

## IMMERSIVE LEARNING SPACES PLANNING GUIDE

Every space tells a story. Whether it's intentional or not, the spaces within a school speak volumes about its culture and its values. Whether it's the classrooms, hallways, cafeteria or even bathrooms, every space greatly impacts student experiences and sets the stage for learning. The curriculum is more than just what is taught and tested, it includes every experience of the school. Therefore, it's important to thoughtfully design spaces and experiences that fully engage all learners and best prepare them for success, helping them to become the hero of their own story.

Answer the following questions to help you identify areas that can be more intentionally designed to support the process of transforming an ordinary classroom to an extraordinary place of learning.

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What do you currently like about the space in which you teach?

What do you not like about the space in which you teach?

What would you identify is the greatest challenge that you face in the space in which you teach?

***A classroom should be an oasis of imagination and creativity, carefully designed to inspire and engage learners.***

***- Sir Ken Robinson***

## **BLUE SKY THINKING**

If you could create the perfect teaching space, what would it look like? What would change about the way you teach?

Now imagine that you have an unlimited budget, what would the space and experiences look like now?

What if magic were real? How would that change things?

**CHALLENGE:** Ask your students these same questions and see what they say.

## THE POWER OF STORY

**The story of your school reflects what it stands for. It's the mission and the vision that demonstrated in both verbal and non-verbal ways. As with all things, actions speak louder than words when it comes to the story that is being told by a school. With that in mind, answer the following questions:**

What is the stated mission and vision of your school? For your classroom?

How do the verbal messages given to students by all adults of the building support the mission/vision? Would you say those messages more discouraging or encouraging? What about the messaging in your own classroom? Give examples.

What non-verbal messaging is being sent to the students of your school based on the physical appearance of the building and grounds? What about the appearance of your classroom? Give examples.

This verbal and non-verbal messaging creates the story of your school. Is it a story that empowers students to dream, prepare and move boldly into their future or is it a story of just getting by and accepting your lot in life? With that in mind, describe the story of your school as well as the story of your classroom.

**CHALLENGE: Ask your students what types of stories they feel are being told by the school environment.**

# THE POWER OF STORY

What story would you like for your school or classroom to tell?

What's the best methods of telling that story? How would you do it?

What type of **SPACE** would be needed to tell those stories?

What types of **EXPERIENCES** would be needed to best tell those stories?

*Stories are the way we contextualize information. They give us a framework for understanding the world around us.*

*-Joe Rhode*

## THE POWER OF SPACE

If the messages that we send to students are the stories that are being told, then every space of the school is the stage on which those stories are played out. Never underestimate the power of a well-designed space. Space can spark engagement, cultivate curiosity, encourage collaboration as well as promote social and emotional well-being, all of which supports student achievement. Learning spaces are not just limited to the classroom. Every space within a school, both indoor and outdoor, should be considered a design element to be carefully crafted with student needs in mind. That said, fill in the chart for each of the following spaces in your classroom:

LEARNING SPACE	CURRENT DESCRIPTION	VISION FOR THE FUTURE
<b>Whole Group Space</b>		
<b>Small Group/ Collaboration Space</b>		
<b>Individual Workspaces</b>		

# THE POWER OF SPACE

LEARNING SPACE	CURRENT DESCRIPTION	VISION FOR THE FUTURE
<b>Furniture</b>		
<b>Surrounding Spaces</b>	Wall Space:  Windows:  Storage Space:  Additional Space: (class library, stations, etc)	Wall Space:  Windows:  Storage Space:  Additional Space: (class library, stations, etc.)

# THE POWER OF SPACE

LEARNING SPACE	CURRENT DESCRIPTION	VISION FOR THE FUTURE
<p><b>Social/Emotional Learning Support</b></p>	<p>Lighting (Natural, Fluorescent, LED, etc.)</p> <p>Main Colors Used in the Space</p> <p>Sounds (music, nature, etc.)</p> <p>Plants/Natural Elements</p>	<p>Lighting (Natural, Fluorescent, LED, etc.)</p> <p>Main Colors Used in the Space</p> <p>Sounds (music, nature, etc.)</p> <p>Plants/Natural Elements</p>
<p><b>Other</b> <b>(any other unique spaces in your classrooms that you can identify)</b></p>		

## THE POWER OF EXPERIENCE

Our experiences shape us; they make us who we are. The events that we encounter, the actions in which we participate, the thoughts that we think throughout life, all work together to create the person that we become. Those experiences, both positive and negative, impact what and how we learn. As educators we must understand that the quality of the experiences that students face within our schools greatly impacts the effectiveness of their learning. As the ones who must plan, design, deliver and evolve those experiences, the responsibility for creating them falls squarely on us. With this in mind, answer the following questions:

What are some experiences or spaces that you've enjoyed in other schools? What was it that created that enjoyment?

What types of experiences or places have inspired you to learn and why?

How might you modify and/or adapt these experiences to your own classroom or school?

***Experiential learning is the key to true understanding and mastery.***

***- David Kolb***



## THE POWER OF EXPERIENCE

Describe the types of experiences currently provided to your students. Who makes the decision to provide those specific experiences and why?

What's the primary method of delivery for those experiences? Textbook? Technology? Lecture? Hands-on activities? Field trips?

To what extent do students serve as collaborators with teachers and/or administrators in designing the spaces and experiences of the classrooms and school as a whole? If so, what does that look like. If not, what would it take for it to occur?

Legendary Imagineer Joe Rhode says that, "Experiences suggest engagement and participation, not simply consumption." With this in mind, to what extent are your students creators of their own learning versus simply being consumers of what is taught?

## 10 QUESTIONS, 3 STEPS

Now that you've had a chance to focus on some key areas needed for creating highly engaging and immersive learning spaces, answer the following questions:

1. What do you want your students to know when they leave your classroom?
2. What do you want them to remember about your classroom?
3. How do you want your students to feel when they leave you?
4. What types of experiences are required to accomplish all of this? Describe them in as much detail as possible.
5. With this in mind, what resources do you need? Describe as many as you can and state why.
- 6. *What's your first step to make this happen?***
7. Whose assistance do you need and why?
- 8. *What's your first step to make it happen?***
9. What type of space is needed to support all of this?
- 10. *What's your first step to make it happen?***

List your first three steps to transforming your classroom into the most magical place to learn:

**STEP ONE:**

**STEP TWO:**

**STEP THREE:**