
The One-Computer Classroom. . . Planning

Planning for the one-computer classroom requires a different mind-set than a whole group situation. Instead of dealing with the whole class activity, generally the one computer is used by an individual or a small group. Although you can do many of the same activities, you need to structure those activities somewhat differently.

Before Getting Into Groups

Introducing the activity to the whole group

Explain the objectives of the lesson and your expectations to the class as a whole. Allow students to work on the project individually on a time-line based on your unit. Be sure you have the project directions clearly posted at the computer work station and a Software hints sheet for the specific program the students are using. This allows students to work independently without interrupting you and the other students in small group activities.

"Keyboard Egg Timer"

Making sure one student is not monopolizing the project and keeping the other students off the computer

When time is limited and the project is well-suited to your unit, allow students to work in small groups or in pairs to complete the project. If two students are working together, set the timer for five minutes.

One student will work for the first five minutes, and, when the timer goes off, that student must turn the keyboard over to the other student, and the timer is reset. At the end of the ten minutes, have the students write a paragraph about what they did to contribute to the project and how well they shared as a group.

Computer Expert

Helping students help each other

Occasionally students will need extra help on the computer. Designate a technology team or computer expert for your classroom. Name one student as the printing expert, another as the saving expert, a third as the font expert and so on. This can be per project, per software system or per semester. The technology team will be in charge of helping any student having trouble on the computer. Once the students know where to go for help, you will be free to concentrate on other classroom matters. Train these students how to answer questions and how to demonstrate or explain the answer *to* the student without solving problems *for* the student.

Management Sheet

Keeping track

Keep up with student progress with a Status of the Class management sheet. This helps keep track of who is using his or her time wisely and who may be struggling with the activity.

Author Station/Writer's Workshop Center

The classroom computer is a wonderful publishing tool. It makes the student's writing malleable for editing, polishing and publishing in a supportive, collaborative classroom environment. Just add some cardboard, binding materials and markers, and you are an independent book making company, complete with 25 eager authors!