

# SCHOOL FURNITURE

## The Impact Furniture has on Learning

Furniture impacts how we interact with our environment. Used to support work, play, and interaction, furniture is a key final step in creating a functional space.

Three distinguishable areas with their own considerations regarding school furniture are flexible learning spaces, classrooms, and administration spaces. Flexible learning spaces (or collaboration spaces) with the right furniture can boost relationships between students, educational content, and the school. Classrooms are often the core space for students and must support teacher and student needs. Educators' and administrators' productivity, health and well-being, work relationships, and career development can all be affected by their office space and work environment.

### COLLABORATION SPACES

Within hallways, libraries, and other flexible learning spaces, offering a variety of soft seating can promote healthy practices within educational environments. By creating places for students and staff to unwind or work in a more casual setting, furniture is important in how the collaboration spaces will function.

Consider furniture with tablet arms or pairing with side tables that would allow comfortable use of tablets, laptops, or notebooks.

Using different furniture types and heights allows students and staff to pick what would fit their needs for comfort and productivity. "Bar height" seating may be preferred by older or taller students.

Successful soft seating areas provide enough seats for how many people are in the space and enough options to keep their choices open throughout many occasions and uses of the furniture.





## CLASSROOMS

When selecting furniture for a learning environment, several considerations are important to ensure functionality, safety, and comfort for students and staff. Here are key factors to keep in mind:

1. **Ergonomics:** Choose furniture that supports good posture and comfort, especially for students who spend extended periods sitting. Chairs and desks should be adjustable to accommodate different body sizes and physical abilities.
2. **Durability:** School furniture needs to withstand heavy use and potential rough handling by students. Consider the ease of maintenance and cleaning of the furniture. Choose materials that are easy to wipe down and sanitize, promoting a hygienic environment.
3. **Safety:** Ensure that furniture meets safety standards and guidelines, especially regarding stability, sharp edges, and materials used (non-toxic, fire-resistant, etc.).
4. **Flexibility and adaptability:** Furniture should be versatile to accommodate different teaching styles and classroom layouts. Consider modular or adjustable furniture that can be easily reconfigured.



“Flexible seating” is a term growing in popularity as it allows students to have choices for alternative seating or workspace options. Having seating choices can help with independence and trust in the classroom.

Many classrooms are opting for individual desks that are of different shapes. Beyond the typical rectangle, many schools are opting for trapezoid or triangular desk shapes.

5. **Storage:** Provide adequate storage solutions such as shelves, cabinets, cubbies, or lockers to help keep classrooms organized and minimize clutter.

Cubbies in each classroom are often preferable for younger students because they are more accessible for both students and teachers. By promoting independence and organization, cubbies can encourage healthy habits early on.

Lockers offer greater privacy and security for students and their belongings. They also provide long-term storage, allowing students to safely store seasonal items or class projects.

6. **Aesthetic appeal:** While functionality is key, visually appealing furniture can create a more pleasant learning environment. Choose colors and designs that complement the school’s overall aesthetic.

By carefully considering these factors, schools can select classroom furniture that enhances the learning environment, promotes student well-being, and supports effective teaching practices.





## ADMINISTRATION

Within administrative spaces, furniture is an important consideration when thinking about the performance and efficiency of the space.

Height-adjustable desks and workstations promote physical activity and movement throughout the day.

Ergonomic chairs are important for the comfort of those sitting while at their desk. Not only overall chair height, but being able to adjust the lumbar support, armrests, and headrest are all important features for individuals to be comfortable.

Conference tables are an important feature of most administrative suites. Consider using smaller tables on wheels to have more configuration options based on the current needs of the space.



To conclude, furniture can have a large impact on the continued use of all spaces within a school. To promote comfort, productivity, and connection, the furniture selected needs to address the needs and goals of students and staff.



**Lauren Kettner,**

*IIDA Associate, LEED Green Associate,*

is an Interior Designer at frk architects + engineers, Iowa's leading architectural firm focused on education.

