stand and meet in pairs, trios, or quartets.



The perimeter furniture arrangement to the left opens up a large space in the center of the room, so that students can easily move into that area without a great deal of confusion, and with no furniture barring the way. Notice, too, that when students are seated, the teacher has a wide-open avenue of movement (marked by the red line and arrow) where he or she is never more than one person away from any student in the room. When students are doing seatwork, teachers can move around at will, helping students without any obstacles.

Another advantage of this room arrangement is that students can, while doing seatwork, meet with a "face partner" or "shoulder partner" without having to move chairs or desks.

Finally, when the teacher is front and center in the classroom, no student has to do more than turn his or her chair slightly in order to make eye contact with the teacher, while

still being able to take notes or reference a book or other resource on the desk. Moving slightly gives them a clear line of sight to the screen.

He who does the talking does the learning, which is why I learned more about American history in my first year of teaching than I did in all my years of undergraduate and graduate work. This is because I did the talking. When students talk, they learn, and the room arrangement in the attached file allows for students to meet, discuss something, process information—while the teacher walks among the pairs listening to the conversations, and deciding who she will have share out during the debriefing.

You might take a look at your current classroom furniture arrangement with an eye toward making some changes that will facilitate student movement and structured conversations.