

Life **Learn**

FALL 2015

Kennedy Secondary School

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OTTERS

**Get Your Community Engaged in
Facilities Planning**

**There's More Than One Way to Set Up
Your Learning Spaces**

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GET YOUR COMMUNITY ENGAGED IN FACILITIES PLANNING

Tom Tapper, Ed.D, ATS&R's Senior Education Planner, shares this simple five-step planning process that provides an opportunity to listen, learn and share.



Coming to terms with how to address aging facilities that are both in need of repair as well as in need of upgrades to support the changes taking place in the teaching/learning process can be a daunting task. The underlying challenge is the costs associated with repair, betterment and/or replacement of valued, sometimes cherished, school buildings. And, justifying those costs must be the first order of business for any school district.

Districts can meet this challenge by engaging the community in a simple five-step planning process that brings together a community-based planning team. We suggest this planning team be comprised of key community stakeholders including community leaders, parents, and representatives from the school board, faculty, staff and students. This planning team will examine the critical challenges its school facilities face; an important first step toward successfully reaching solutions that will result in sustaining school facilities that support 21st century instruction and gain community support to do so.

Our five-step planning process provides an opportunity for planning team members to listen, learn and let their ideas be known; leading to a set of solutions for the school board and community it serves to consider and act upon.

Step 1 Visioning

Planning team members come together for the first time and share their thoughts and ideas about the future of their school. The collective wisdom of the newly formed team will provide opportunities for each planning team member to 'check their own thoughts and ideas' against those of other team members; creating a kaleidoscope of ideas upon which future meetings will be built.

Step 2 Data Analysis

Planning team members will come face to face with the realities of their school district's facilities. A review of the most recently completed study of facility conditions (facility efficiency and educational adequacy) is shared along with other pertinent information that is unique to the community such as demographic changes, trends in community growth, and the economic impact of making facility upgrades on the district's residents.

Step 3 Bridging the Future

Every step of the way, planning team members are provided with ample opportunities to listen and learn (the easiest part), but also to let their ideas be known. Beginning in meeting three, the major work effort shifts directly to planning team members. Each member will share their own thoughts and ideas about the conditions of their schools and their vision of education for their children. These thoughts and ideas will shape the future of their school. This meeting is where aspirations begin to be formed around the realities of 'what is' (in terms of school building functions) and 'what can be' (in terms of school buildings facilitating 21st century instruction).

Step 4 Creating the Future

At this step in the planning process, the kaleidoscope of possibilities has taken shape through the on-going conversations (sometimes of a courageous nature) between and among planning team members. Work is done to create a set of solutions that are grounded by the intersecting of the past, present and future realities.

Step 5 The Pathway Forward

The final step charts a course for school district decision makers to follow. This pathway forward will include the vision for the district's facilities (repair, renovate, and/or replace) as well as the identification of the steps the board and community must take in order to move the school district forward. The kaleidoscope of possibilities generated in previous meetings turns into a clear picture that both describes and defines the pathway forward.

This five-step planning process is enlightening, challenging and energizing all at the same time; not only for the planning team members, but for the entire community as information is shared and feedback is provided along the way. And while the actual outcome of this process is unpredictable (as it should be), the process itself leads to a more clear understanding within the community of the needs for changes in school facilities and the rationale behind it.

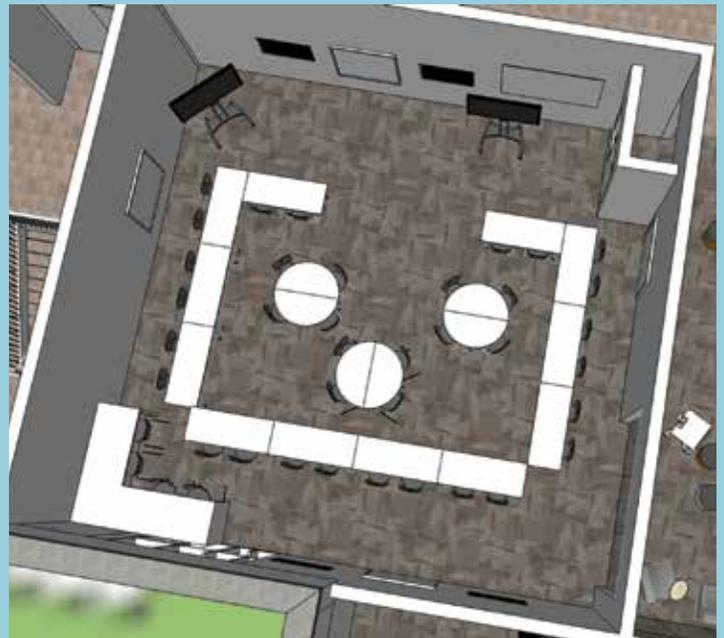
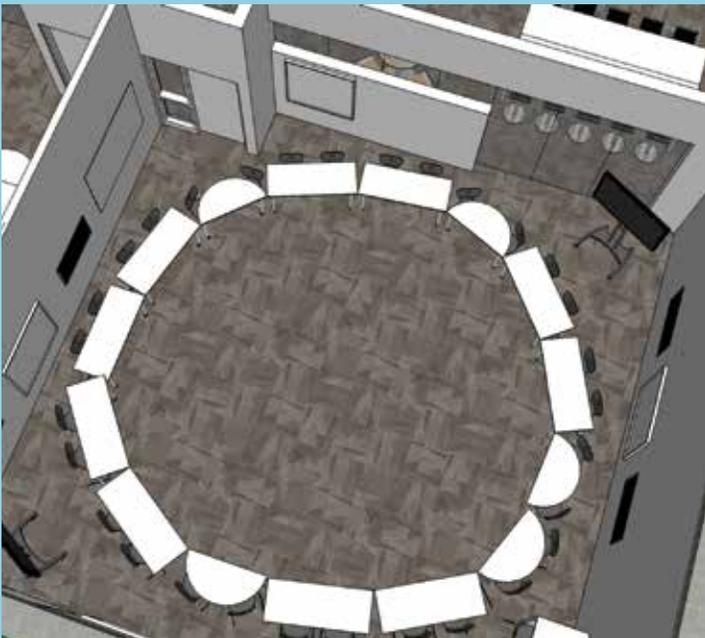
DID YOU KNOW?

THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO SET UP YOUR LEARNING SPACES

Classrooms are no longer square boxes with the teacher's desk at the front of the room and student desks lined in up rows. The chalkboard, corkboard and overhead projector used to serve as the main tools in the classroom.

Learning today has become interdisciplinary, project-based, and research-driven. It is connected to the community—local, state, national and global. Many times students are collaborating with people around the world in various projects. The curriculum incorporates higher order thinking skills, multiple intelligences, technology and multimedia, and the greater community. Students are self-directed and work both independently and interdependently.

We recently worked with Burnsville High School to reimagine their classrooms into flexible learning spaces that encourage small group discussion, collaboration, and personalized learning. These learning spaces will allow the teachers to plug into a docking station and float among the students. Monitors, both wall-mounted and portable, will be located around the room allowing easy access as the furniture is reconfigured to best provide the appropriate learning space for the teacher and students. Tables, chairs and casework will also be on casters to allow for portability and flexibility. Wall-mounted whiteboards around the perimeter will engage students with interactive learning. A genius bar in the back of the learning space allows for test taking, individual learning, and one-on-one interaction. The learning space is designed to support the curriculum and instruction that challenges all students and provides for differentiation.



Flexible furniture on casters allows the same learning space to be reconfigured multiple ways enabling the area to be customized to the curriculum.



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COMING TO A CONFERENCE NEAR YOU



The conference is once again upon us. Please stop by and visit us at one of these upcoming conferences. We'd love to hear more about how your planning and design challenges and offer ideas that can help!

September 28, 2015

MASA Fall Conference
Booth 48, DECC
Duluth, Minnesota

October 1, 2015

MASMS 2015 Fall Conference
St. Cloud Holiday Inn
St. Cloud, Minnesota

November 20-21, 2015

IASB/IASA/IASBO Annual Conference
Booth 416, Hyatt Regency
Chicago, Illinois

January 14-15, 2016

MSBA Leadership Conference
Booths 218 & 220, Mpls Convention Center
Minneapolis, Minnesota

January 20-21, 2016

Wisconsin Education Convention
Booth 501, Wisconsin Center
Milwaukee, Wisconsin