

Eight Steps for Creating the Best Educational Space

October 29, 2015

Last week, Global Educator Institute (GEI) hosted a meeting with Athens, Ga.-based David A. Stubbs II, a well-known classroom environment planner and designer who creates solutions for classroom space obstacles. In a wide-ranging discussion, Stubbs shared his eight defining tenets or benchmarks every new educational space solution should meet, based on his years of design and consultation.

1. Change the environment: "If you want to change pedagogy, you must first change the environment," said Stubbs. As we think about the space where learning occurs, can furniture tilt the classroom towards being more student-centered? What types of changes do we need to make in order to make this a reality? Teachers should begin asking themselves which parts of the classroom are really used, begging the question which spaces are not. From an optimization stand point, both require attention — and change.

2. Reduce the clutter: Clutter is very distracting to the learning environment. Furniture should provide organizational solutions that aid in decluttering student and classroom clutter.

3. Integrate wireless and transparent technology: As you evaluate new classroom solutions, judge equipment on the level of seamless and transparent technology. In layperson's terms, technology should not get in the way of the learning environment but be present when needed. And of course, always consider wireless power and data whenever possible.

4. Respond to multiple learning and teaching styles: Whether students are debating in small groups, viewing a PowerPoint or interacting within a lab, furniture should be adaptable to fit many modes of learning. "The ultimate goal for furniture is to respond to all current and future pedagogy," said Stubbs.

5. Establish total mobility: A classroom brimming with mobile, student chairs is nice. Finding a solution to enable educators to configure the entire room effortlessly, throughout the day or year, meeting multiple teaching and learning styles, is completely different. When looking for classroom solutions, try to find solutions that address the whole classroom in order to maximize the full use of the word "mobile."

6. Be adaptable, agile and recoverable: "The tools that we seek all need to perform in these three ways," said Stubbs. The product, system and/or process needs to be able to adapt to constantly evolving educational landscapes. With that, they need to be simple and easy to use when transformed. And finally, will they provide opportunities that are recoverable, enabling the facilitators to set up their environments in familiar ways? Too many times, educators find a great configuration only to forget it when trying to recall it later.

7. Be multi-functional: As schools think to purchase furniture, one guiding question should be whether or not the furniture offers multiple uses. Can it be a storage unit one day, a stool for debates another and a surface on which to write later? Multifunctional tools eliminate the need to acquire multiple products that serve only one function, thus avoiding introducing clutter back into the environment.

8. Be fun, inviting and engaging: When families enter into the environment, they must no longer recognize the space from which their grandparents learned or has been iconized from old television shows like "Leave It to Beaver." Spaces must be fun, inviting and engaging. Spaces must also permit choice, encourage facilitation and allow continuous professional growth.

At GEI, we often talk about the importance of the physical space within your classroom. And for good reason: Creative classroom environments have been linked to increased student learning. But limited budgets, grandfathered furniture and a lack of support can make it difficult to try new things. But that doesn't mean you can't take a stance.

Read more about David A. Stubbs II and how he's creating customizable solutions to improve the educational environment to fit individualized needs [here](#) For more information about GEI, visit: <http://geiendorsed.com/>

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