



## **How Teachers Can Shape the Learning Space Story**

By Aaron Maurer and Emily Roth

### **Asking the right questions can help educators craft a meaningful narrative.**

The learning space is the start of an ever-evolving story. It's a unique tale of shared experiences that helps to foster lifelong learning in school and beyond. School leaders can help teachers begin this story and think through the lens of narrative (rather than predefined design) with a few key questions.

#### **What is your learning space currently communicating?**

Understanding the story that has been told so far might require an outside perspective. Teachers should talk to students and peers about their space to see how it speaks to others.

#### **How can this grow into a shared experience?**

Teachers can make students part of the story by co-designing the space alongside them. This could look like students voting on a bullet board theme, rearranging the classroom for certain activities, or even contributing ideas for a brand-new learning zone. Teachers can also encourage them to contribute something personal to the space, such as a small artifact, a drawing, or a written idea on a communal board.

#### **Does your learning space reflect our school's values, goals, mission, and vision?**

Teachers can cultivate flexibility in the space in order to accommodate various learning styles and activities, from group projects to quiet individual study. Teachers can also use elements that inspire creativity and collaboration, such as movable furniture or interactive boards to turn

students' ideas into a tangible part of the learning environment. Administrators can help ensure those elements are available in classrooms.

## **TEACHER CHALLENGE**

### **Working Together to Maximize Learning Spaces**

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One of the best things we did at our school was to partner teachers up the week before students came back for the purpose of improving each other's learning environments. Teachers assessed each other's rooms and gave both positive and constructive feedback on the space design. Constructive feedback was approached in a supportive, non-judgmental way, and it made all the difference!

You can facilitate this exercise by giving teachers some guiding questions, such as:

- What area of the classroom do you feel drawn to?
- What makes that area particularly engaging?
- Which areas have the best flow for students to move around?
- Are there any spaces that feel constrictive? What makes them feel that way?
- What ideas do you have to open them up?

