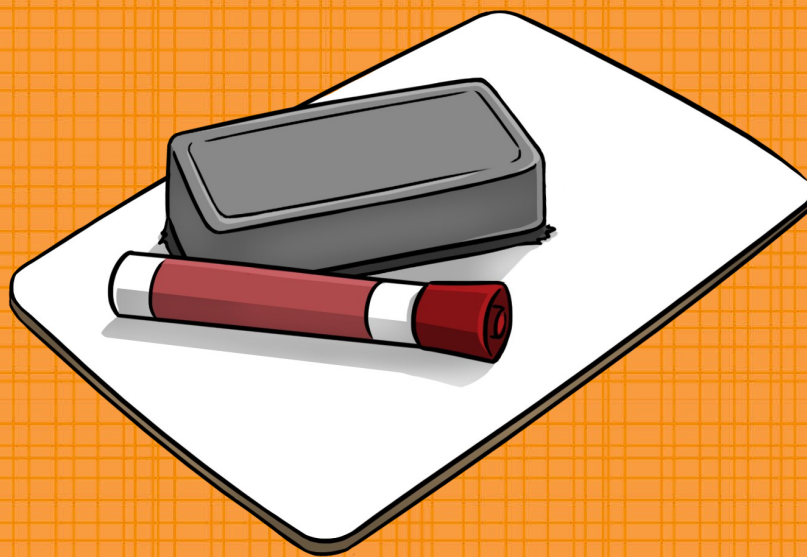


Teaching with Dry Erase Boards

Interactive and Effective
Strategies for Instruction



Laura Candler
©2012 Teaching Resources
www.lauracandler.com

Teaching with Dry Erase Boards

Interactive and Effective Strategies for Instruction

Note: This article was first published as a blog post in three parts for TeachHUB.com, an online magazine for educators. I decided to compile all three articles into one free document that can be downloaded, saved, and shared with others.



by Laura Candler

When it comes to active engagement, nothing beats a white board. Not the expensive, high-tech kind – I'm referring to the low-tech white boards that students write on with dry erase markers. If I had to choose between an interactive white board and a classroom set of dry erase boards, I'd choose the low-tech white boards every time.

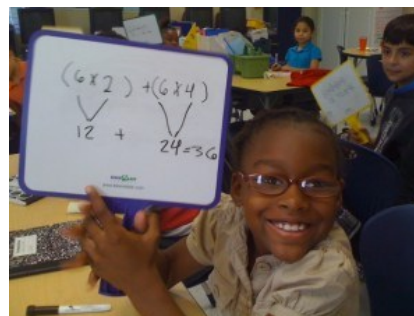
Why are individual dry erase boards so effective?

- You can use them to engage every child in every single lesson.
- Minute by minute, you'll know exactly who's grasping the concepts and who's not.
- Students love them because they're fun, and mistakes made during guided practice can be easily brushed away.
- Using dry erase boards will save paper and significantly reduce the stack of work you take home to grade.
- Dry erase boards can be used in whole group instruction, small guided groups, and learning centers.
- No need to worry about technology failing when you need it most.
- No learning curve or advanced prep! Just pass them out and let the learning begin!



Where to Get Individual Dry Erase Boards

Maybe you're already thinking that you can't afford a full set of dry erase boards. However, I want to dispel that notion right now! Dry erase boards are amazingly affordable when you make your own or purchase them with grants, and there are a number of creative alternatives that work well, too.



1. **Store-Bought Dry Erase Boards** – The advantage of store-bought boards is that they are often double-sided, with one blank side and lines or graph paper on the other. Some companies like teacher-created [Kleenslate Concepts](#) can even customize them for you with handwriting lines, graphic organizers, or music lines. If store-bought boards are not in your budget, you may be able to obtain funding for them through organizations like [DonorsChoose.org](#) or from school business partners.

2. **Homemade Dry Erase Boards** – To make your own set of dry erase boards, visit a home improvement store and buy a large sheet of white shower board. There may be a charge for having it cut into rectangles or squares, but if you go when the store isn't busy, you may be able to sweet-talk them into doing it for free! One 4' x 8' board will be enough for thirty-two 12" x 12" square boards. Sand or tape the edges to protect little fingers. Tip: Bring a dry erase marker with you and test it on the board's surface before you buy it. Some boards work better than others.
3. **Alternatives to Dry Erase Boards** – If you absolutely can't obtain real dry erase boards, try one of the following alternatives:
- Plastic dinner plates
 - A piece of card stock inside a sheet protector
 - Plastic menu covers
 - Laminated sheets of card stock
 - Your students' desktops – although they won't be able to hold them up to show their work.



Whole Class Interactive Lessons

The whole class strategies below work particularly well for subjects like math, spelling, vocabulary, and language arts where you can break the material down into bite-sized chunks. Using dry erase boards makes the entire lesson effective, interactive, and fun.

1. Pre-teaching Strategies

- **Determining Readiness** - I start by writing a problem on the board and everyone solves the problem on their own boards without help. When finished, they turn their boards face down. Then I say "Show Me!" and they flip their boards over for me to review. Since my purpose is to assess readiness and background knowledge, I reveal the correct answers but I don't take time to explain how I solved the problems. This quick check enables me to start my instruction at the right instructional level.
- **Reviewing Concepts** - If our previous day's lesson is essential for understanding the new concept, I'll start with a few review problems. I'm careful not to point out individual errors in front of the class, but I do review the problems and answers to make sure everyone is ready to move on.

2. Teaching Strategies

- **Guided Practice** – After introducing the lesson briefly, I begin posing problems of increasing difficulty. I always start with something easy that everyone should be able to handle and I work up to more difficult content. I alternate a few minutes of direct instruction with a few minutes of individual white board practice, always checking to see if my students are ready for the next step. Teaching this way allows me to keep instruction moving quickly when students grasp the concepts easily, or slow down when they need more time.



- **Targeted Help** – After I present each problem, I move around the classroom while the students are working to see how they are solving the problems. If I notice that a student is having difficulty, I make a point to walk over to that child while he or she is working, offering help as needed. If I have a teacher assistant or parent volunteer in the room, I can ask the adult helper to do the same.

3. Follow-up Strategies

- **Daily Quick Checks** – At the end of the lesson, I use the dry erase boards to assess how the class as a whole is progressing. I write 4 to 6 problems on the board and set a timer for 5 minutes or an appropriate amount of time. As students finish working the problems, they put their boards face down and raise their hands. When I come over to check their work, they quickly show me their answers. After the timer goes off, I check the remaining boards. Then we review and discuss the problems and answers as a class to correct any misunderstandings. This informal assessment lets me know what types of problems to assign for homework and where to start my instruction the next day. Each week I give at least one paper and pencil graded quiz for my records, but these daily formative assessments give me the immediate feedback I need for planning.
- **Opting Out of Homework** – I frequently excuse students from doing the lesson homework if they scored 100% correct during the daily quick check. They love this, and it motivates them to do their very best work during on daily assessments. I simply check off their name on my homework chart so I'll remember that I excused them from the assignment. Why should they have homework on something they already know how to do perfectly?



Six Guided Practice Strategies for Dry Erase Boards

Effective lessons often start with whole class instruction and include guided practice through cooperative learning, small group instruction, one-on-one assistance, or learning centers. Try these dry erase board strategies for the guided practice portion of your lesson. These methods work well to actively engage students in practicing a skill with a partner or group, but you'll want to follow up with an independent assignment for accountability.

1. **Partner Pass** – Pair students of similar abilities and give each pair one dry erase board and a marker to share. Next, give them a set of task cards with questions or assign a page of problems from a textbook. Be sure to provide an answer key for the assignment. As they complete the assignment, students take turns being the Recorder or the Coach. The Recorder solves the first problem and/or answers the question while the Coach watches and coaches as needed. The Coach checks the answer with the key and they switch roles for the next task card. To see an example of an

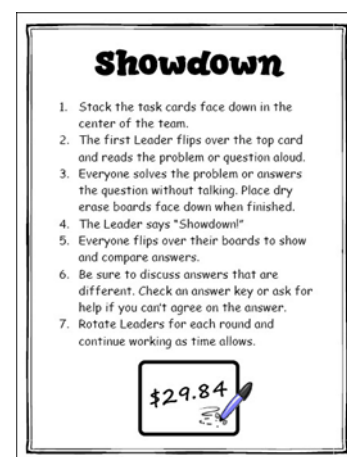
Subject & Predicate Task Cards	
Write the simple subject and the simple predicate.	
1. The shark swims through the dark ocean.	2. Our family loves to relax and swim at the beach.
3. Some small fish hide under rocks in tide pools.	4. The Atlantic Ocean looks calm today.
5. Divers jump overboard into the freezing water.	6. Many brightly-colored fish chase each other.
7. Tiny sand crabs scurry into their holes.	8. Thomas Clark studies the ocean from a sailboat.
9. He videotapes a dolphin jumping out of the water.	10. The sail of the boat catches the ocean breeze.

appropriate set of task cards for this activity, download the [Subject and Predicate Task Cards](#) from the Teaching Resources. You can create your own task cards using the [blank task card template](#) from that same page. Starter ideas are shown below.

Type of Task Card	Sample Tasks on Cards
Sentence with underlined word	Write the part of speech.
Math problem	Solve problem and record the answer.
State name	Write the capital city.
Science review question	Write a short answer.
Number in standard form	Write the word name or expanded form.
Present tense verb	Write the past tense form.
Definitions of key vocabulary words	Write the correct term.

2. **Pairs Compare** – For Pairs Compare, both students will need their own dry erase board and a marker. Create pairs of students with similar abilities and provide them with task cards or a textbook assignment as described above. Both students work the first problem independently without talking. They place their boards face down when finished. When both are ready, they flip their boards face up, compare answers, and discuss solutions. They check their answer with a key or use a calculator to check math problems.

3. **Showdown** – For Showdown, students should be seated in cooperative learning teams. For each team, you'll need a set of task cards as well as a reference for checking answers, such as an answer key, a textbook, class notes, or a calculator. The task cards are stacked face down in the middle of the team and students rotate the role of Leader. The Leader flips over the top card and all students silently solve the problem or write the answer on their dry erase boards. They turn them face down to show they are ready. The Leader says, "Showdown!" and they flip their boards face up, compare and discuss. You can find a page of kid-friendly [Showdown directions](#) on Teaching Resources. (Note: Showdown works best if you group your students homogeneously for this activity. If students within each team differ too much academically, your at-risk students may become frustrated if they are the only ones missing the problem each time. You can differentiate by using task cards on different levels for each group.)



4. **Small Group Instruction** – Dry erase boards are great for working with kids in small groups. Keep a stack of boards along with a box of markers in the middle of your small group table. When you ask a question or pose a problem, have students jot the answer down on their boards before sharing with the group. This step keeps everyone on task and serves as formative assessment while you are teaching a new skill.

5. **One-on-One Instruction** – If you have a teacher assistant, parent volunteer, or peer tutor, there's nothing better than a dry erase board for working with students individually. The tutor can write a problem or question on the board and watch closely as the student solves the problem or responds to the question. The level of difficulty can easily be adjusted for each new task according to how the student responded to the one before it.
6. **Learning Centers** – Many center games involve recording answers or solving problems; for example, math games often require students to solve a problem before they can move their marker or cover a space on a game board. Dry erase boards are terrific for these activities because they save paper and allow students to correct their mistakes easily. When assigning students to work with a buddy, have them use Partner Pass or Pairs Compare to provide structure and individual accountability.



Organizing and Managing Dry Erase Boards

Dry erase boards are an awesome tool for instruction, but they do require a certain amount of organization and management. Here are some helpful tips I've picked up over the years.

- **Numbered Boards** – Write a number on the back of each dry erase board, and assign every student their own board from your collection. The boards should stay at school so that they're always handy for any lesson. I find that assigning each student their own board encourages students to take better care of them. The boards are less likely to be left on the floor where they can become scratched or dirty. If we do find a board somewhere in the room, it's easy to return it to its owner.
- **Marker Management** – If your school doesn't provide dry erase markers for students, you'll need to figure out a way to ensure a steady supply of them. Some teachers ask students to bring in a pack of markers at the beginning of the year, and they store the markers in the classroom to hand out as needed. You may be able to purchase them as a part of a grant or ask a local business to donate some. As a 5th grade teacher, I felt comfortable expecting my students to be responsible for having a marker each day. When they ran out, I let them borrow from me or a friend, but they had to take home this [Dry Erase Marker request slip](#) and get it signed by a parent. You'll find this permission slip at the back of this article.



Dry Erase Marker Request	
Name _____	Date _____
<p><small>This is a note to let you know that your child needs a new dry erase marker for class. We use our markers for instruction on a regular basis. He or she may borrow a marker from me for a few days until you have a chance to get one. Please sign below to show that you are aware of the need for a new dry erase marker. Thank you!</small></p>	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: flex-end;"> Parent Signature _____ </div>	

- **Handy Sock Erasers** – In addition to markers, you'll need a supply of erasers. Kids can use tissues, but that's wasteful and expensive in the long run. They can also use store-bought erasers if you have them. But if you don't I've found that small black socks work best; I buy boys' ankle socks in packs of 10 or 12 at a discount store and they last for a long time. White socks soon look grungy even when washed, so it's best to get the black ones. Kids like to wear their eraser socks on one hand while holding their markers in the other – definitely a “handy” solution to the eraser problem!
- **Surface Solutions** – Keeping the surface of the board clean and free of marks can be tricky. Encourage your students treat them with care to prevent scratches and to erase all traces of marker after every use. If marks are left on the boards for any length of time, they are almost impossible to remove later. I've had varying degrees of success with dry erase board cleaners, wet wipes, and nail polish remover. I use the nail polish remover myself after the students have left, and I air out the room completely before leaving for the day. If you purchase your boards from [Kleenslate](#), you can clean them with soap and water, and you can also order replacement surfaces if the original ones become marred.

- **Materials Storage –**

Markers and Erasers – I like to keep a set of four markers and four erasers together in a zippered pencil pouch as shown here. At the end of the day, the team captain is responsible for making sure all markers and erasers are back in the pouch.



Dry Erase Boards - I prefer to let my students keep their dry erase boards inside their desks where they can pull them out on the spot for instruction. I used to sew small covers for them that looked like tiny pillowcases, but I found that solution to be costly and time-intensive. Eventually I decided that it was easier to replace the boards every few years than to try to cover them. Some teachers store all the boards together on a shelf, organized in sets for each team. The team captain retrieves the set of boards when instruction begins.

Dry Erase Board Sets – If students don't have space at their teams or desks to store materials, you may want to store sets of markers, erasers, and boards for them. You can purchase clear plastic sweater bags to keep all the materials for each team together. Label each plastic storage bag with a team number to make it easy to distribute materials when needed.

Well, there you have it! Now you know why I'm convinced that dry erase boards are interactive, effective, and fun! I can promise you that after you start using these strategies yourself, you'll become a member of the Dry Erase Board fan club, too!



Please visit Teaching Resources at www.lauracandler.com where you'll find more books and ebooks for educators in my online file cabinet! You'll also find teaching tips, freebies, and strategies on my blog, Corkboard Connections, located at www.corkboardconnections.com.

Dry Erase Marker Request

Name _____

Date _____

This is a note to let you know that your child needs a new dry erase marker for class. We use our markers for instruction on a regular basis. He or she may borrow a marker from me for a few days until you have a chance to get one.

Please sign below to show that you are aware of the need for a new dry erase marker. Thank you!



Parent Signature _____

Dry Erase Marker Request

Name _____

Date _____

This is a note to let you know that your child needs a new dry erase marker for class. We use our markers for instruction on a regular basis. He or she may borrow a marker from me for a few days until you have a chance to get one.

Please sign below to show that you are aware of the need for a new dry erase marker. Thank you!



Parent Signature _____

Dry Erase Marker Request

Name _____

Date _____

This is a note to let you know that your child needs a new dry erase marker for class. We use our markers for instruction on a regular basis. He or she may borrow a marker from me for a few days until you have a chance to get one.

Please sign below to show that you are aware of the need for a new dry erase marker. Thank you!



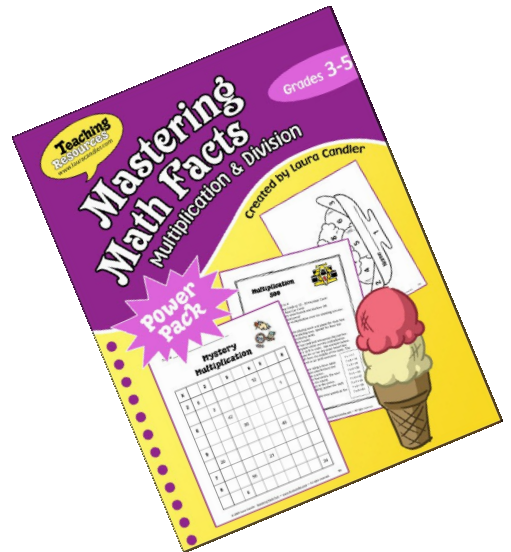
Parent Signature _____

Teaching Resources Website

www.lauracandler.com

Ready-to-Use Resources for Teachers!

- Free printables and activity sheets
- Lesson plans and teaching strategies
- Cooperative learning methods
- Classroom management and motivation
- Literacy & Reading Workshop strategies
- Mathematics instructional resources
- Weekly Newsletters



Are you on **Facebook**? If so, check out Teaching Resources for new ideas:
www.facebook.com/TeachingResources

Discover Laura's Teaching Resources . . .

- Digital eBooks and lessons you can download from www.lauracandler.com and print or use on a Smartboard!
- Each book, ebook or lesson pack includes ready-to-use directions, printables, and teaching tips!
- Popular titles include:
 - **Mastering Math Facts**
 - **Daily Math Puzzler Series**
 - **Math Stations for Middle Grades**
 - **Laura Candler's Power Reading Workshop**



Created by
Laura Candler
Milken Educator



Laura Candler's Teaching Resources

If you enjoyed this free teaching resources pack, you might also enjoy some of my popular ebooks and lessons. You can purchase them from my store on TeachersPayTeachers.com by clicking the links below or by visiting my Teaching Resources website: www.lauracandler.com.



Laura Candler

Teaching Multiple Intelligence Theory

Bingo Showdown:

Confusing Words Review

Character Bio Reports

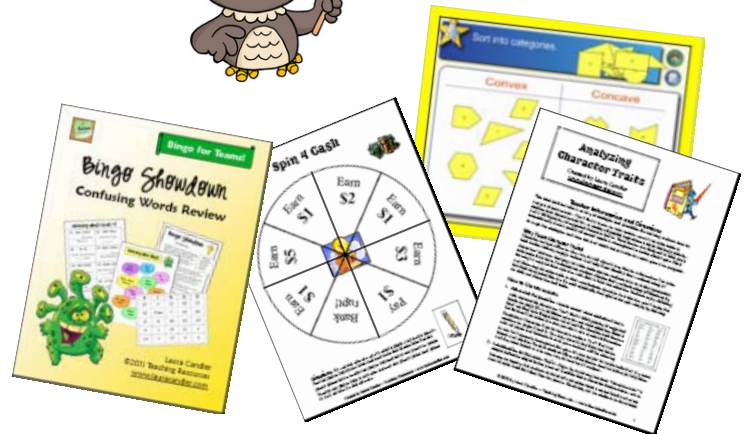
Analyzing Character Traits

Powerful Poetry Combo

Plural Noun Showdown

Sentence Go Round

Writing Powerful Poetry



Geometry: Exploring the Basics

Math Stations for Middle Grades (3-8)

Mastering Math Facts

Polygon Explorations

Polygon Explorations (Smartboard)

Place Value Spinner Games

Fraction Spinner Games

Simplify and Snap Fraction Game

Order of Operations Bingo

Seasonal Teaching Packs

October

November

December

January

February (Free!)

March

April

