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To celebrate the end of the first season of the Ten Minute Teacher Podcast on June 16th, we're running a giveaway. <http://www.coolcatteacher.com/help-kids-learn-code-dash-dot-wonder-workshop/> The Dash and Dot robot wonder pack from Wonder Workshop Stay tuned at the end of the show for how to enter.

Today's guest is Angela Watson. Check out her free video series, *Five Summer Secrets for a Stress-Free Fall*. Just go to cctea.ch/40hw-summer and enter your email to get this spring series. While you're there, take a look at the 40-hour work week club. This club has personally helped me a better teacher while working less hours. Yes, it is possible. Now, onto episode 78; *A Stress-Free Plan for Closing out Your Classroom with Angela Watson*.

The Ten-minute Teacher podcast with Vicki Davis. Every week day you'll learn powerful practical ways to be a more remarkable teacher today.

VICKI: Happy wonderful classroom Wednesday. Today we're talking to one of my favorite productivity teaching – just expert at everything, Angela Watson. [@angela_watson](https://twitter.com/angela_watson) And we're going to talk about a stress-free plan for closing out our classroom. Now, Angela, I have to admit, I'm not very good at this, I end up with a complete disaster in my room and sometimes even during pre-planning I'm cleaning out the mess that I left at the end of the year. Help me please.

ANGELA: I think a lot of teachers can relate to that. It's really a struggle and a lot of teachers haven't been taught a system for it. So, I'm looking forward to kind of breaking that down with you today.

VICKI: Let's do it.

ANGELA: Okay. So, the first thing that I want you to understand is that there's a difference between deconstructing the room and closing out your classroom. So taking things off the walls and storing these materials away in boxes or covering your shelves make a huge difference visually in your classroom.

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And it makes it feel like you've made a lot progress towards closing things out for the end of the year. But really, it's the easiest thing to do. And it's not really moving you forward. It's so quick that I actually recommend that you don't even start it until the second to last day of school. So, hear me out on this because I know a lot of people listening are going to be like, "No, way, I could never wait that long." Here's the thing, I've seen teachers close up their classroom libraries, their centers and pull all these materials away like a full month in advance.

VICKI: Oh, my goodness.

ANGELA: Because they don't want to feel overwhelmed, right? They don't want to leave all that cleaning and organization and packing up for that last week of school. But

what happens is – and you probably know what happens. What happens to the kids when you do that?

VICKI: Yeah. They misbehave, don't do it, like you're asking for trouble. Never, never. I never take my stuff down until school is out, I just can't.

ANGELA: Good for you. So, you're kind of the opposite then. That's exactly right, it will throw up all your daily routines if they're put away. And it just ramps kid's excitement levels up and it just create behavioral issues. So, I've experimented with a lot of difference approaches and I can tell you without a doubt that it's best to have kids help deconstruct the classroom starting from that second to last day.

So, in the weeks leading up to the last day, that's when you're going to complete your end-of-year paper work – all those closing out tasks. So you can return materials, you can start de-cluttering, those sorts of things. You do want to get that stuff done in advance but you want to keep the classroom looking exactly the same for as long as possible so that you can keep your regular routines in place. And then on that second to last day of school you can turn your full attention to overseeing the classroom deconstruction. If you try to do it sooner or you try to spread out the task over a week or two it will be very difficult for the kids to concentrate on the academic work because the room is screaming, "we're done here."

VICKI: I do have to admit, I may be biased because I have been doing your 40-hour work week <https://40htw.com/join/club/ref/coolcat/> and I know you cover that in there. So this is just important advice for closing out right and not being done till you're done, you know.

ANGELA: Yes.

VICKI: Okay, what's next?

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ANGELA: So, here's what you're going to do when you're ready to deconstruct. You could just wait until school is over and the kids are gone and just do it on your own like you've been doing. But the thing with that is that then you're doing all the work. So if you can involve students in it, there's a way to do that that is not too chaotic. So, here's what I recommend. I recommend you keep the class engaged in meaningful tasks while a handful of students help deconstruct. So problems with end-of-year close out tasks arrives when the teacher has things to do but the kids don't have anything to do because kids are really perceptive, they know when we give them busy work, they know when we're just trying to get them out of hair until we end up spending the whole day trying to keep them on task and then we don't get our own stuff done.

So what you do instead is keep the class engaged in a really worthwhile learning activity. Something that they enjoy, something that's going to be fun for them, something that they're going to stay engaged with naturally. And then while the kids work, you can periodically circulate throughout the room to make sure everyone knows what they're doing and spend the rest of your time overseeing the students who are sustained with your end-of-year task. So your full attention is with the kids, you're watching the ones who are at work, you're watching the ones who are deconstructing you're not off trying to do your own thing because that's when it gets chaotic, when they know that you are not present there with them.

VICKI: Yeah. Because you can be in the room and not really there.

ANGELA: Exactly. So you're going to make a list of all the jobs that you can assign to your students, do that in advance. They can take down bulletin boards, pack up books, record text book numbers, label things with your name, make a list of all those things that you need done. I usually had a list about 40 things and I found that my 3rd graders were able to complete every task on the list usually in less than two hours using this process I'm about to explain.

We would start around 10am, we'd be done by noon. Just a handful of things may be done in the afternoon. So, once you know what needs to be done you have this pass listed out, now you're going to do the final step which is to create an efficient system in which you assign task to pairs of students so you're going to pair your kids up. I like to think about it in advance, some people just kind of do it just pair the moment and you're just thinking about student's personalities, right?

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Because you want to match up kids who get along well so they can get the task done and they're not going to be interrupting you constantly to settle arguments between them. So, pair up kids who have similar strengths, maybe your most organized students can do the task like filing and library organization. Pair up the kids who are really active so that they can move the furniture and they can run errands around the school.

If you are the secondary level of you see multiple classes each day, break down the jobs into tasks that can be completed within a single class period. So you may want to consider chunking the job so that each class participates to some degree and the classes with your more responsible students get the most important tasks. So figure out how you're going to pair your kids up, get the whole class working on that meaningful engaging independent activity. And then you're just going to call a pair of students over to your desk and you're going to explain the task that you want them to do. Remember, this is on the second to last day of school now.

So you're going to explain it to them, make sure they're confident, they understand what to do, they know what to do, they know now to be successful and then call over another pair of students and assign the next task on your list.

So I usually have about two to five pairs of students deconstructing the classroom at any given time, maybe a third of the class, the other two-thirds are working. And I things start to feel chaotic or they get difficult to manage then you just don't call any more pairs until another pair has finished.

And then whenever they're done this is what you need to train them to do, have them go automatically back to completing the whole class assignment until you need them again.

VICKI: Awesome. That just sounds like a dream, it's like, "I guess it works."

ANGELA: They love it, that's the whole thing – when you tell them "this is the day." Because they're going to see all the other teachers have already started, like, "When are we taking down this room?" We're doing it today and we're going to have a system for it. But if it gets crazy in here then you're not going to be able to help, right?

VICKI: Yeah.

ANGELA: So you having them go back to their seats when they're done and if they're not able to do the task well, if they can't stay on task, if they can't do it quietly, then you just don't call them to help with anymore – that's all. And then you just keep rotating through each pair of students as many times as needed until all the jobs are finished and that's how it works.

VICKI: That sounds much better than how I've done it which is like, write the list of everything that needs to be done on the dry erase board and kids pick tasks.

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VICKI DAVIS @COOLCATTEACHER

And you invariably have some kids who picked the task of supervising everybody else which doesn't work very well. Okay so what is your last piece of this that when teachers are done and the last day of school is done, where will they be with this process?

ANGELA: So, you should be able to get the deconstruction done on that second to last day of school. And you can adapt this process in any way that makes sense for you. This is just a way that I did it and I recommend other teachers do it, but you can do it however you want it. Just keep those for core elements in place because that's what makes it so effective. You want to have everything but your room deconstruction done in advance. So to speak to your exact question on the last day of school, almost all the tasks are done, only your last day things are left because you've been doing the closeout task for weeks and then that second to last day you have the entire room taken down.

So follow that format, have all your jobs listed out in advance, assign your pairs of students to do each job and get the whole class engaged in a meaningful activity and call pairs of students over to do the task. I teach the members of the 40-hour teacher work week club <https://40htw.com/join/club/ref/coolcat/> to do it this way, I've had teachers in every grade level K-12 use this system and they love it, they swear by it now. So I promise it can work in your classroom too. It really does work.

VICKI: So teachers, we'll have also a link to Angela's video series Five Summer Secrets for a Stress Free Fall. <http://cctea.ch/40HW-summer>
She has so many resources. And if you're thinking, "Oh my goodness, I really want to hear more about this 40-hour work week club" I know she's going to have open cart in June and I'll have links to all this in the show notes.

And we're also going to have another episode in June where we talk more. So, I highly recommend following all that Angela does. I just learned so much from her on a daily basis. And Angela, I just appreciate all you do for all of us teachers because I learn a lot from you.

ANGELA: Thank you, Vicki. I appreciate that so much.

On June 16th we'll finish up Season 1 of the 10 Minute Teacher. So, celebrate, we've partnered with one of my favorite robots for teaching coding, Dash and Dot from Wonder Workshop. Go to coolcat.com/wonder and enter to win your very own Wonder pack from Wonder workshop and to learn more about how you can use Dash and Dot to teach programming to kids, age kindergarten and up.

Thank you for listening to the Ten-minute Teacher Podcast. You can download the show notes and see the archive at coolcatteacher.com/podcast. Never stop learning.

[End of Audio 0:10:38] VICKI DAVIS @COOLCATTEACHER

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