

CREATE

Create amazing learning spaces

ZONING SPECIAL



Form Follows Function

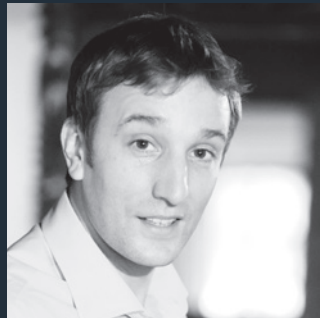
How to make your classroom
a dynamic tool for learning

In this Zoning Special issue...

- 04 Gather:** a space to instruct, discuss, present
- 05 Collaborate:** somewhere to co-operate, participate, share

- 06 Explore:** a zone where you can make, build, enquire
- 07 Reflect:** a quieter space to contemplate, wonder and think

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Welcome to our 'Zoning Special' issue of CREATE, the magazine from Spaceoasis that's all about helping you create amazing learning spaces.

In this issue we're looking at the single most important question when it comes to designing learning spaces: **what do you want to be able to do in the space?** We explain why this question knocks aesthetics off its pedestal and why 'form follows function' is the key to success.

Then, drawing on our work on the neuroscience of learning, we show you the top four learning zones and explain how they enable a range of learning styles.

Enjoy!

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How to get the learning space you need

(rather than the one you think you want...)

What you think you want and what you actually need are often two completely different things, and this is especially true when it comes to designing learning spaces.

You might think you want to refresh your classrooms, or create a 'wow' space that looks fantastic, or simply revamp the library, but unless you think through exactly what you want to be able to DO in the space you run the risk of ending up with more of the same or a space that no-one's quite sure what to do with.

When it comes to learning space design the vital question you need to ask yourself is:

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO DO IN THE SPACE?



Gather



Collaborate



Explore



Reflect

Seize the opportunity!

With budgets under pressure, every penny counts and you can't afford to get it wrong. While a 'wow' space might look amazing, wonderful aesthetics can't make up for a space that doesn't deliver improved learning outcomes. And what's the point of investing hard-won funding if you're not seizing the chance to make radical improvements? What if you end up right back where you started? You'd be missing out on an opportunity to create an environment for learning that improves outcomes, engages learners and makes your classroom a dynamic tool for learning.

The Single Most Important Question You Need To Answer

When it comes to learning space design the vital question you need to ask yourself is: *What do you want to be able to do in the space?*

If it's keep children quiet facing the front then you're reading the wrong magazine. If you want highly engaged learners working in an

environment that supports a range of learning styles, maintains focus by offering variety, and enables physical movement to boost cognitive performance in a range of zones proven by neuroscience to support learning, then read on.

Form Follows Function

The reason 'what do you want to be able to do in the space' is the crucial question can be explained by the phrase 'form follows function', which has been a design mantra since the early 20th century and still resonates today. What it means is that the function, what a space needs to do, dictates the form, what a space looks like and contains. If you start with form – such as tables, chairs and perhaps some soft seating – you fail to address the purpose of the space. What do you want to do with these tables and why? Do you want to be able to stack the chairs? Why? Fancy a sofa? What purpose will it serve?

If you're designing a kitchen you need to consider its function as a place to

cook, eat and store food. If you don't think about where you're going to cook, where the fridge is going to go and how much storage you'll need you end up with a space with no sink that isn't fit for purpose and doesn't have anywhere to put the microwave.

Learning is infinitely more complex than making lunch, so it's even more important to think through what you want to be able to do in your learning space. To help kick start your design thinking process, we've developed four key learning zones, each of which supports a key tenet of the learning process: Gather, Collaborate, Explore, Reflect. In the following pages we'll explain what each zone does, what it contains and the neuroscience behind it.

Good luck! And don't forget if you want us to design an amazing learning space for you that delivers a better all-round teaching and learning experience, we'd be happy to help. ■



Instruct. Discuss. Present.

Def: A tightly focussed space where everyone can be heard. Varied height seating means each person has a clear line of sight, so it's easy to attract everyone's attention without having to shout.

USE: To give instruction, for small group presentation, discussion, debate and breakout.

THE NEUROSCIENCE BIT: Attention is a finite resource and we tend to spotlight our focus on a single subject of interest at any one time. If you want attention to be focused on a single speaker you need to make it easy to do so. The 'Gather zone' is designed to make it easy to concentrate on the teacher or speaker with clear lines of sight and a natural focal point.

ELEMENTS: Tiered seating and upholstered stools.



Co-operate. Participate. Share.

Def: Agile space with furniture that learners can rearrange to suit the requirements of the task in hand, where they can share ideas and work in teams. Writable LearningSurface® tables and screens make this a truly dynamic, energetic space to share ideas and collaborate.

USE: For team tasks, peer-to-peer and group learning in various sizes and configurations.

THE NEUROSCIENCE BIT: Learning is an active and social process occurring as a result of observation and modelling. The brain can also learn vicariously while watching others. The design of the collaboration area allows for both physical and cognitive collaboration allowing students to learn alongside and from each other.

ELEMENTS: Bite tables with LearningSurface®, Agile screens and reverse cantilever chairs which can all be stacked / nestled to clear a space when required.



Make. Build. Enquire.

Def: An active zone replete with all the kit (and storage) to encourage learners to be inquisitive and experimental. Great for self-directed, hands-on, practical learning this adaptable space could become a STEM / STEAM studio / Makerspace / Tech Lab / Robotics Studio / Workshop...

USE: Build, dismantle, create, model - set the task and let your students come up with their own solution. Problem-solving at its most absorbing. From building robots to designing and making a game or toy, the possibilities are endless.

THE NEUROSCIENCE BIT: The workshop aesthetic primes students through associative memory and encourages exploratory and creative behaviour. The natural imperfections of the work surface will prime students to focus less on perfection and precision and more on innovation.

ELEMENTS: Mobile work benches, highly organised storage in drawers, on shelves, pegboards and trays, power sockets, seating, LearningSurface® writable surfaces.



Contemplate Wonder. Think.

Def: A space where learners can sit and think away from the energy and noise of the other spaces. Acoustic properties and screens reduce visual and auditory interruptions making it easier to concentrate and focus.

USE: Individual reflection on work and feedback, thinking, reading, working independently or in small groups, one-to-one teacher / student conversations.

THE NEUROSCIENCE BIT: Our inability to suppress auditory input can be damaging to attention as it makes it difficult to suppress distractions - in other words we 'can't hear ourselves think'. A quieter space for thinking, reading or even meditating can improve concentration simply by making it easier.

ELEMENTS: Curvpress® Okinawa Group Meeting Pod with upholstered seating and circular freestanding central table with LearningSurface®. ■

BERLIN METROPOLITAN SCHOOL

Berlin Metropolitan School in old East Berlin is evolving its teaching and learning, moving away from 'chalk and talk' to a more open, collaborative approach where learning is a shared endeavour.

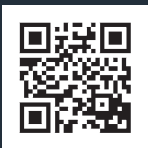
In the senior-school English department, they built five new rooms and wanted them to be a blank, but high-functioning, canvas for this new approach to learning. With standing height workbenches with LearningSurface® writable tops and high stools, mobile LearningSurface® Bite tables, individual chairs and magnetic LearningSurface® wall boards, ideas can be unpacked anywhere in these rooms encouraging active participation from each and every student.



We designed these spaces to enable free thinking with a flexible layout that doesn't dictate how the space should be used. It's a layout that gives the students a degree of agency and builds their autonomy, which their IB curriculum also encourages.

The school also introduced a Brainstorming Room and an Idea Room, which are used by older students for independent study, featuring stunning gloss black Bite tables which can be written on with a suspended chalk pen, along with Agile LearningSurface® screens that can be moved around and LearningSurface® wall boards.

As the school and its students begin to evolve their teaching and learning practice in these sophisticated new rooms, other departments are trying them out too, taking that first step towards a collaborative new future where writing on the walls is positively encouraged. ■



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