

TEACHING TODAY'S LEARNERS #19

CLASSROOM FENG SHUI



● Questions to Ask About Your Learning Space ●

1) Who owns the learning?

The arrangement of desks and tables dictate who controls the learning. If the desks all face the front, likely the teacher controls much of the learning in the room. If you want students to take responsibility for their own learning, they won't always need to face the teacher.

2) What is more important, collaboration or quiet?

If you value authentic collaboration, your room will get noisy (think active and organized chaos). Students will need to sit together in different arrangements, to facilitate conversation, cooperation, and collaboration.

3) How is meaning constructed?

Think about the types of spaces necessary for students to talk through thoughts, bounce ideas off each other, ask and answer essential questions, utilize technology during the learning process, and showcase what they know and understand.

4) How can I promote inquiry and curiosity?

Bringing learners along on the learning journey, asking provoking questions and increasing excitement will naturally drive students to use different learning spaces for research, inquiry, and collaboration.

5) What spaces am I underusing?

It's rather exciting to view traditional roles differently in light of best practices for learners. Looking at types of activities that could define our spaces helps us escape the constraints and get beyond our own set of normal limitations.



6) Does learning happen only in the classroom?

If you believe learning can occur anytime, anywhere, then the limits of your classroom no longer become your four walls, but rather the horizon! Thinking through the lens of technology such as Skype and Twitter, we can bring the world into our spaces. This kind of collaboration opens the door to new opportunities for our learners.

7) Why is this on the wall?

Anything on the walls or display boards should be there for a reason and related to the learning. Don't hang something up just because it is pretty or because there is space to fill. Take it down if it's old or irrelevant; keep it up if students can refer back to it or make connections to new/prior learning.

8) Does every learner have to do the same thing at the same time?

Learning spaces should have access for different kinds of learning to take place simultaneously. Places for a small groups to work, a place to gather around a device, a place to move, a place to share learning, a place to work individually.

9) Do I really need this?

Clutter can actually hinder learning. If you haven't used or looked at something in the past year, you likely don't need it any longer! Less "stuff" means more learning space. Less furniture means more flexibility and more area to move about the room. Repeat: Throw it out!

Think learning experience first, not things.

Use design to make the experience yours.

Understand your current spaces.

Develop a new language of space and learning.

Develop metrics to evaluate space and learning.

Rethink the "classroom" as a location of learning
(furniture, de-clutter walls, lighting, color, writable surface)

Develop digital spaces for learning.

Overall, to meet the needs of contemporary learners, learning spaces need to be:

- Flexible
- Connected
- Collaborative
- Multisensory
- Graphic
- Blend of physical & virtual environments

Schools are filled with hundreds of legacy 800 square foot cinder block classrooms.

How do these spaces become capable of supporting a contemporary learning experience?

