

Suggestions When Designing Creative Spaces

Places to meet and places to reflect:

- ◇ Students need a spot to collaborate and, when possible, furniture to support this effort. A vertical writing surface (such as chalkboards, whiteboards, paper on a wall or an easel) can help students document ideas as they work together. Tables and chairs that easily move can help students maintain eye contact and give them a surface on which to write.
- ◇ Students may need a quieter area during some stages of their creative process. For those students who are really working through an idea, soft seating in a private area can be helpful.

Adequate materials:

- ◇ Loose parts and open-ended materials can stimulate creativity. Storing these items in baskets and easily accessible containers is helpful in building independence during creative times.
- ◇ Books and resource materials related to domain-specific understanding can help students when questions emerge.
- ◇ Templates and graphic organizers support students in their quest to organize their thinking. Allowing choice ensures they are thinking about the versions that best suit their creative style.
- ◇ Technology is often essential during all aspects of the creative process. It can be a tool for research, a tool to generate thoughts, a tool to organize ideas, or a tool to create a meaningful product. The more students can choose technology, the more control they can maintain during their creative process.
- ◇ Visual materials are highly engaging for some students. Access to images and mentor products can serve as strong catalysts for creative thinking.
- ◇ Tools for the creative process are important to have easily available. Scissors, paints, lab equipment, wood, cloth, glue, string, paper, hammers and nails . . . you name it, if students need them to create, making materials like these available can ensure the creative process runs smoothly. For example, it is amazing how powerful a special piece of paper and nice writing utensils are to inspire creative thinking. Tools matter.
- ◇ Protective clothing is an often overlooked item to have, especially in classrooms with older students. Old shirts, lab coats, gloves, and eye protectors may be important items to have available. Creativity can be messy.
- ◇ Protective furniture coverings may also be important during creative processes, and can save everyone time during cleanup. Plastic table covers go a long way in protecting furniture from creative mess. Also, cleaning materials are handy to have during some creative work.

A spot to honor questions:

- ◇ Questions are the fertilizer for creative thinking. Having a special bulletin board, a wall, or a creative journal to hold these questions is important. It is helpful for students to see the questions and problems that are guiding their creative work in the beginning, middle, and end of their creative processes.
- ◇ Keep track of great questions, discuss the qualities of good questions, and use questions to guide the daily work of learners.

A spot to celebrate drafts:

- ◇ Creative processes are as important as the products they produce. Making space available to celebrate drafts in their various forms shows students that all thinking is important thinking. A special spot on the wall or a special binder labeled “Our Work in Progress” can do this for students.
- ◇ Invite families to explore drafts as evidence of learning. Share the importance of drafts in getting to quality creative work. Ask parents and trusted friends to offer feedback, celebrate strengths, and encourage risk taking.