

Education Market Association

essentials

Fall 2018



EDspaces

Where
TECHNOLOGY,
SPACE, and
PEDAGOGY
converge

2018

Preview

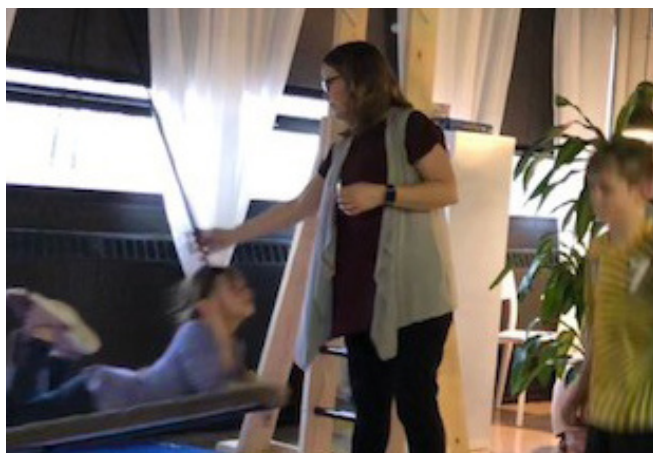
**PLUS: Ed Spaces That Support Executive Function • How to Build a Solid Forecast • The Future of School Design
Let's Get Your Customers Talking • Autism-Friendly Educational Design • EDproducts Gallery • And more...**

Redesigning for Wellness

BY JANA PARKER Ed.D

Case Study from Lindbergh School District (MO)





In a typical day, students switch tasks every 3 minutes, get interrupted every 11 minutes and take 23 minutes to get back on task, according to research by Steelcase Education. With those statistics, we cannot ignore the need for classroom learning space to reflect the demands of our Generation Z students. The students entering our classrooms today should expect a highly collaborative learning environment where creativity is encouraged, and their social, emotional well-being is recognized as a necessary component before any possibility of student outcomes are achieved. The wellbeing of any student should be our priority.

When individual student desks continue to be the norm and classrooms look the same as they did 20 years ago, we have done a disservice to our students and taken away their ability to have choice in how they learn best. Research commissioned by the New Zealand Ministry of Education on the impact of physical design on student outcomes supports the idea that space is as important as the learning taking place. “It sug-

gests that the learning space must be explicitly considered as part of planning and delivery to leverage the full potential of its impact on student outcomes,” writes report author Dr. Gabrielle Wall. Inadequate learning spaces can have an adverse impact on student engagement and achievement. The two should always be mutually exclusive, especially as many school/ districts further transform their educational institutions into one that fosters blended and personalized learning.

As learning spaces continue to transform, so too does the focus on the whole child and their social emotional needs. All too often, we have seen much attention given to learning spaces that directly impact academics and little to those spaces that would directly affect their social means. We must shift our thinking and challenge the status quo. Through the case study below, you will see how one school transitioned away from the traditional counseling office.

During the 2017-2018 school year, the Lindbergh School District, a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri was in its 5th year of seeing significant increases in enrollment. Long Elementary, 1 of 5 at the time, had a total enrollment of over 670 students. A growth of 200 students in 5 years. In a building that could adequately accommodate 550 students, every available space was being utilized, including custodial closets and stair-

wells. That August, a relief valve came, and a new elementary school opened that August.

When the new elementary opened, Long immediately lost almost 200 students to redistricting. This provided them a unique opportunity to not only redefine who they were as a school community, but also many of the spaces they had previously lost to student growth. This was not without challenge. There were significant budget constraints which meant outside funding sources would have to be found to assist with any major redesign. As luck would have it, a grant opportunity presented itself and in May of 2017, Long Elementary and their school counselor, Kim Maddock, became the recipient of a \$5,000 ITEF grant. ITEF is the Innovation Technology Education Fund, a St. Louis foundation that empowers educators to embrace innovative learning projects and use technology in creative ways that promote excellence in education.

Traditionally, school counselors have a small room located near the main office. In this traditional space, because of the size, only a small group of students could meet at best. With an increase of students with significant social emotional needs and a desire to have a greater impact on students, a plan was developed that required moving to what had always been a grade level classroom. Maddock needed and wanted a space



where students could find a sense of calm, focus and connection during their school day, and achieve a temporary escape from a world that has increasingly become more stimulating because of social and academic pressures. The sensory-based, responsive guidance room was a vision that quickly became reality.

Over the past several years, Maddock had noticed a sharp increase in the number of students who have trouble regulating their emotions appropriately, have shorter attention spans, have trouble in resolving conflict, self-harm, and were unable to successfully cope with classroom demands. Maddock and her staff had the belief those changes were due to higher levels of daily trauma and stress, as well as academic demands. The sensory and responsive guidance room was a huge addition to the school. It provided a space where students could learn to identify stress triggers, how the stress was affecting their body, and appropriate ways to release the stress.

“The goal of the new room is to create a simple space where students can allow their brains to just ‘be,’” Maddock said. “In a world where family makeup and stresses are different, and technology is constantly bombarding them with stimulation, it is important for young children to learn how to calm themselves appropriately in a supervised setting.”

Working with Rebecca Hare,



co-author of *The Space: A Guide for Educators*, everything that went into the new room redesign had purpose and intent, in addition to utilizing student voice as a deciding factor on things. The result was a masterpiece. Within the room itself, several distinct areas were created to meet a variety of student needs. The design featured neutral colors — grey, white, and black — and minimal furniture. The ceiling went from white to black to help foster a sense of calm and warmth. Students were now able to practice yoga and mindfulness or escape all stimulation by taking a sensory break in a private curtained area. Students needing more activity could play in sand, swing on the indoor

therapy gym, jump on a trampoline or leap into a safe crash pad. In addition, a large portion of the classroom was able to provide space for full group instruction to deliver classroom guidance lessons from the Missouri Guidance Program.

The room has now been recreated all over the St. Louis region as many have visited to learn, share in best practice, and become more informed as educators work collectively to do what is best for all students. As we continue to become more trauma informed and knowledgeable about toxic stress, the sensory-responsive guidance room must be a mainstay when learning spaces are discussed. All educators belong at the table. ■



DR. JANA PARKER serves as the Director of Innovation and Gifted in the Lindbergh School District. Jana also serves as a mentor for the Missouri Leadership Development System and is an adjunct professor at Lindenwood University. Prior to that appointment, she served as a principal for 6 years after teaching high school social studies for 12 years. Follow her on twitter [@JanaParker](https://twitter.com/JanaParker).