

Student Preferences In Learning Environments

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ABSTRACT

Students are drawn to a setting that allows them to be comfortable, engaged in the class content/activity for the day, and that of which allows them to best work in groups. Overall, they prefer to customize their interior classroom environment to correlate with the current activity taking place, which plays a role in the type of classroom furniture they prefer. Data for this study was obtained using a survey which expanded upon how students perceive the classroom environment, furniture types, and common distractions within the classroom environment. It was concluded that students value the ability to work in groups while still managing a certain degree of personal space. Upon this conclusion, it was determined that high top desks are the most logical and preferred furniture solution for the desired learning and working types of the majority of modern-day students within the classroom. Finally, distractions within the classroom can greatly affect the learning and working outcomes of these students.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are student preferences regarding classroom design to create a successful learning space?

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

A survey was created that requested students to answer 17 questions regarding classroom furniture types and other design factors that affect learning. Some of the questions were modeled after a previous study (Harvey & Kenyon, 2013). The survey was distributed via North Dakota State University student email ListServ. Students were required to be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study.

RESULTS

The survey received 368 responses, with 73% from females, 26% from males, and 1% choosing not to respond.

Students were asked to select options from a list that they find distracting in a classroom setting.

Most commonly reported distractions by students...

- obstructed view of whiteboard (81%)
- seating too close together (63%)
- noise from outside the classroom (58%)
- loud classroom (54%)

RESULTS

Students were asked to select their favorite and least favorite seating options. Students were also asked what makes a furniture type preferable to them, similar other studies that have been done (Adedokun, et al., 2017).

Mobility seemed to be an important factor to students, as the most popular seating options were all mobile. Two of the least popular seating options were stationary.

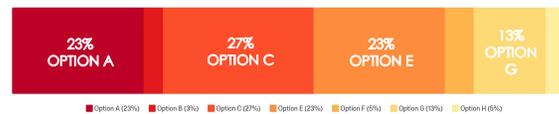
Things students liked about furniture options...

- allowing them to easily work in groups (61%)
- providing plenty of work space (59%)
- appearing to be comfortable (59%)

Things students disliked about furniture options...

- appearing uncomfortable (75%)
- not providing enough work space (68%)
- and a lack of storage for belongings such as books and backpacks (54%)

Below is a graph of the most common choices students selected when asked what their **favorite** furniture option was:



Option A: Mobile Desk with Adjustable Tablet Arm
Option C: Standing Height Tables and Chairs
Option E: Individual Desks in Groups with Mobile Chairs
Option G: Booth-Style Seating

Below is a graph of the most common choices students selected when asked what their **least** favorite furniture option was:



Option D: Stool That Promotes Movement While Sitting
Option F: Shared Table and Stationary Chairs
Option H: Tablet Arm Desk

CONCLUSION

Many of the challenges students face while in the classroom can be alleviated through good design. The most commonly reported distractions were related to sight lines, furniture layout, and acoustics, which are all important factors for interior designers to consider.

The most popular seating options were high top tables, mobile desks with adjustable tablet arms, and individual desks in groups with mobile chairs. These options were all mobile, and made working as a group easy.

Two of the three least popular options were stationary. These options are what many would consider more traditional classroom seating options, which demonstrates students' desire for a classroom that supports the new concept of active learning.

When designing an educational facility, it is important to consider what types of furniture would best support the various styles of learning (Harvey & Kenyon, 2013). Overall, it can be concluded that students prefer mobile furniture so that group work and communication is encouraged along with being able to see the whiteboard when in class (Rands & Gansemmer-Topf, 2017). Desks that are stationary and small do not encourage flexibility or collaboration within a classroom. The preferences shown give us as designers great insight into how to design effectively within an educational facility for its users (McArthur, 2015).

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