



Positively impact your students' learning with colour

We all have colours we do and don't gravitate towards – but there's actually a lot more to colour than pure aesthetics. According to neuroscience, colour is actually a powerful force that can shape our moods, thought patterns and even our behaviours.

Definitely worth considering when you're next picking out paint colours for your home, or clothes for an important date; but it's also something to keep in mind when you're in the classroom. After all, kids are just as susceptible to the influence of colour as adults, so why not use it to your (and their) advantage?

First, let's start with a quick science lesson.

If you're sceptical about the true impact of colour on the brain, you need look no further than the swathe of studies that have been done in this space, including those conducted by renowned educator Josef Albers, and modern-day Harvard University professors. While different conclusions have been reached, experts agree on some basic principles – starting with the fact that colour can actually affect neurological pathways in the brain.

As part of the electromagnetic spectrum, colour is (in its purest form) energy; a wavelength with its own magnetic frequency. When used in a specific context or way, colours can trigger a biomechanical response in the brain, which leads us to think or feel a certain way. Ever wondered why you feel hungry when you see a warm-toned fast food sign, or why blue feels calming? A large part of this is colour.

While colour is certainly a tool that marketers use to their advantage, it's also something you can harness in the classroom to help your students. To get you started, we've profiled a few colours that are particularly relevant to learning, and given you some ideas on when and how to use them.

Green helps kids concentrate

Aside from being one of easiest colours on the eye, green also reminds us of nature. Research suggests that this hue helps students stay focused, showing that students who looked at green made fewer mistakes and overall had better concentration.

When to use it: If your class is lacking focus or feels distracted (and let's face it, no school teacher will be a stranger to those moments!).

Teacher Tactic: A projector is a great tool to have up your sleeve. By setting a green-toned image as the classroom's temporary backdrop you can set the tone for the room. An image of a forest or field is great for when your students are sitting down for a test, but you can use this technique for all sorts of colours and occasions.

Student Activity: If you feel your students' need a refreshed perspective, or to help transition from one topic to the next, ask students to sketch a 'nature' theme or something that inspires them using only green tones. Display artwork around the classroom to help contribute to a focused classroom environment.



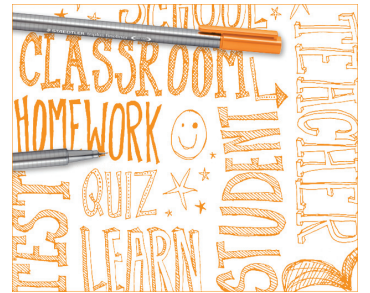
Orange brings an energy boost

Orange isn't just a nice bright shade – theorists also argue that it increases the oxygen supply into the brain, stimulating mental activity. This extra oxygen also invigorates us, and primes us to get things done. Be warned though, it also has the power to overstimulate the energetic.

When to use it: If your students are a little flat and the energy in the room is low.

Teacher Tactic: Why not print out classroom exercises on orange paper, or organise a craft activity with warm-toned materials?

Student Activity: Need a little inspiration to lift the classroom mood? Choose a topic of the day and ask students to write or draw words, phrases or pictures in orange in their workbooks. Brainstorming stimulates creativity and provokes thinking while simultaneously boosting positive energy with colour.



Blue helps calm things down

Research has shown that academic activities can be made easier with the use of blue. It's great for promoting high levels of thought and productivity – but be careful because too much can create the feeling of coldness or detachment.

When to use it: If you can't get the kids to concentrate and the mood feels hyperactive.

Teacher Tactic: Ask students to use 'blue' pens when approaching a difficult task, you can bring down their energy level and help them focus.

Student Activity: Plan an art class that focuses on works in cool tones, like Picasso's Blue period? Show your students blue-toned visuals and ask them to sketch the existing visual using blue tones



Colour combos help students remember

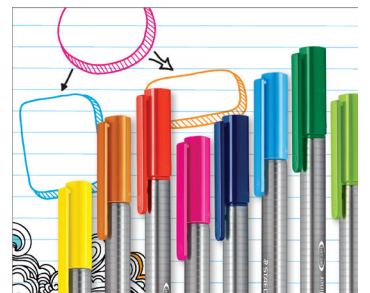
Another technique where colour can have a huge impact is 'colour coding' – that is, assigning different meanings to different colours.

When to use it: If your students are struggling to separate, or identify things in different categories (such as different word types).

Teacher Tactic: Use different colours as a teaching technique to differentiate the concepts you're teaching and improve student recognition and recall.

Student Activity: Hand out different coloured pens to your students, we love Staedtler's triplus fineliners as they come in 48 colours, and ask them to write verbs in red, nouns in blue, conjunctions in aqua etc. The colour associations will help reinforce the concepts you're teaching, and improve recognition and recall.

Bonus Tip: Ask students to write their homework or study notes in different colours. Not only will it help add a bit of spark to a tedious task, it will boost their overall learning experience and memory retention.



Of course, this is just the tip of the colourful iceberg.

There are loads of other ways to integrate colour into your classroom routine, from the stimulus and materials you use, to the way you decorate the room itself. We hope this gives you some inspiration to get started, and that this is the beginning of a colourful new chapter in your classroom's story!

Reference: STAEDTLER AUSTRALIA