

Vancouver Public Schools Educational Facilities Symposium

November 5

2014

Connecting Design II Strategic Initiatives with
Flexible Learning Environments

Design II Educational
Facilities Planning



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Executive Summary

Symposium Purpose

The purpose of the symposium was to connect the Design II Strategic Plan six priority goal areas to facility design principles. Symposium participants envisioned physical environments that support learning opportunities for our students to become future ready graduates. In their discussions, it was evident that facility design can help educators equip students with the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that will enable them to succeed in a highly competitive, globally connected economy and community.

Our community has a long history of support for its schools. In the previous 25 years the district completed three phases of new construction, remodeling, and classroom additions consisting of 18 new or replacement schools to support teaching and learning for the 21st century. That work was extensive and transformational, and we're proud that the district was able to respond to our community's desire and support our teachers and our students in their pursuit of excellence.

While many schools were remodeled and/or replaced, several schools and other needs were not addressed in the most recent round of building projects. Also, new programs and strategic initiatives have emerged that require other facility improvements, most notably the need to construct a school for Vancouver *i*Tech Preparatory.

Recently, the district board of directors approved a planning resolution authorizing the superintendent and staff to review our facility needs and develop a proposal that would address remaining capital improvements. This work is about equity — leveling the playing field. The students who attend *all of our schools* deserve learning environments in which they can thrive. The focus is not about brick and mortar. It's about providing our students and teachers access to facilities that enhance teaching and learning. It's about spaces and environments that help to prepare our students and graduates to be future ready. Facilities designed for 21st century learners are imperative to our mission.

This symposium addressed the specific strategic goal of Flexible Learning Environments for educational facilities. The group participated in an internal scan of the district's current design principals, complete with visual examples. An external perspective by Sir Ken Robinson outlining three principles for the human mind to flourish also was shared with the participants. The three principles — diversity, curiosity and creativity — stimulated creative conversations about a hopeful future for our students.

Through the internal and external scans and the Design II strategic initiatives, participants considered key components within Design II Strategic Plan initiatives and connected them to design principles that can be applied to future educational facility improvement projects.

Key Discussion Question

Symposium participants were asked to consider the following key question regarding their assigned strategic goal areas to validate current design principles and identify new emerging themes. The groups discussed how the current design principles may apply to current strategic initiatives and identified new design principles relevant to future facility improvements.

What design principles support these Design II goal areas? Consider student, teacher, and parent/community perspectives.

Design II Strategic Goal Areas

Instructional Quality
Flexible Learning Environments
Programs of Choice
Early Learning
Family Engagement & FCRCs
Safe and Supportive Schools

Current Facility Design Principles

1/3, 1/3, 1/3 model of instruction
Stimulating, learner-centered environment
Flexible and adaptable spaces (furniture/equipment)
Small within large
Project-based learning
Applied learning
Specialized areas for programs of choice
Integrated technology
Distributed technology
Partnerships as learning resources
Safety and security
Community use

Symposium Results

The input was collected from each table group and recorded by goal area for cross-referencing to the existing set of Vancouver facility design principles. Current principles that remain viable were noted, and new emerging design principles will be considered while developing an updated design template for future projects.

In addition to validating several of the current design principles, new themes emerged from the symposium. The desire for design principles that promote “whole child” learning was pervasive throughout the table discussions.

Design II Emerging Design Principles:

- Engaging learner centered environments
- Adaptive learning spaces
- Ubiquitously integrated learning technologies
- Family and community learning partnerships
- Safe and supportive learning environments
- Functionally inspired learning spaces
 - (*pragmatic, sustainable, transparent, aligned, inspiring, aesthetically pleasing, and ergonomically friendly*)

Next Steps

The design principles and themes will serve as a guide for future school planning and design work. The Flexible Learning Environments goal area team will continue to evaluate current and future facilities needs based on existing building conditions, educational program needs, enrollment forecasts, and Design II requirements. The facilities planning team will use the assessments to draft a set of capital facility improvement recommendations for review and consideration by the superintendent and school board.