

# No Paper, No Pencil Lost Pencils and Paper

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(*The Solution Book*, Solution Sheets, Section 15)

See also

Losing Textbooks or Workbooks 12

Slow Transitions 91

## Description of the Problem

Each day the second-grade class has a spelling lesson. The teacher always begins the lesson by saying, "It's time for spelling. Please take out your spelling book, a pencil, and a sheet of lined paper." And every day at least three students need to borrow a pencil or a sheet of paper.

## Cause

Students can become lax about keeping themselves supplied with paper and pencils if they aren't held accountable for doing so. Some students find that they don't need to keep track of materials because their teacher will give them the material they need. Some students may have found that losing materials is a good way to get the teacher's attention.

(Some students may lack the money to purchase supplies. This is, of course, a separate issue from the problem of repeatedly misplacing material.)

**The Goal** Students will keep track of their own pencils and paper.

## The Plan

**Step 1 Determine whether or not a lack of money to purchase the materials is a part of the problem.** If the lack of money is a factor, provide some way that students can work to earn the pencils and paper. One option is to set up jobs for them to do after school. Another possibility is to use pencils and paper as tangible reinforcers for doing good work in class. If materials are used as reinforcers for good work, make sure that students meet specific, prearranged standards in order to earn them. Students should not get something for nothing. Check with the school counselor; there are often funds available to help students whose families cannot provide them with school supplies.

**Step 2 Decide on a consequence for not having the necessary school supplies.** Your plan should allow for providing materials quickly so that instructional time is not wasted. Three different strategies are described below.

Have presharpended pencils and paper in your desk. When a student does not have materials, he or she may purchase them from you. The purchase price should be based on whatever

Turn the page.

## The Plan (continued)

reinforcement system you have working in your room. For example, if you have a point system, students could purchase a pencil in exchange for five points that they have earned for academic excellence or for good behavior. If your students work to earn free time, they could purchase a pencil in exchange for five minutes of free time.

Have presharpener pencils and paper in your desk. Students may borrow a pencil whenever they need to. However, they must put up some kind of collateral in exchange for the pencil. Collateral could consist of anything that the student values, such as a toy, a game, or even a shoe. The important thing to remember about allowing students to borrow supplies is that they remember to return the material. The best way to teach them this is to treat borrowing the same way a bank does. Never lend anything without getting adequate collateral first.

When students use up a pencil, ask them to put it into the “stub box.” This is a small box placed somewhere in the room so that all students have access to it. Whenever a student has misplaced a pencil, he or she may take one out of the stub box. After a day of writing with a pencil stub, most students will remember to bring a pencil the next day. If there are no pencils in the stub box, follow one of the two other procedures outlined above.

Whichever option you choose to implement, remember that the goal is to teach students to be responsible for their own materials. Do not lecture or remind the students. Let the consequences teach the student to be self-sufficient and responsible.

**Step 3** **When a student who typically loses materials has not had to purchase or borrow from you for some time, praise the student.** Let the student know that you are aware that keeping track of materials is difficult and that you are pleased with his or her success.