Checklist for Organizing Your Classroom

- Desks are arranged in clusters so three or four students can work together.

- Each cluster has only three or four seats. Bigger groups can be hard for both teachers and students to manage.

- Tables, if you use them, are spread out evenly, with no more than four students at each table.

- Pathways between clusters are clear and wide enough for middle schoolers’ bodies.

- Students know how to move furniture as needed. If you choose to place desks in rows, model and practice with students how to move furniture into clusters for small group work and then back again.

- Frequently used materials are labeled, stored neatly, and accessible.

- Infrequently used materials are tucked away from view. This eliminates clutter and removes potential distractions.

- Student work is displayed, both finished and in-progress work. Show every student’s work at some point, not just that of the same few “star” students. Change displays frequently to reflect new learning.

- Students know to use anchoring supports and tools. These help create routines and predictability.

- Students know where work is collected.