Purpose Driven, Accessible Learning Spaces

Microsoft

The goal

Schools can improve the positive impact of digital technology with physical learning spaces that are more flexible, collaborative, equitable, healthy and inspiring. Teachers can now let their lesson plans drive the classroom setup, instead of the other way around.

Creating the right environment

As digital technology revolutionizes nearly every aspect of the developing world, we are now seeing its influence on our schools. In taking up digital tools, teachers and students have naturally begun to seek out more comfortable, more flexible, and more connected environments that can support their modern learning needs.

To plan an effective physical learning environment, technical and digital specifications must be developed alongside qualitative considerations. This is what the OECD calls Quality Design, which begins with defining a quality physical learning environment – in terms of student requirements, age groups, societal needs and usability/safety regulations – then continually measuring and analyzing the results.

How do we get there?

While schools tend to put a lot of effort into choosing technology, they put inadequate consideration into the adjustability of student workstations and the suitability of lighting. Different pedagogical modalities have varying requirements in terms of classroom layout.

Applying models like Zandvliet & Straker's Model for Educational Productivity and Scott-Weber's linking pedagogy to space and modalities enables the creation of appropriate spaces for learning.
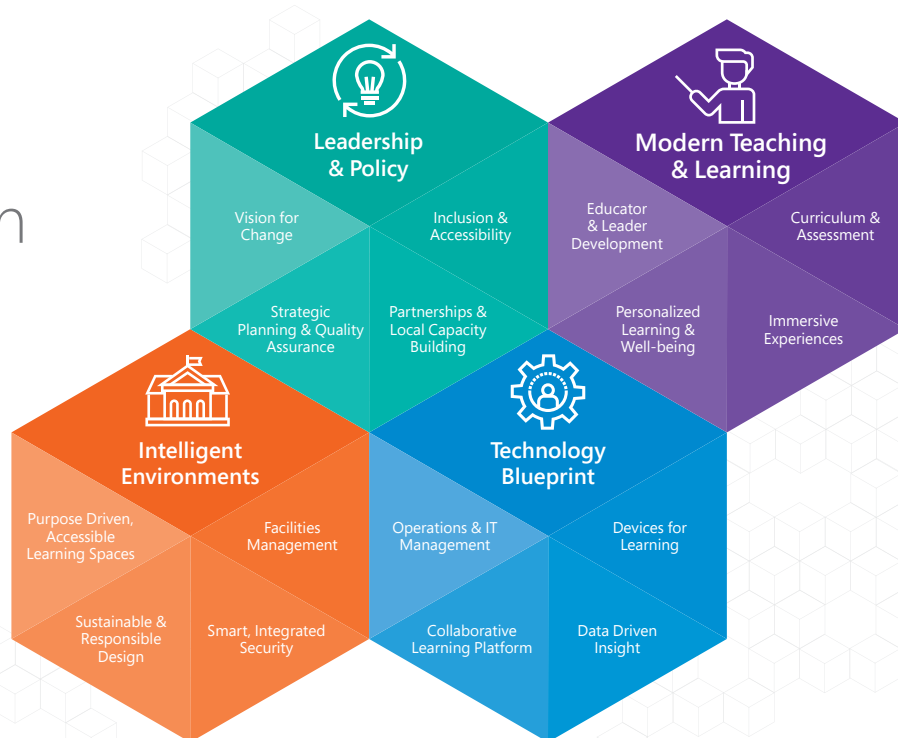
Care must be taken to appropriately select furniture for students, to support good posture. Protecting student eyesight requires appropriate light levels and policies to ensure students get enough time away from screens.

Flexible layouts, which enable easy moving of furniture and devices, are the best option to support teachers in applying a diverse range of pedagogies. Collaborative work can be supported by small groups of furniture with movable screens, to easily create larger or smaller spaces as needed.

Education Transformation Framework

Leadership & Policy
- Vision for Change
- Inclusion & Accessibility
- Strategic Planning & Quality Assurance
- Partnerships & Local Capacity Building

Modern Teaching & Learning
- Educator & Leader Development
- Curriculum & Assessment
- Personalized Learning & Well-being
- Immersive Experiences

Intelligent Environments
- Purpose Driven, Accessible Learning Spaces
- Facilities Management
- Sustainable & Responsible Design
- Smart, Integrated Security

Technology Blueprint
- Operations & IT Management
- Devices for Learning
- Collaborative Learning Platform
- Data Driven Insight

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Guiding questions

How will spaces be redesigned to enable modern learning?

What does a modern learning space look and feel like?

What technologies are needed to make learning spaces flexible and collaborative?

What kind of institutional policies are needed to ensure a healthy learning environment?

How can we support educators to make the best use of flexible learning spaces?

How can technology be used to support evolving learning environments?

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Here are some ways schools use technology to enable anywhere, anytime learning:

- Using Microsoft Advanced Analytics and Business Intelligence to analyze student data for development of new learning tools and applications
- Supporting student collaboration, competition, and innovation, for example through Microsoft Dreamspark, YouthSpark and Imagine Cup
- Skype in the Classroom for connecting to experts, experiences and peers worldwide
- Mobile learning supported by Office on Mobile Devices.

Resources

Whitepaper: Transforming Learning Environments for Anytime, Anywhere Learning for All

Authored by Dr. Don Olcott, Jr., FRSA Professor of Educational Leadership and Open and Distance Learning, this paper explores how students and teachers adapt to new technologies for anytime, anywhere learning. It discusses how student-centered learning environments may serve as a catalyst for schools to create the best possible educational, social and cultural impacts for community development.

The complete version is available at aka.ms/leaders

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