## How to Manage Computer Laboratory

Tips for Strong Instructional Routines in the Computer Laboratory;

1. **Give instructions BEFORE students come to the lab.** Once they have a computer in front of them, kids won’t want to listen to you. If you’re a classroom teacher, show the websites/activities on your classroom projector and give the directions, *then* bring the class immediately to the lab.
2. **Teach students to sit in their same seat, turn on the computer, and begin working as soon as they enter the room.** Kids are anxious to use the machines and will play around and be disruptive if you force them to sit in front of a computer and not touch it.
3. **Make sure important websites and passwords are displayed.** Then when students say, “Which site are we on?” “How do I login?” you can just gesture at the sign. This doesn’t have to be a major production: view the slideshow above to see how simply appropriate signs and reminders can be posted.
4. **When giving directions in the lab, move quickly.** Don’t ask “Is everyone on this web page? Everyone got it?” Just look around: if most screens are at the right place, give the next direction. Students will eagerly help one another out as needed, and once the class is settled, you can circulate to troubleshoot with the ones who have fallen behind.
5. **Always have something for students to do when they finish early,** Kids shouldn’t have to ask what to do, or worse, find their own form of entertainment. When they complete their task, they should have a list of fun educational games or other things they can do.
6. **Have an alternate activity planned in case something goes wrong with your lesson**. What if the internet is down or too slow? What if a site is blocked? What if your subscription to a site is no longer valid? (Yes, all three of these have happened to me. Repeatedly.) Have at least two other things students can do, preferably things that are similar to past assignments so it won’t take a lot of explanation.
7. **Give meaningful, engaging assignments, preferably ones that allow students to work at their own pace.** Remember, the goal is to minimize time off task. Don’t make the entire class sit passively at ANY time. If you make them wait while three kids struggle to get online, and then again while you reprimand a few kids for being off task, and then again to make sure everyone’s gotten to the right website, the learning environment will be chaotic because the kids are frustrated.