





FURNITURE CAN MAKE-OR-BREAK MAKERSPACE

by Ashley Scott

Across the U.S., educators are integrating hands-on learning into their classrooms enabling students to work collaboratively while building skills through tinkering, creativity and innovation. This type of learning has many names, one of which is Makerspace.



Creativity and Innovation

Any space or area available that can be used for students to be creative and innovative is called a Makerspace. Materials such as 3D printers, straws, popsicle sticks, Legos, drones, and robotics kits can be used for students to tinker and build with. Not only are makerspaces being incorporated into the K-12 sector, higher education has joined the maker movement.

“Letting students discover their own projects is what makes makerspaces so popular; it’s the application of algebra, writing and other core curriculum subjects that convince educators that makerspaces can be valuable learning environments,” said Matt Zalaznick from Makerspaces: Meeting of the Mindsets.

The Ultimate Collaboration Experience

In higher education makerspaces are being created on campuses, and some universities even have makerspace clubs. Makerspaces provide the ultimate experience for students to collaborate and learn from one another.

As explained by Vincent Wilczynski, deputy dean of Yale School of Engineering & Applied Science and co-author of “Higher Education Makerspaces: Engaged Students, Hands-on Skills, Interdisciplinary Connection” published in *Learning By Design*, “Universities have always provided elements of makerspaces, including machine shops, assembly and testing areas, CAD labs, meeting spaces, and classrooms.

What universities have not always done is include all of these elements in one location and make the resulting space widely accessible to an academically diverse campus population.”

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Non-Traditional Learning

Makerspaces allow students the freedom to learn in a non-traditional way. Although this is true, in order to produce an effective Makerspace the right type of furniture and room layouts are needed. Rather than sitting in a traditional student desk, students now have the chance be mobile around the classroom and collaborate with other students.

“Planning for adaptability is key in the design of a makerspace,” Wilczynski said in Engaged Students, Hands-on Skills, Interdisciplinary Connection. “Most equipment, other than the largest pieces, is on wheels; few things are permanent within the space itself to ensure adaptability and flexibility. The more useful spaces are generously proportioned, technologically rich, and provide range of settings

in which to interact. Key to the long-term sustainability of a makerspace is adopting the view that furnishings and programs are not permanent, but instead adapt to the changing needs of users.”

Right Furniture Keeps Educators Mobile

The correct type of furniture in a makerspace also allows for educators to be mobile in the classroom and easily see how students are learning skills, applying creativity and collaborating together. How a makerspace functions corresponds with how students will utilize their creative space.

Whether they are working by themselves or within a group, the purpose of the makerspace is to not only have students collaborate, be creative and develop fundamental skills, but to become inspired by the process of “making” in their makerspace environment.

“For students to use a makerspace to its maximum potential, it must allow them to move around freely and find inspiration,” said Kylie Lacey from Makerspaces: Meeting of the Mindsets—Brave New Building Blocks. “Whether constructing a makerspace from scratch or renovating an existing room, administrators must bring in furniture and design elements that facilitate enthusiastic creation.”

Furniture That Adapts to the Maker Mindset

Room layout and furniture in a makerspace can make-or-break its effectiveness and collaboration component. Mobility, flexibility, separate areas for noise levels, storage space and even a display area for finished makerspace products are aspects that lead to a winning room layout.

“Just as education has adapted to the ‘maker’ mindset, classrooms need to adapt to allow makerspaces to flourish,” said Ben Jones, Spectrum’s Vice President of Sales. A classroom that provides endless collaboration opportunities will offer students the most effective makerspace experience possible.”

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