

PRIMARY SCHOOL CASE STUDY

NAME OF SCHOOL

Bethany Lutheran Primary School Raceview, Ipswich, QLD, Australia

WHAT TYPES OF INNOVATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE?

Open-plan classroom environments

HOW WERE THESE ENVIRONMENTS DEVELOPED?

Redevelopment of existing school buildings and/or interiors

WHAT HAS BEEN THE FEEDBACK FROM TEACHERS' ABOUT USING ILES?

Teachers working in these ILEs have reported how much they enjoy working in them. They have noticed their role has changed quite significantly; the things teachers do in traditional spaces are very different to the things teachers do in ILEs. In our setting, we have ILEs that enable us to operate collaborative teaching arrangements. Many of these teachers have never worked so closely with others but have noted that they would never go back to working 'solo' in traditional spaces if given the option.

WHAT HAS THE FEEDBACK BEEN FROM STUDENTS?

Every term, all students working in ILEs complete a survey providing feedback on their time within the space. This feedback is reviewed and reflected upon by the members of staff who work in these spaces. The information is also used to help with tweaking the design of the physical space as well as inform planning and assessment practices for upcoming terms. Overall, the feedback has been very positive. Students enjoy working in these ILEs as it is very much like what happens in the 'real world'; people collaborate, communicate and think critically and creatively.

HOW DOES TEACHING DIFFER IN ILES FROM TRADITIONAL CLASSROOMS?

The following differences occur between ILEs and traditional classrooms:

- teachers share the responsibility for teaching every student.
- teachers share the planning, assessment and reporting to enable a more efficient curriculum delivery.
- small focused groups based on individual student learning goals and needs - able to remove students without making it obvious and visible to everyone else.

- teachers able to cater for larger range of needs.
- teaching in ILEs reflects life in general as well as most workplaces where strong collaboration and communication skills are essential.
- teachers to offer a high-quality and effective use of ICTs by providing eLearning opportunities.
- a more regular opportunity to communicate on a regular basis with parents and carers.

DO THE ILES HAVE AN IMPACT ON STUDENTS' LEARNING/ENGAGEMENT/BEHAVIOUR?

Agile Learning at Bethany reflects current research and knowledge of 21st Century teaching and learning practices. The aim in using Agile Learning is to improve student learning outcomes. Decisions about learning space design must support and enhance current and emerging pedagogies and technologies. Learning needs to be collaborative, flexible, adaptive, intuitive and open-ended.

Back in 2008, state and federal government representatives met to discuss the future of education. It was there that the Melbourne Declaration was drafted and agreed upon. This declaration defines education as that which “equips young people with the knowledge, understanding, skills and values to take advantage of opportunity and to face the challenges of this era with confidence” (Melbourne Declaration, 2008). Students need to know how to use knowledge and skills to think critically, apply knowledge to new situations, analyse information, comprehend new ideas, communicate, collaborate, solve problems and make decisions.

Agile learning spaces provide a variety of spaces that can be used for specific learning tasks and activities. These spaces are flexible and allow students to connect, communicate and engage in self-directed learning. Areas can be configured to suit learning styles and help generate engaging and exciting learning opportunities. Agile learning spaces allow adults and support staff to work within the space, meaning students have access to support more readily.

At Bethany, we focus on providing a constructionist learning environment that engages all learners and their learning styles. It enables social and collaborative learning, integrated curriculum delivery, inquiry-based learning, student-directed learning, direct/explicit instruction, creative and critical thinking, relationship building and problem solving skills. We are educating children for their future which is not well defined as yet, especially in the jobs and skills that will be required by all. This approach is something which is used across the school from Prep-Year 6.

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