

Sticking It to Them

“If we had 3M Post-It Easel Pads, we could...”

At the beginning of August, all across the nation glimpses of the return of school can be seen. It starts with the local stores changing their shelves from swimming and pool supplies to shelves being stocked with the much-needed classroom supplies, such as pens, pencils, backpacks, and notebooks. Often, students can find teachers pushing shopping carts full of these items and other supplies for both students and their classrooms. One item that will surely be found in the shopping cart is the much-needed and ever popular Post-It notes or other brands of sticky note pads. These sticky note pads will inevitably find their way onto student's papers or folders home to parents, covering a teacher's computer and desk with simple reminders of both large and small issues, and other ambiguous locations as references and reminders to both student and teachers. However, these sticky notes can do so much more than just act as reminders or a place for a password. They can be used to open a whole new method of classroom engagement as well as formative assessments; these are just a few to mention.

Every professional development meeting or continued education course that I have participated in has incorporated large, easel-sized papers that are used as references to the daily schedule, answers to group questions, or as a place to put final thoughts or comments. As this dawned on me, I started to do what every teacher does when they have an idea or notion that could be applied to their classroom: I placed the thought on a sticky note as a reminder to do some further research. Research I did.

I found out that the large, easel-sized sticky notes can be used to incorporate group projects, act as a vehicle for vocabulary activities, brainstorm the causes and events of historical events, allow visual learners to clearly demonstrate a concept or purpose through drawing, and finally be used as a parking lot of ideas and questions about certain topics. I purchased a two-pack of 3M Post-It self-stick wall pads to use in my U.S. Government classroom. For one unit, I placed important concepts and rigorous in-depth questions on the wall pads for students to use as daily reviews. Students would enter the room and locate the wall pads in groups and then answer questions or statements posed for them. Students used one wall pad to write down concepts or questions that needed further explanations. This allowed me to review the wall pad daily as a tool to either reinforce a concept or to reteach a misunderstanding. The wall pads worked. Prior to the use of the sticky notes, 77% of the students received an 85% or higher on their quizzes (last three prior quizzes). After the use of the sticky pads, those who scored 85% or higher rose to 86%, a nine percent increase in students obtaining 85% or higher.

After finding these results and sharing them with the class, I surveyed the class on what they thought about the use of the sticky pads and how they would like to incorporate them in the classroom. The response was overwhelmingly positive as well as engaging. As a class, we think that the wall pad sticky notes would help our classroom in multiple ways. If the class had more sticky notes in the classroom, we could use them to generate projects that would allow students to create classroom sets of U.S. Constitutional Amendments that would have what the Amendment states, an image of the Amendment in action, and engaging questions that would go along with the Amendments. The students also stated that we could share these with the entire school by placing them in the hallways or even share them in the middle school classrooms who briefly discuss the U.S. Constitution and its importance. As a class, students are seated in six groups of five. The students suggested that if each group had a smaller 3 inch x 3 inch sticky pad, they could create flashcards for vocabulary words that would have both images as well as definitions to governmental terms that they could use as a class.

As you can see, the sticky note pads are more than just simple reminders; they are vehicles to learning. They inform, they remind, and they can assess everyone from the teacher to the students. With the help of the W.R.I.T.E Grant Program, our classroom will be able to take on multiple learning techniques that have been proven to work. These supplies will enhance flexible learning practices, support students learning styles and disabilities, and create new and exciting activities to learn how our government operates.

As a newer teacher with only four years' experience, I look forward to my future, and I strive each day to provide my students with the support needed to achieve their academic goal; however, I want to empower them by taking action for their learning. My students have proven that when they have the tools and means necessary to make learning memorable, the goal of education has been met. Thank you for your time and consideration in this grant and for the opportunity in helping my students fulfill their goal. I am greatly appreciative of programs such as the W.R.I.T.E. Grant Program and Friends Office. Not only do programs like yours advocate and support classrooms, but they also allow students the opportunity to learn in different ways.