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Flexible Seating in the Classroom

by Summer Stanley

Creating a classroom with flexible seating is about more than just switching out traditional desks and chairs with the most up-to-date, trendy seating options. It's about creating the best environment for your students and being "flexible" enough to change things that aren't working.

Why flexible seating?



- It encourages children to share space and supplies, and to take turns in different locations.



- It allows students to pair up, work in small groups, or discuss as a class rather than being isolated at traditional desks.



- It lets kids bounce, lean, twist, kick, fidget, wobble, roll, stand, kneel, and/or sit to suit their individual needs.



- It helps students get more comfortable, which means they're calmer, more focused, and more productive.

- It stimulates children's sense of touch, which can be especially helpful for students with ADHD and autism.

Perhaps the most important aspect of flexible seating is giving students a say in their learning environment.

"It's very powerful when kids feel like they have a choice and a voice," said Shivonne Lewis-Young, a 3rd and 4th grade teacher. "It builds trust and mutual respect."



However, flexible seating might not be the best for every student, or for every group of students. The type of class being taught may also make a difference – traditional desks or tables may be better for art lessons, for example. That's why it's important to include students' input when designing your classroom, and to be open to trial and error.

Types of flexible seating options include:

- Wobble stools or cushions
- Office chairs
- Scoop rockers
- Balance balls/ball chairs
- Standing stations
- Bean bag chairs
- Floor cushions
- Couches
- High tables that allow switching between sitting and standing



Resources:

- "Is Flexible Seating Overrated?" accessed from <https://www.weareteachers.com/flexible-seating-overrated/> on July 30, 2019
- "6 Problems with Flexible Seating in the Classroom," accessed from <https://www.cfclassroom.com/2016/09/flexible-seating-in-the-classroom.html> on Aug. 5, 2019
- "Designing Flexible Seating with Students," accessed from <https://www.edutopia.org/article/designing-flexible-seating-students> on Aug. 5, 2019
- "Flexible Seating: 21 Awesome Ideas for Your Classroom," accessed from <https://www.prodigygame.com/blog/flexible-seating-classroom-ideas/> on Aug. 16, 2019
- "Six Benefits of Flexible Seating in the Classroom," accessed Aug. 16, 2019, from <https://infograph.venngage.com/p/226127/6-benefits-of-flexible-seating>

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