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SLATE

magazine



REBUILDING A CULTURE OF SAFETY

**Jefferson School District implements a new safety
plan following a school shooting. - Page 32**

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SAFETY NOTES

Based on 30 years of experience of providing insurance coverage to Idaho Schools, we have developed a Safety & Loss Control Self Audit guide for ISBA Insurance Plan members. The self audit covers a wide variety of potential loss producing exposures based on the actual insurance loss experience of Idaho schools. It covers safety concerns including;

- Building Access, Security & Key Control
- Inspection and Service of Automatic Fire Sprinklers
- Snow and Ice Removal
- Emergency Procedures
- District Vehicle Use – Driver Qualification
- Playground Inspections and Playground Supervision
- Staff Training for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment
- Science Laboratory Safety

There is a separate checklist for Vocational Education.

The Safety & Loss Control Self Audit is best completed in a group setting, whether it be with school trustees, and administrators, school principals and selected staff, or by your district safety committee. The group reviews each of the potential loss producing exposures and assigns a grade based upon their evaluation. An exposure that is controlled by a written formal policy that is fully and consistently in effect would be given an "A". An exposure controlled by written policy but has minor discrepancies in its execution maybe given a "B". Informal safety policies that are regular in their application could be give a "C". Exposures whose controls are inconsistent in their application could be given a failing grade. The Safety & Loss Control Self Audit will identify safety issues that can be improved upon and help you prioritize your safety efforts.

Many Idaho school districts have benefited by having the ISBA Insurance Plan's Safety & Loss Control Consultant participate in the self audit process, as not only can he help to describe the best safety practices needed to control specific exposures, he can also provide tools, assistance and necessary training to help you improve your safety programs.

The Safety & Loss Control Self-Audit form is available to all ISBA Insurance Plan members. If you would like a copy of the form, or if you like assistance from the ISBA Insurance Plan's Safety & Loss Control Consultant please contact Chad Ranstrom, Dane Higdem or Sondra Lavoie at 1-208-321-9300.



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By **Doug McIntosh** / D & D Integrated Solutions
Learning Environment Designer & Writer



The Benefits of Flexible Learning Spaces

The terms, flexible seating, flexible furniture, and flexible classroom are really the end product of the pedagogical change from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning. A learner-centered environment embodies practices that optimize the students' movement from whole-group instruction to smaller groupings, to personalized spaces.

A flexible learning space is designed to morph classroom activities into different learning configurations by using furniture, materials, tools and technology. It becomes an essential part of learning and teaching by enhancing both the students' and teacher's sensory input, and also physical movement and psychological well-being.

To optimize such a flexible design, learning spaces should utilize five categories of furniture and technology to enhance student movement, which in turn helps to spark their motivation, engagement, and creativity.

1. Seating and Movement

Sitting with subtle movement while working independently or in groups

2. Modular Sitting Tables

Sitting at shaped tables that optimize space while working in groups or independently

3. Sit to Stand Tables and Movement

Having a standing option to weight-transfer while working independently or in groups

4. AV & Visual Communications

Walls that talk using audio, video and visuals with a variety of fixed and mobile displays, and boards

5. Mobile Storage

Bin and cabinet places organized and optimized for stacking and mobility. Personalized storage for each student, and for the variety of room materials, books, tools and technology

From Classroom to Learning Studio

As a child in the 20th century, you probably attended K-12 classrooms where all the desks and chairs were the same, probably in rows, facing the front chalkboard. As 21st century learning and teaching practices support literacy, STEAM, project-based learning, critical thinking, and collaborative learning, the curriculum has been transformed. What hasn't evolved as much is the physically furnished classroom in this century. Stationary single or double desks and 4-legged chairs still make up most classrooms today designed for single activity whole-group instruction.

In the last ten years more and more teachers and administrators have moved together to sync their 21st century curriculum with a sprinkling of flexible furniture and technology in their classroom. I call this process, "transitions to transformation" as the physical classroom evolves into what many are now calling, "Learning Studios." Classrooms are becoming learning studios as pedagogy and physical space converge to enhance student creativity, expression, and understanding.

Flexible Learning Space Assets

- Emulates the world of work – In the real world, adults work in teams. Project-based tasks are what most people do everyday at their jobs. Modern office spaces have transformed how people work in face-to-face environments that also facilitate online activities. Educators are empowered as designers to create learning spaces that now include a broader mix of hard and soft furniture not only made for schools. This new mix includes furniture from office and work, hotel and restaurant, and home and living space environments.
- Designers of their space – A teachers, working with their students, should be the designers of their learning space. With a variety of district standard flexible furniture, the classroom design is often the first class project of the school year.
- A Social and Emotional Safe Nest – When students walk into a classroom, they need a safe place to land. Cozy is cool- both a physical and emotional feeling. Many students need the comfort of a welcoming classroom to serve as a springboard for the deep-dive of learning with a class of peers.
- Living with Covid – As collaborative teams have become standard practice in pre-covid classrooms, the pandemic has created learning challenges that include the furniture. Flexible shape desks and tables can both be configured for group work, or can easily be reconfigured for social distancing space and individualized seating.

To Flex Minds, We Need to Flex the Classroom.

Learning spaces in the 2020's need non-traditional eclectic designs to create a positive learning environment. The key to a flexible learning space combines a student's need to fidget, rock, swivel, stretch, stand, and even get horizontal with mobile and modular furniture and technology. Subtle self-movement and weight transfer keeps student brains stimulated and helps prevent mental fatigue within a contained space. It's really simple, physical movement sparks the mind to enhance one's motivation, engagement, and creativity that open paths for learning.

About the author: Doug McIntosh was a 35 year K-12 teacher in special and general education. In 2014, he started Groupwerk® his educational consulting business working with schools and vendors to craft engaging learning spaces.



Building 21st Century Learning Environments™