

Ty Ankrom's Here's What I Think ...

By the calendar, it is officially spring. For many, that can mean spring cleaning around the house. But what about your classroom?

It's common to accumulate a raft of papers, reports, magazines and half-used (or broken) classroom supplies.

Long before Netflix made Marie Kondo a household name for her home makeover system of tidying up, psychologists were encouraging teachers to do the same in the classroom.

In a 2014 study, Dr. Anna V. Fisher, Karrie E. Godwin and Dr. Howard Seltman examined how classroom displays affected children's ability to focus.

The Carnegie Mellon University researchers reported in an article published in the journal *Psychological Science* "that children in highly decorated classrooms were more distracted, spent more time off-task and demonstrated smaller learning gains than when the decorations were removed."

The study involved 24 kindergarten students who learned three introductory science lessons in a heavily decorated classroom and three in a sparse classroom.

The results were that "children's accuracy on the test questions was higher in the sparse classroom (55% correct) than in the decorated classroom (42% correct)."

More recently, Heather Wolpert-Gawron, an award-winning middle school teacher and project-based learning coach, wrote in a blog about re-evaluating her classroom décor and provided some points to consider.

She suggests that wall displays encourage thinking and are appealing. She also reminds teachers to do away with outdated tools that students may not have a use for today.

Similarly, she encourages teachers to embrace the digital era for curriculum and storage.

Read her full blog at www.edutopia.org/article/



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decluttering-your-classroom.

For other ideas on de-cluttering classroom space, check out www.teachtc.com/5-tips-to-clean-up-classroom-clutter/.



This week was designated Public Schools Week, an opportunity to highlight all that public schools — and teachers and staff members — do for young people.

An article that appeared March 12 on Education Week's Web site highlighted the importance of teacher-student relationships.

The article referenced an upcoming study by Mary Helen Immordino-Yang, a cognitive neuroscientist at the University of Southern California, with New York City's Bank Street College of Education.

"A Review of Educational Research analysis of 46 studies found that strong teacher-student relationships were associated in both the short- and long-term with improvements on practically every measure schools care about: higher student academic engagement, attendance, grades, fewer disruptive behaviors and suspensions, and lower school dropout rates. Those effects were strong even after controlling for differences in students' individual, family and school backgrounds," the article reported.

Such relationships also benefit teachers, another study found.

According to the European *Journal of Psychology of Education*, "a teacher's relationship with students was the best predictor of how much the teacher experienced joy versus anxiety in class."

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