

10 Classroom Ideas to Try in 2015

By **Jennie Magiera** on January 5, 2015 1:28 PM

http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_toward_tomorrow/2015/01/new_things_that_were_back_to.html?print=1

Now that we're back to school, what are some ways you can shake things up in the new year? Here are 10 ideas to try out in your classroom, no matter how big or small your learners may be. Have some ideas of your own? Or have you tried one of these ideas already and have some tips? Add your thoughts to the comments below!

1. **Student Resolution Blog**

Many teachers have their students create new year's resolutions in January—an easy way to have them to do some midyear goal setting. Help your kids stick to these resolutions by having them **create a blog** to track their progress. Start by having them create a video or text post describing their resolution and why it's important. Follow up by having them create a plan and post that. Each day, or week, have them post updates, reflecting on their progress and challenges. Give time for them to comment on their classmates' posts, giving encouragement and advice.

2. **Student-led conferences**

This was an idea I got from the great teachers at **Taupaki School**. They have their students lead their own parent-teacher conferences. Primary students have a structured guide to follow while older students simply curate their own work in various domains throughout the quarter to share with families. Students learn to take more ownership of their learning and have to demonstrate their growth and challenges.

3. **Hire student tech leaders**

Get some much-needed support and empower your students by posting a new classroom job: Technology leader. Ask your students to "apply" for this job by having

them write an essay about their leadership and love of digital learning (or for primary students, draw a picture that shows why technology is important to them). Then interview and "hire" 4-6 qualified applicants. These tech leaders will join you for a "tech lunch" weekly or monthly where they'll learn about the next app, program or device you'll be using in the classroom. On the day you roll out this new tool, these little helpers will be around the room to support a lost peer.

4. Twitter Tuesday

This is a great way to engage your classroom or even your entire school community around a common theme or idea. Additionally, it's as terrific method for teaching digital citizenship and encouraging powerful student voice. Check out [this post](#) for more information on how to get started!

5. Backchanneling

Not sure you're ready to set your kids loose on Twitter? Scaffold up to this by having [backchannel conversations](#) in your classroom. [Today's Meet](#) is a great starting point, but if you're ready to try something else, there are [various other platforms](#) that offer different bonus features.

6. Tell a story with a map

Many of us have used Google Maps to find directions to dinner, but have you tried using one to tell a story? Have your class use [MyMaps](#) (now a part of Google Drive!) for storytelling. They can drop pins in the different locations a character visits and add in videos, images or text to talk about plot or character development. One idea for middle grades teachers: Have students overlay the [Divergent factions](#) onto a map of Chicago!

7. Digital book reviews

Speaking of stories, how about encouraging students to try out new texts through digital book reviews. Allow students to create 1-minute book trailers using your 1:1 devices or their own cell phones and easy apps like [iMovie](#), [MoveNote](#), or

WeVideo. Then create a **free QR code**, print that out and tape to the back of the book. Students can scan the QR codes on the book to learn more about it and see endorsements from peers (and overtime, perhaps even an older sibling from years past)!

8. QR Code centers

QR Codes are also a great catalyst for small group learning! Instead of making a ton of centers materials and directions, video record a demonstration of that math game, set up for that science lab or instructions for that phonics activity. Simply print the QR code with the activity title, then place it in a picture frame at the designated table and voila—students can scan it to find out what their task is!

9. Challenge Based Learning

Shake up your traditional curriculum by introducing some real-world challenges. Also known as Problem Based Learning and sometimes Project Based Learning, Challenge Based Learning is all about immersing students in authentic challenges and letting them explore concepts through the development of a viable solution. For more information, check out this **past post and webinar** about how to get started.

10. Take a Virtual Field Trip

Too cold to head to the zoo this February? Or tired of always taking your students to that same museum every year? Try out a virtual field trip to the International Space Station or a volcano with **Google's Connected Classrooms!** Students can tune into archived trips or you could take charge and arrange for your own virtual field trip by connecting with an organization on your own!

