

Teacher revamps classroom

Walk into Kathleen Mathis' English classroom, and you will be surprised.

Mathis has creatively changed her classroom from typical and boring to a lively and comfortable space.

The interesting set up includes bright colored bean bag chairs, purple yoga balls, soft and plush chairs and rugs that come in nearly every color of the rainbow to replace the wooden desks and traditional school chairs.

But why has Mathis done this?

There is no doubt that most students find their classes boring.

You go over notes, complete a worksheet, get the homework assignment, and repeat.

It is an exhausting cycle and most students have trouble paying attention and learning in this repetitive, monotonous environment.

To find a solution for this, many teachers like Mathis have found new methods and techniques to make the classroom more interesting. They hope to persuade students to find education exciting and not something to dread.

Mathis uses Donors Choose, a website which allows friends and family to donate money for her renovations.

"I have always wanted my classroom to be an inviting space for students," Mathis said. "Donors Choose gave me an opportunity to do so without spending a lot of my own money."

By crowd sourcing, Mathis was able to raise \$1,200, along with using \$200 of her own money.

Students have recognized the hard work that she has put into her classroom and are extremely satisfied with the end product.

"I really like how Mrs. Mathis classroom is set up," sophomore Cynthia Nguyen said. "It makes me feel more comfortable in class, and it makes the class enjoyable,"

An innovative classroom is not the only endeavor Mathis has

made to make her class more engaging.

She has also made use of online programs to make homework assignments and class work more engrossing for students.

Instead of doing the usual annotating with highlighters and sticky notes, Mathis' students get to annotate online with systems like Diigo and Kami.

Along with review sheets, Mathis helps students review for vocabulary quizzes and tests with Padlet, Kahoot and Pear Deck.

"Now that we are a One-to-One school and every student has a laptop, I wanted to utilize the technology provided to everyone in an engaging way."

"The annotating systems we work with definitely make it easier to annotate," Nguyen said. "And the review methods make studying less boring."

Mathis is not the only teacher who has found innovative ways to catch students' attention.

World History teacher Joseph Valentino has figured out ways of his own.

Valentino is known for acting out historical events and major historical figures.

This includes yelling amongst other things that you normally wouldn't see a teacher do, in order to truly get in character.

"It wasn't anything I set out to do. I didn't do it my first couple years, but as I got more experience as a teacher, it evolved naturally as a way to set the mood and create an experience for students to remember," Valentino said.

Valentino believes that this method is a sure fire way to help students focus on the material being taught in class.

"It's effective because students won't forget what I act out, such as the Reign of Terror. But it wouldn't be effective if I used it all the time, so I use it as impact for certain times."

Valentino's students find his acting sequences to be entertaining and beneficial to learning.

"Personally, I really enjoy them," freshman Ladan Abdi said.

"At first you get intimidated, but then you realize how it

connects to what we're learning and you're like 'that makes sense.'"

School is vital for the development of the human brain and success in the future. Education provides people with the building blocks of life. Despite, it being occasionally a bore, it is a necessity.

However, learning can be fun with creative ways to approach it, and teachers are the key to unlocking that very much needed door for students.