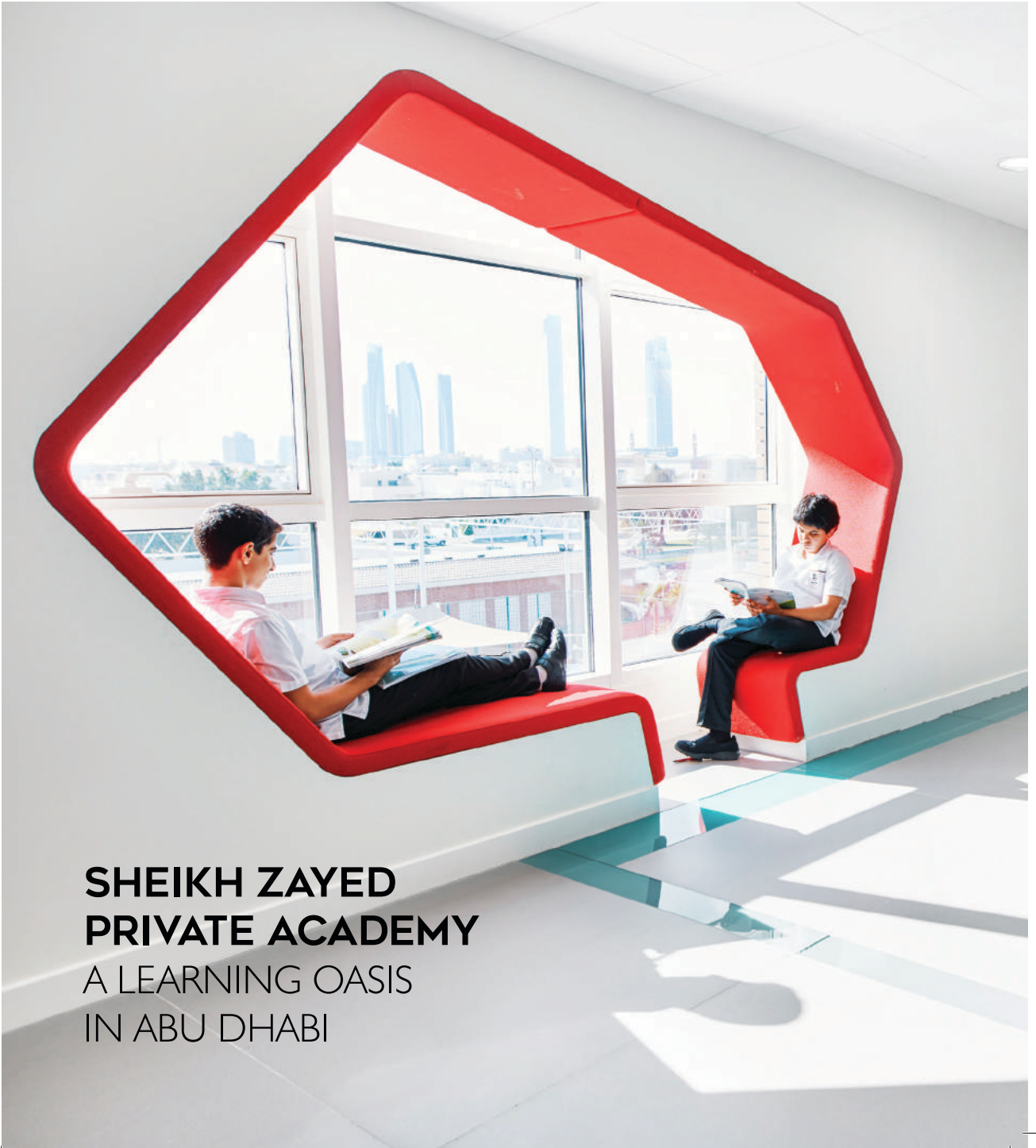


J F M A M J J A S O N D 2020 / UAE

PLANNING LEARNING SPACES

FOR ARCHITECTS
DESIGNERS AND
SCHOOL LEADERS



**SHEIKH ZAYED
PRIVATE ACADEMY**
A LEARNING OASIS
IN ABU DHABI



Not just decorating classroom spaces, but designing them to improve learning

Gratnells is privileged to be part of a global movement that is shaping the learning environment.

Working with academics, educationalists, teachers and architects our vision is to create better spaces for children to learn and teachers to teach.

Our work has gone far beyond the concept stage. Supported now by empirical evidence, the views of renowned experts and professional bodies, Gratnells Learning Rooms is an idea whose time has come.

PLANNING LEARNING SPACES

Welcome to a very special UAE edition of Planning Learning Spaces magazine. This publication is designed to complement the Planning Learning Spaces book and illustrate many of the themes and ideas behind our thinking. On p8 we feature Sheikh Zayed Private Academy in Abu Dhabi, designed by contributor Rosan Bosch. Discover how Rosan incorporated ornaments, bending ceramic water channels and towering palm trees into a modern framework for creativity, movement and playful learning.

Tackling climate change is a worldwide crisis, so read on p4 how Asha Alexander, the principal of The Kindergarten Starters school in Dubai ensured every single teacher was specially trained as a United Nations accredited Climate Change Teacher.

On p18 Dr Robert Dillon explains how school corridors are more than a network for conveying pupils to lessons. They should be maximised to tell the history of the school, convey the school's ethos and expectations or even provide exercise points for impromptu workouts.

School environment guru Professor Peter Barrett explains how to maximise the effectiveness of a primary classroom on p16. Finally on p26 we illustrate the thinking process behind designing a new learning space.

Best wishes
Murray Hudson
Terry White



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TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE ONE TEACHER AT A TIME.

The Kindergarten Starters school in Dubai is serious about tackling climate change and helping children learn about their impact on the environment. Principal Asha Alexander talks to Irena Barker about how she is training up a new generation of eco-conscious world citizens.

"Anything that you touch in my school is mammoth because it's so big," says Asha Alexander, principal of the 5,400-pupil GEMS Kindergarten Starters school in Dubai.

"Most people who visit are taken aback by the sheer size and volume of children spilling out of classrooms, but to me after 20 years it's just routine, you get used to managing it," she adds.

And it's the very size of her school that has allowed Alexander to make a big impact on something very close to her heart: the fight against climate change.

Her school has become the first in the world to ensure that every single one of its teachers – all 327 – have been specially trained as a United Nations accredited Climate Change Teacher.

The school for 4 to 11 year-olds has now been designated as a regional hub to promote the certification and environmental action in schools.

Run by EduCCate Global in partnership with UNITAR, the certification helps teachers to integrate climate change education across the school curriculum and their teaching.

A total of 225,000 teachers worldwide now have been through the training.

Although her school had held an Eco-Schools Green Flag award for six years, Alexander explains, she wanted to do more to help children have a full

understanding of the issues.

"I found that students were doing activities connected with environmental action more than really understanding climate literacy.

"We were engaging them in activities and they knew all about things like banning plastic but now we have integrated climate literacy in all subject areas right from kindergarten."

But the school is not just training up its teachers and has introduced a number of important changes to improve its eco credentials.

One is to install solar panels on the large roof of its two-storey building that will help it power its 162 classrooms.

Despite high levels of sunshine in Dubai, Alexander explains, people have only recently been harnessing the sun's rays to capture energy. Dubai airport has recently installed 15,000 solar panels on its roof and other institutions are following suit.

The school is also spearheading a Dubai-wide initiative to plant more than 15,000 trees a year, and pupils are starting to learn how to make compost from fruit peelings and cultivate their own hydroponic vegetables. The project is starting in the kindergarten section but will spread through the school.

"Children will grow their own vegetables and learn how to be little chefs in the school," says Alexander.

"When they eat together, children tend to eat their salad and veg together. It's actually promoting healthy eating," she says.

Alongside helping to save the world, the school has also been taking part in a project that will help pupils improve their own classrooms.



Renewed commitment to plant 15,000 trees

They have been signed up to a global pilot of the Learnometer, a new device which measures important classroom factors that can affect learning such as CO2, light and ambient sounds.

Inspired by educational technology guru, Professor Stephen Heppell, children have been learning what can affect their classroom environment and how they can influence it.

Alexander explains: "We didn't realise that with so many children in classrooms the amount of carbon dioxide was very high.

"The minute we put the Learnometer in and compared the readings with other schools and organisations worldwide, we had to think quickly about how we could reduce this."

One of the solutions they opted for was to create "green walls" of around 30 to 40 wall-mounted CO2 absorbing plants in each of the 162 classrooms.

"When we measured later we found that levels had dropped quite a bit in the classroom," she says, "and that encouraged us to bring in more green plants into the corridors and everywhere."

The school is now looking at how it can use waste "grey water" to irrigate the plants.

The school has also started to look at how to improve airflow around the school by opening out the classrooms.

The school's quadrangle has been renovated to make it a comfortable space for children to sit and work outside.

"By bringing them out and redefining spaces around the school I was able to lower the concentration of CO2," says Alexander.

The Kingergarten Starters' eco-credentials are impressive and clearly the result of some hard work.

But how does Alexander manage to engage everyone in her mission – and how did she convince every single teacher to undertake the climate change certification training?

Well, it was all about persistence and the powers of persuasion, she says.

"I kept on following up. I would write maybe twice a day saying 'these are the names of the people, it would be wonderful if all of you could be on board.'

"Then they realised that 250 teachers had done it, they saw they might become the first in the world and that of course that added its own momentum."

So, Alexander is clearly an inspirational headteacher with a passion for the environment.

And as her school leads the way in the Middle East, let's see how many more people she can inspire. ■



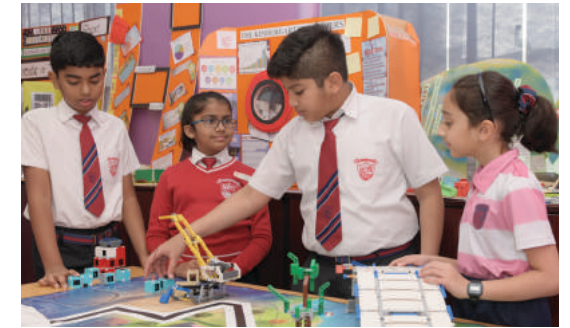
Asha Alexander



327 staff certified as UNCC Accredited climate change teachers - world first



Composting fruit peels.



Students finding solutions to address climate related problems through robotics and AI



Students exploring the rise in sea levels through an activity in the science lab.


THE PLAYFUL LEARNING OASIS OF ABU DHABI

The Sheikh Zayed Private Academy presents an imaginative learning landscape in Abu Dhabi, UAE. World-famous designer Rosan Bosch explains how the school offers a learning landscape bringing the rich desert culture into a modern framework for 21st Century learning.

Greeting students as they enter the main entrance of the Sheikh Zayed Private Academy is the school motto: "Honoring the past. Educating for the future."

In this state-of-the-art school designed by Rosan Bosch Studio, local traditions of the desert culture meet innovative learning. With the incorporation of ornaments, bending ceramic water channels and towering palm trees, the design brings traditional Emirate symbols into a modern framework for creativity, movement and playful learning.

The school is centered around the development of skills of the learners, preparing them for an increasingly interconnected and dynamic world.



CERAMIC WATER CHANNELS SPREAD FROM THE CENTER OF THE BUILDING THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL.

**THE DESIGN INCORPORATES
IDENTITY MARKERS IN
GRAPHICS AND ORNAMENTS
AIMED TO ENHANCE PRIDE
AND AFFILIATION WITH THE
SCHOOL.**



Learning landscapes based on the learners' needs

The more than 29,000m² of learning spaces of the Sheikh Zayed Private Academy are shaped according to the six design principles of Rosan Bosch Studio. With a student-centered approach, the studio connects learning situations to the physical framework, presenting a flexible and differentiated environment that supports the individual needs of the students.

With learning landscapes of Mountain Tops, Caves, Campfires, Watering Holes and space for Hands-on and Movement, the school day can be organized as destinations in the landscape.

At the Sheikh Zayed Private Academy, the learning landscape takes shapes as upholstered reading tubes integrated into walls and door openings that function as Caves for concentration. Large staircases and shielded grottos create spaces for Mountain Top presentations, while diners, padded sitting areas and teamwork stations create a learning environment supporting project-oriented teamwork.





Throughout the school, the design activates the hallways and corridors. Red sofas sway across all open spaces of the school, offering comfortable sitting options that invite students to meet, hang out and collaborate, so the entire school becomes activated as an appealing learning space.

Connecting the school with inspiration

In the vast desert of Abu Dhabi, water has historically been a limited and treasured resource. With blue ceramic waterways integrated into the floors, the design of the Sheikh Zayed Private Academy activates the narrative of how life-giving water has changed the rugged landscapes and created growth.

The ceramic channels spread from the centre of the building throughout the school. The irrigation system of glittering tiles connects the school in cross-sectional patterns representing a lifeline of inspiration and knowledge, while also working as a wayfinding tool within the large school.

Along its paths, the ceramic channel rises to shape intriguing and playful installations, tables and bookshelves that make the hallways interesting and engaging for the students.

Palms, rock formations and arabesques

Central to the school is the dining hall with a striking floor-to-ceiling height, underlined by the high indoor palm trees. The view into the dining hall brings associations to a welcoming oasis with its greenery forming a calm and comfortable atmosphere.

The dining hall is designed as a multi-purpose area that supports teaching situations, group work, food serving, theatre performances, exhibitions, parent meetings, festivities and more.

The yellow plateau, inspired by the giant rock formations surrounding the city, creates a bouldering area where the students can climb, play and seek shelter or work on projects in groups.

On the main wall of the dining hall, a modernized arabesque pattern underlines the core identity of the school: the connection between Emirati culture and contemporary international standards.

Learning fuelled by play

The playful and imaginative design of the Sheikh Zayed Private Academy characterizes the approach of Rosan Bosch Studio. With the belief that play is a vehicle for children to develop as creative thinkers, the studio creates inspiring learning landscapes cultivating 21st Century learning.

Throughout the Sheikh Zayed Private Academy, the playfulness in the design provides a learning environment for wonder where the children can explore, connect, transform and create through play. For the youngest students, specialized play areas invite the children to use their bodies and explore with their hands. Large constructions with slides and climbing possibilities create a fun environment where they can be active while learning with their peers.

PLAY IS A VEHICLE FOR CHILDREN TO DEVELOP AS CREATIVE THINKERS

Activating cultural heritage

With explicit references to the desert landscape and local traditions, the design incorporates important identity markers in graphics and ornaments.

The walls showcase more than a kilometer of decorations inspired by language, mathematical patterns, desert sceneries, local animals, and camel-races, imbuing the school with the cultural heritage of Abu Dhabi aimed to enhance pride and affiliation with the school.

The school also entails a rooftop playfield, great sports courts in bright colours and a large auditorium with seats in the colour palette of the desert sand and ceiling constructed as a vaulting sky resembling the night in the desert. The school swimming pools incorporate the tradition of pearl divers with bright mosaics and a giant starfish with arms acting as mini-slides for the youngest students.

The design for the Sheikh Zayed Private Academy inspires innovative thinking by combining differentiated learning, local history, and playful meetings for the learners.

The Sheikh Zayed Private Academy

The Sheikh Zayed Private Academy has a capacity for 1,400 students. In 2016 the school was shortlisted for a 'World Interior of the Year' INSIDE Award and won a gold in 2018 with IDA Design Awards in the category of Institutional Interior Design.

Rosan Bosch Studio

Rosan Bosch Studio is an interdisciplinary agency working in the crossfield between art, architecture, and design. The studio was founded in Copenhagen in 2011. Among its designs are the renowned schools Vittra Telefonplan in Sweden, Western Academy of Beijing in China and Sheikh Zayed Private Academy in Abu Dhabi. ■



Planning Learning Spaces

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR ARCHITECTS, DESIGNERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS

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' A welcome and timely addition to the subject of school design at a time of great change '

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President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, 2019-21

' Comprehensive but also very practical approach '

ANDREAS SCHLEICHER
Director of the Directorate of Education and skills, OECD

' Any community building a new school should read this book '

MICHAEL B. HORN
Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation

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awash in opportunity and inspiration '**

PROFESSOR STEPHEN HEPPELL
Chair in Learning Innovation at Universidad Camilo José Cela, Madrid



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361-373 City Road
London EC1V 1LR

Professor Peter Barrett, author of the ground-breaking *Clever Classrooms* report makes some suggestions

ANYONE CAN IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT IN A PRIMARY CLASSROOM

Tip 1 - Maximise daylight

Daylight is good for us. Where you can, it should be maximised, but subject of course to avoiding problems with glare. Obstructing the windows with large items of furniture or covering them with pupils' work is not usually a good idea. Depending on the orientation and size of the windows in your classroom you may need to use blinds, but only as much as you have to. Of course there will be times when artificial light is needed and good quality lighting is important to keep up attention levels.

Tip 2 - Ensure adequate ventilation

Again a very basic human requirement – oxygen! An average classroom with thirty children in it will develop poor air quality within 30 minutes if no fresh air is introduced. This is important as poor air makes pupils drowsy; not a good basis for learning. Active use of opening windows is recommended as poor air quality was very commonly encountered.

Tip 3 - Control the temperature

Hopefully you have a thermostat in the classroom and can control your space to be cool but comfortable. If there are problems of overheating from the sun then external shading is the answer, as internal blinds come too late, after the heat has passed through the glass. Pragmatically though, you may have to use a combination of blinds and ventilation.

Tip 4 - Choose the right level flexibility

A classroom that has defined learning zones, that are suited to the pupils' stage of development, assists learning. Given the usual blended learning approach to teaching that we saw, this means a range of zones for the more play-based learning of KS1 children and bigger,



simpler spaces for KS2 pupils, as the learning becomes more formal. So, do you need more learning options – or maybe fewer?

Tip 5 - Engender ownership

Having aspects of the classroom that reflect the individual pupils is important - some of their work on the wall, names/pictures on trays and pegs, etc. Also something that maybe they have created together that makes the classroom instantly recognisable – not just a soulless box. This is all supported by good quality, child-centred furniture and equipment. Lots of teachers do these things, and our evidence shows that it really helps.

Tip 6 - Manage the visual complexity

A mid-level of visual complexity is to be sought. This is a lot to do with the displays, where you are aiming for a lively feel, without it becoming chaotic. As a rule of thumb, leaving something like 20-50% of the wall space clear is recommended. Of course the basic complexity of the floor plan and ceiling structure is your starting position and should be taken into account.

Tip 7 - Use colour carefully

Young children do seem to like bright colours, but for effective learning a combination of quite a calm background colour for the walls with some brighter highlights, say the teaching wall or a feature area, seems best. Then you have to factor in the effect of the furniture and displays etc. So just stand back and judge whether the colour scheme is "shouting at you", feels really boring and bland or is just right, somewhere in the middle.

Tip 8 - Attack on all fronts

The impact on learning of the above actions is spread pretty evenly across all seven areas. So, don't focus on one or two only, but try to assess and address all of them together. Not easy in a busy world, but once you have taken an initial view it will get easier. A large part of it is increased awareness to what matters – now we have established the evidence.

Tip 9 - Don't assume a "good" school means a "good" classroom

From our study we know that there are typically more and less effective classrooms in the same school. Sometimes it's to do with the different orientations of classrooms and other times it comes from the different things individual teachers do with their spaces. So you should look at every classroom as an individual case. Design issues at a school level (shared facilities, playgrounds, etc) were not as important from our analysis as the factors at the classroom level – which is, after all, the primary school pupil's universe.

Tip 10 - Remember to see the classroom as another teaching tool

All of the above can sound like the type of thing that a building surveyor would go on about. Remember, these are the specific aspects that have been shown to have positive (and, if ignored, potentially negative) impacts on learning. You and your pupils need all the help you can get to enhance learning, so hopefully the physical features of the classroom will now feel more like a set of levers you can pull to positive effect. ■



Professor Peter Barrett
Author of the *Clever Classrooms* Report.

Top 10 ways to innovate the classroom

Along with the more detailed advice and suggestions illustrated here, the key questions to be considered are:

Stimulation: Does your classroom use colour and visual complexity to stimulate without creating confusion?

Individualisation: Through flexibility and ownership can the children interact and resonate with their classroom base?

Naturalness: Does your classroom offer the quality and control of light, heat and fresh air to create a comfortable learning environment?

- Tip 1: Provide plenty of daylight, but without glare
- Tip 2: Ensure adequate ventilation
- Tip 3: Control the temperature
- Tip 4: Choose the right level flexibility
- Tip 5: Engender ownership
- Tip 6: Manage the visual complexity
- Tip 7: Use colour carefully
- Tip 8: Attack on all fronts!
- Tip 9: Don't assume a 'good' school means a 'good' classroom
- Tip 10: Remember to see the classroom as another teaching tool

Tops 8, 9 and 10 are whole school initiatives. Based on an original design by GDST

MAKING THE MOST FROM THE SCHOOL CORRIDOR

Dr Robert Dillon, leading education space designer, explains how.

As designers of space, it is essential that we see all space as a potential place to guide learning.

Students are learning every moment of every day. They are refining their ideas and beliefs. They are adding to their understanding of the world.

Some of these moments are guided by parents, teachers, and mentors while other moments remain under the sole direction of the learner.

In schools, we have focused for a long time on the power of classroom design as well as areas such as libraries, learning labs and playgrounds.

But as we look more comprehensively at space, it is clear that the area dedicated to corridor space in many schools shouldn't be ignored.

It needs to be designed with intention. Consider the ideas below that have been shown to be effective in turning hallways into more structured spaces for learning.





Tell the history/explain the science

Every space has a history, but the new often obscures the past. Many schools unearth the history of the school through displays and plaques. These efforts often fade into the space and become invisible, but creating a living 'history tour' throughout the building via excellent signage can be a way to unpack the past so that students understand the context of the space in which they learn.

These signs can answer questions about what was on the land before the school, why the school has its name, the different phases of building construction, details about the first students who went to the school and so many other facts that grow a community understanding of the school.

This can also be done for the science behind the building. Signs would include the details of efforts to be sustainable with energy, water, recycling, and more. These efforts create a greater sense of community within the school and beyond.

Displays as a storytelling device

What is the non-verbal story of your school? When someone walks around the building after the bell, what do they see? Hallway displays can help shape the learning narrative of a school.

Some of these provide a glimpse of the hard work of the school pupils and staff.

Yet others feel like they have been filled for the sake of avoiding blank space. Consider a display strategy

based on mission and purpose. What three or four concepts do you want the displays to represent? Think about having the right mix of static, dynamic and digital displays. Static displays allow you to anchor your message with language and objects that have a life span of three to five years. Dynamic displays showcase the hard work of students, including images of students learning.

They are designed to remain alive and fresh for our frequent visitors to the building.

Digital displays allow you to showcase the true essence of the school through images and video.

Many schools have a single digital display, but consider a more wide-ranging strategy that includes displays throughout the building that are text-light and image-rich.

Growing the tactile nature of the space

What is good for the students on the edges of formal learning is almost always good for all kids. This is especially true for adding tactile elements to the design of hallways.

Many students that move through the hallway with their hands touching the wall are looking to reset and reorient their balance.

By providing opportunities for tactile interaction in the hallways, schools can support a variety of student needs.

For too long, this work was trapped in the spaces designated for occupational therapy, but when they are a whole school effort, all students can reap the benefits. Textures on the walls allow students to self-soothe, calm, and reset.

Some schools are placing objects for interaction along the walls that encourage students to interact in a physical way with the wall spaces. In other schools, we see the walls retro-fitted with curves or a variety of materials that give students a tactile experience.

Be strategic with this work as it isn't about creating a fun house of distractions.

However, you can provide a series of stations that meet the needs of both students with special learning needs and those suffering from stress and anxiety.

The healthy hallway movement

In many parks, you will find fitness equipment that allows visitors to take part in circuit training. This model is being brought into many schools who see their corridors as a great opportunity to push their healthy movement mission. Depending on the size of the school, 8-12 stations throughout the building can create hallway spaces that increase movement and physical well-being. These stations can be used with individual

students that need to reset, classes of students looking for a 'brain break', indoor break activities and for small groups. It is essential that each of these stations describe the activity and scaffolded options, a description about why the activity supports physical and mental wellness, and images of students doing it correctly.

Images of learning

In too many schools, visitors, students and parents travel a long way into the school building without seeing images of the modern learning experience. By placing images of students learning throughout the hallway spaces, there is a clear message that this is what excellent behaviour looks like in the school. Along with this visual reminder, it can create excitement about active learning for students. Images, strategically placed, can create an energy and joy in the space as well.

A comprehensive hallway strategy threads together the work being done in the classrooms that are attached to the hallways. These efforts enrich the mission, reinforce learning, and provide students with social, emotional and academic learning opportunities throughout the school day. ■

Dr. Robert Dillon, is the co-author of 'The Space: A Guide for Educators' along with Rebecca Hare.



MAKING THE PERFECT MAKERSPACE

Creating an area that lets students' imagination and creativity run wild is not easy. Over the next two pages James Clarke looks at two examples for you to consider.

A flexible learning environment requires areas in which students can choose their tools and space to learn, to match their learning styles. Always remember to identify the ethos behind the project, make the space easily adaptable, wheels help, don't forget where you are going to store material and most importantly plan for plenty of power points.



BESPOKE MAKERSPACE STUDIO

within specialist space, shown here 76m² room, 9.8m by 7.8m

EQUIPMENT

3D printers, scroll saws, drills etc accommodated on integrated perimeter benching.

TIERING

Tiered perimeter benching allows opportunities for plenary sessions as well as introducing a topic, while of course creating a sense of audience for any competitive project work.

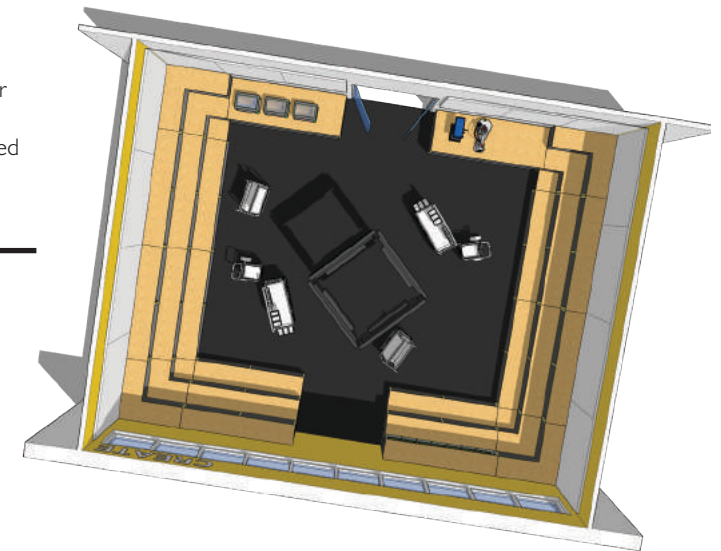
FLEXIBLE SPACE

By keeping everything to the perimeter, you create large floorspaces. We've shown this with a chalkboard floor, so you can map out routes for robots for example, whilst the mobility of Makerhubs, MakerSpace trolleys and Rovers, allow the space to be completely cleared.



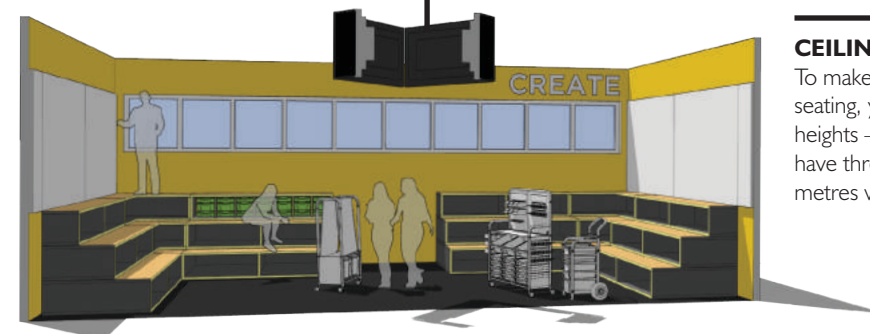
BRAINSTORMING

Dry-wipe surfaces are great for collaborative brainstorming activities, either as wall-mounted panels or using mobile Makerhubs.



DISPLAY

Consider hanging displays from the ceiling centrally so everyone can see (you can mirror presentations from a tablet or laptop using AppleTV or similar). It enables everyone to see whilst adding too, to the drama of the space.

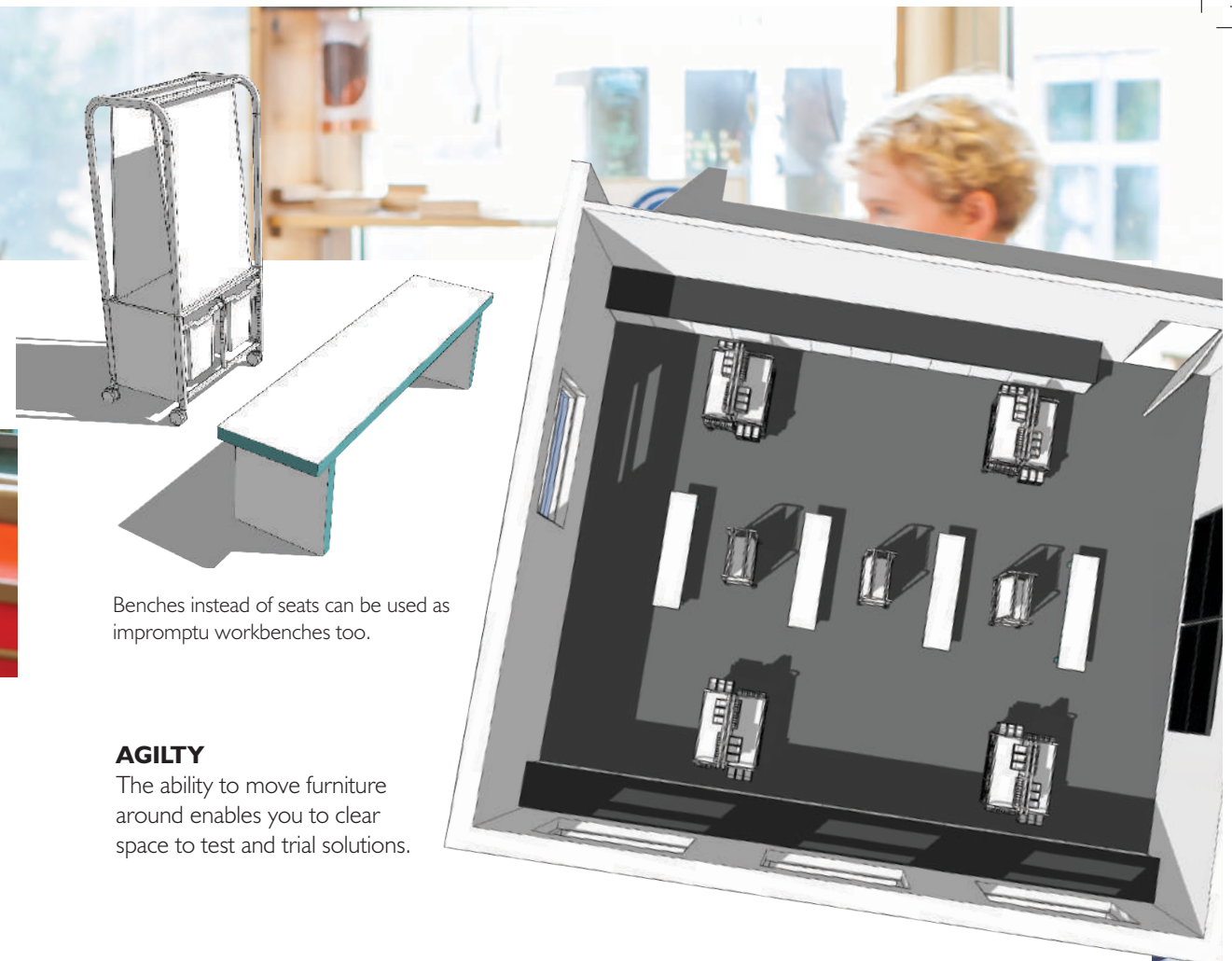


CEILING HEIGHT

To make maximum use of tiered seating, you'll want good ceiling heights – at least 3.5 metres if you have three tiers. This is shown at 3.8 metres with all windows at high level.

MAKERSPACE CLASSROOM

within a typical 56m² classroom



Benches instead of seats can be used as impromptu workbenches too.

AGILITY

The ability to move furniture around enables you to clear space to test and trial solutions.

TESTING SPACE

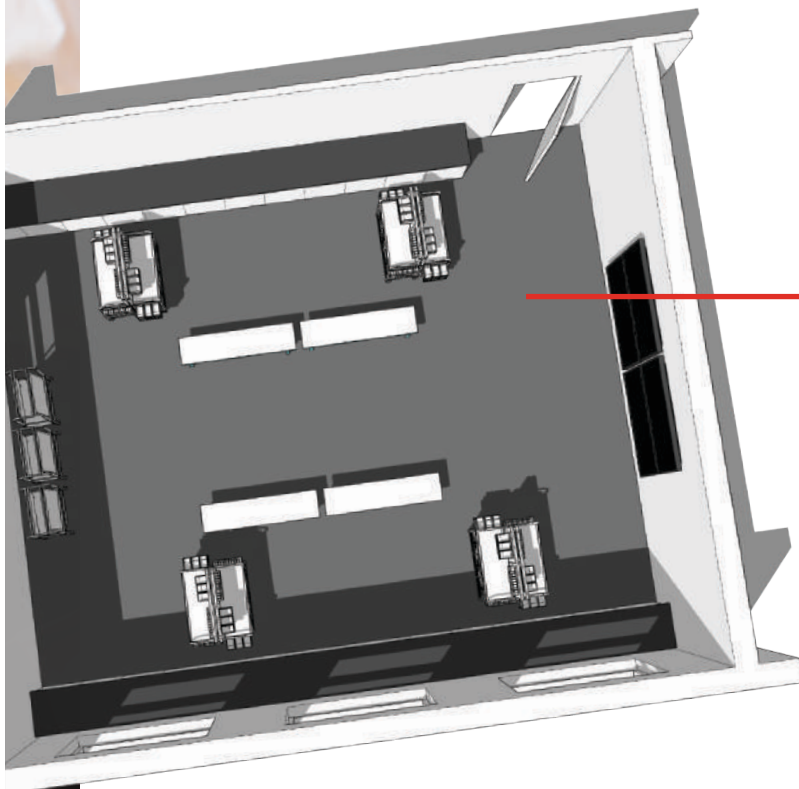
The most valuable resource you have is floorspace – somewhere to celebrate success or test solutions against each other.

DOING SPACE

Simple perimeter benching together with mobile MakerSpace trolleys enable resources to be in the right place at the right time.

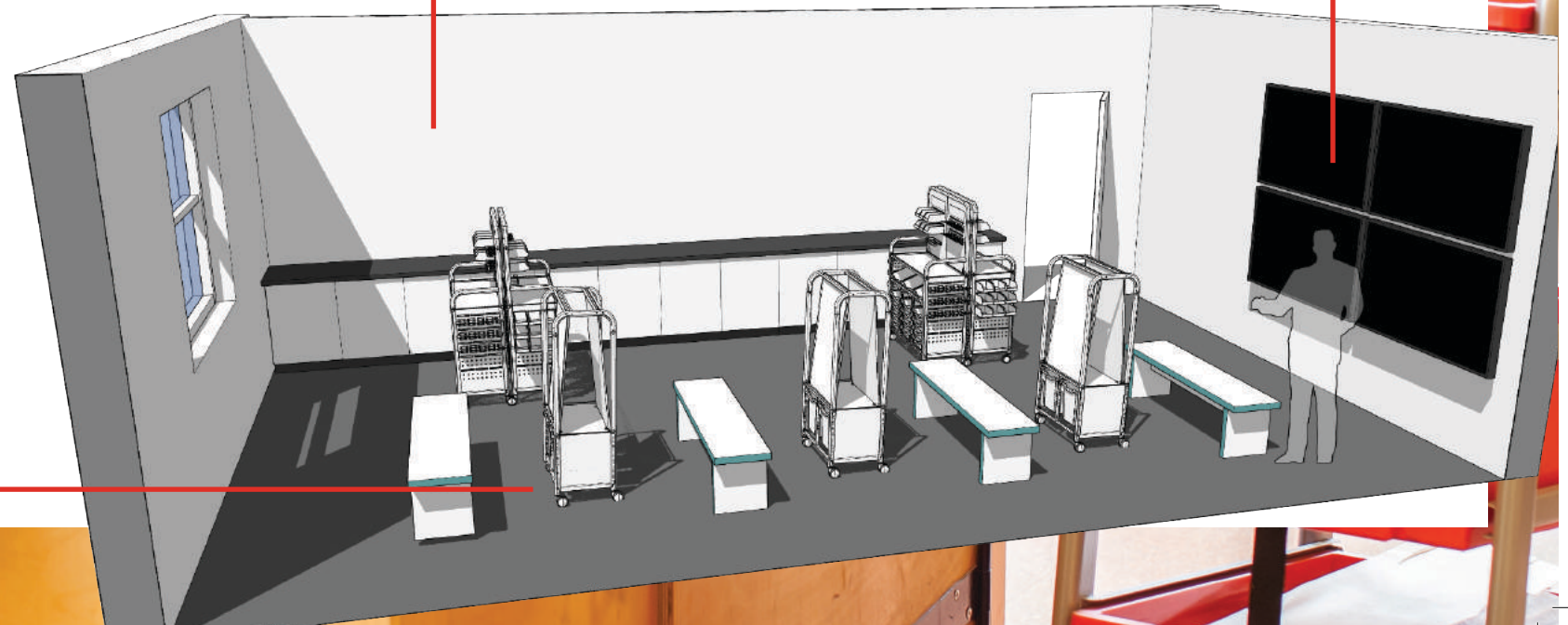
DISPLAY

As big as you can get! LCD screens mean you can keep the light levels up. You might even consider a video wall.



PLANNING SPACE

Benches and MakerHubs create space for learners to gather together and brainstorm ideas whilst enabling them, too, to move furniture to one side allowing them to test and trial their solutions.



A LEARNING-LED PROCESS FOR DESIGNING CONTEMPORARY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

A central theme of Planning Learning Spaces book is the importance of re-thinking and reimagining the spaces and places in which students, teachers and communities learn. At the heart of this approach is a simple message “You can’t successfully design education spaces unless you fully understand the learning and teaching practices they need to support”.

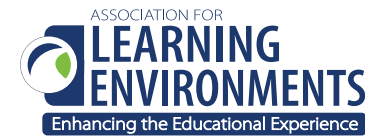
This diagram sets out our step-by-step process of making a reality of your school’s vision for

contemporary learning and how this then develops your own strategy for change.

The process starts with a focus on the school and its stakeholders and must engage and empower all those who will play a part in the process. Collective review and reflection take place at each identified stage looking at observable behaviours for both current and intended next practice and how they translate into whole school design. This is an integrated process and we have developed tools and techniques to help reflection, review and data gathering at each stage shown on the diagram.



©Terry White



The Space, Queen Anne's School designed by Lewandowski Architects © Photo: Jack Hobhouse

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Please contact Terry White for more information on membership and how schools can be part of A4le as associate members through partnership working. Email: terry.white@a4le.co.uk.



Care • Develop • Grow



At Kit for Kids, we are proud of what we do; however, it's not just what we do, but why we do it that counts. We believe we have an essential part to play in improving children's lives, both through the environment in which they grow and the space in which they learn. Care, Development and Growth are the watchwords that lie at the very core of everything we do. They drive our vision to give every child the opportunity to develop and flourish.

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