

SPACE IS WHERE ACTIVE LEARNING OCCURS

Dr Barbara Ostrowska

School space is a fundamental tool in the teacher's work. It is the vehicle of our teaching philosophy and can be either conducive to or create obstacles for the attainment of educational objectives. This space should be flexible (adapted to both current and future educational work), future-oriented (allowing for re-design or re-arrangements), bold (ready to go beyond existing schemes or activities), creative (encouraging and inspiring students and teachers), supportive (developing the potential of the entire community of learners, including those with special educational needs), and stimulating entrepreneurship (possible to be exploited for various purposes) (JISC , 2006, p. 3). To begin the transformation of a traditional classroom with rows of benches facing the teacher into a flexible space of active learning, start with a revision of the teaching model. Moving the benches elsewhere while maintaining the lecture method can even hinder a lesson. Changes to the learning space should primarily promote a constructivist approach to learning, in which the teacher is a moderator and companion in the learning process, and where the students learn in groups and process the input together. Such a change is not easy as it need consultation and involvement of all school stakeholders: teachers, parents, students, and even local community. A re-invented educational model and the resulting change of layout require a communication campaign to all those associated with the school. The point is to develop a common understanding of the purpose of this process and its benefits. School space should give teachers the freedom to pursue various learning methods and techniques and develop students' social and emotional competence. The co-creation of school space by students gives them a sense of agency and develops their key competence, which is essential in today's world. No less important is the commitment and buy-in of parents. Most of them remember the traditional school model and may not understand our idea of change and may even speak against it. These three groups of stakeholders working together may not only strengthen the connection between home and school, but it also gives a sense of belonging and co-ownership of school space, thus engendering greater enthusiasm for its use and respect for the place.

Additional information:

Space in Education: A Guide for Schools <http://fcl.eun.org/novigado-results>

School well designed! Standards for Warsaw schools

<https://architektura.um.warszawa.pl/-/szkola-dobrze-zaprojektowana>

JISC (2006). Designing spaces for effective learning. A guide to 21st century learning space design. Accessed: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/JISClearningspaces.pdf.