

To my new Café Colleague,

What a grand adventure is in store for you and your students! I imagine you are eager to begin, yet a bit nervous too. I remember those feelings of “How is this all going to work?” and “Can I do really it?” Let me assure you, it’s going to work and you really can do it.

To help, let me share some key points about the Café menu that might assist you on your journey...

1. Keep it simple!

We teachers like to make everything “cutesy” in our classroom. Please resist the urge! Think of your menu board simply as a place to put important information. You want the goals and strategies to be the stars of your menu, not the purple polka dotted, zebra striped borders and headers with stick figure children peeking over the top. You can make it look colorful, clean and neat using construction paper and a pleasant font. It’s really all you need.

2. Keep it close!

From your teaching chair, you should be able to touch the menu columns with your hand or a pointer. Yes, it needs to be that close. The menu won’t be as effective to use as a tool if the children have to turn their bodies to see it across the room. If necessary, place your Café board on a display board so it can be set right beside your chair.

3. Children own it!

Let them help you create the board in some way. By now, you’ve read that students can do the writing (be sure the words are spelled correctly) or illustrate the strategies. This is important! Don’t take shortcuts and have all the I-charts and strategies laminated before the children even arrive. Think about it this way, would you rather teach in a classroom that you designed or one prepared by someone else?

4. Use it!

Everyday we read books to the children; everyday we can make a reference to the Café board. As you build your menu, strategy by strategy, it will represent countless hours of sharing and learning with the children. Or, will be just a big poster hanging on the wall? The choice is yours. What you and your students get out of it will be directly proportional to the amount of time and effort you put into it. My hope for you is that your Café menu will seem like an old friend by the end of the year. You’ll smile as you take it down, remembering the many wonderful teaching opportunities it inspired.

So cheers to you for daring to try something different! I think you will find that the moments spent teaching from the Café menu will be the best of the day. Stay passionate, positive and persistent!

From,
Your new Café friend