

Space is a message.

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Spaces in which we stay every day (often unconsciously, although it would be better if consciously) determine our reactions. They set our mind to the desired operating mode; but, it can be quite the opposite, they may prevent you from achieving intended results.

Then, we ask ourselves the question: What is the space of the modern school like?

What message does it send out?

Students' experience is shaped by adults and peers but also by the physical setting in which they study. Why is that important? They say that school space is the "third teacher."

Unfortunately, we are far from thinking of school as a place promoting students' well-being or a place of relaxation. Students are flooded by all types of stimuli from all sides: overcrowded, small classrooms; narrow corridors; colourful, imposing, and poor quality school bulletins on the walls; the sound of the school bell; noise all around. And absolutely no place to feel "away from the class bench." Research conducted by Prof. Nalaskowski, ("School Spaces and Places." Aleksander Nalaskowski, *Impuls*), which looks at where students are most likely to be while at school and where they look for a peaceful asylum, point to school's "nooks and crannies", such as corridor, playground, toilet. And yet on this journey along the fast highway of learning, students need a stop and a place where they can relax, talk in silence, or simply be with one another.

Modern space can be conducive to creating a school of good relationships and positive emotions. Spatial arrangement should promote relationship-building and learning in teams, e.g. round tables, mobile furniture, sports equipment for group activities, comfy corners to have a chat. After all, research clearly shows that we learn more willingly and effectively in places that arouse positive emotions. Thus, school space should offer a sense of security and create a good emotional ambience. It should help create a healthy relationship between teachers, students, and parents. We must keep in mind that learning spaces are not only labs or classrooms; learning can also take place in corridors (e.g. reading rooms/corners, gaming room/corner) or rest and recreation areas. The school library is among such spots. It may become a friendly microworld, free from chaos and powerful stimuli coming at a time. The school library is increasingly becoming a really important place on the map of present-day Polish schools. This process is largely driven by people – librarians-teachers. They foster the positive climate of libraries, often having to struggle with unfavourable conditions and obstructive colleagues and running on tight budgets. And libraries are truly ideal as spaces with a potential to improve the well-being of students.

It is worth keeping in mind that when planning or re-designing the school space, first we should ask the school users what they miss the most. Having collected feedback, we can

address one or more of the most burning deficits. This can be viewed as a map of white spots, i.e. neglected or insufficiently satisfied needs existing in the school space.

When students and teachers are part of the school space design process, there is a chance that the school will become friendly also in their subjective view. It may change from a strange or even hostile “anti-place” into one that is “ours” and where we feel well during breaks, in class, and in free time.

The school space is not only architecture: it is a message communicated to students, teachers, and the entire community. This message shapes our daily lives.