



Classroom in a Bag

Or: Transforming the Janitor's Closet for Classroom Use *

Do you teach in a less-than-inviting space?

Does your classroom change from week to week depending on the needs of others?

Even though we recognize the value and importance of a clean, welcoming classroom space, sometimes it feels impossible to create a warm and pleasant environment for our adult learners when we are given grim places to teach, no storage, and restrictions for what we can post on the walls. Here are a few ideas for improving the physical space where you teach, even when you never know where you will be for your next class. Talk to your students for other ideas and invite them to share in making your space more pleasant.

- Select a lightweight tote bag to in which to store your “transformation items.” These might include:
- Paper towels to wipe down tables or desks; a small spray bottle of simple cleaner
- Good-smelling things. Even sharing a few oranges with students freshens up the air. Avoid chemicals; essential oils in a diffuser can work if no one is allergic. Lavender calms; mint and orange oil energize.
- Inflatable palm tree (available at Oriental Trading or at places like iParty.) These are compact when deflated, easy to transport.
- A plastic pitcher and paper cups for water.
- Colorful lightweight fabric (large scarves, *pareos*, or sarongs can work well and can often be found at second hand stores) to drape over tables and soften the look of a room.

Setting up the classroom can become a short transformation ritual before teaching and learning begins. Students can add to the artifacts and share in setting up and taking down.

*Context: The idea for **Classroom in a Bag** arose from immediate needs teachers have for creating positive classroom environments within less-than-perfect classroom spaces. It is not intended as a solution for bad working conditions in the ABE field. Discussing these conditions with ABE students and colleagues can lead to concerted activity and positive change and is wholeheartedly encouraged!