OPTIMIZE EDUCATIONAL FURNITURE DESIGN

Now more than ever, educational environments are multi-purpose spaces that are used by students, staff, and the community. The furniture should be designed to accommodate all of these needs. By doing it right, the result will be environments that are more functional and productive. This article includes a number of questions that can help to ensure the very best furniture solutions for your space.

Furniture can help to facilitate the curriculum and programs, so it is critical to also consider the location of instructor desks, offices, multi-purpose rooms, media centers, and reception areas. Other critical elements are the often-forgotten design obstacles such as corners, columns, and utility access panels. Knowledge of these design obstacles during the space planning process can help to maximize all available floor space.

Asking the right questions up front is critical to ensure that the environment meets the longer-term needs of the students and staff. The questions in this article will help to design an environment that will be useful for years to come.

Computer Lab Furniture

- How many students need to fit into the room?
- Do the students need to face the front of the room (instructor) or away?
- Where will the instructor be located? Does the instructor need to see the computer screens?
- Will laptops, or flat screen monitor be used?
- What does the work surface height need to be? [25 for elementary, 27 for JHS, 29 for HS]
- How many ADA stations are required?
- Is there a need for one or multiple printer stations?
- Will the layout consist of perimeter stations around the room, rows, or a combination?
- If lecture style required, can a minimum of 36” of space between rows be achieved?
- How will power & data be accessed (floor, wall, ceiling)?
- Will the stations require convenience outlets in addition to dedicated computer circuits?
- Should the grommet holes or wire dips be located in the corners or centered per student?
- How can we best address ergonomics?
- What seating options are required (casters or fixed seating)?
- What is the floor finish?
Tables

- Is mobility a concern?
- Will the tables need to be powered?
- Is there a need for ganging and modesty panels?
- How many people will the tables need to accommodate?
- Will people be seated on one or both sides of the table?
- Will the tables need to be stored in a separate space?

Instructor Desks

- Is mobility a concern?
- What are the storage requirements?
- What are the visual requirements for student monitors?
- What are the electrical requirements for each instructor station?
- Would a standing height or stool height station be beneficial?
- How can we best address ergonomics?
- What is required in the way of additional accessories, including paper management?
- How will group work with students and/or parents be addressed?
Reception/Waiting Area

- Will this be a shared or a single workstation?
- Does the reception area need guest chairs and/or soft seating?
- Does the reception area need a transaction counter and if so what age ranges does it accommodate?
- Is there a value in incorporating a company logo or graphic into the station design?

Administrative Offices

- What is required in needed, i.e., credenzas, book cases, etc?
- What is the desired orientation of the furniture in the room?
- Does existing wall power/data support the desired orientation?
- Does the office size support a small conference/meeting table?
- Is guest seating required?
- How can we best address ergonomics?