

VIEWPOINT

# CREATING WORRY-FREE ENVIRONMENTS IN EDUCATION



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**Spaces4Learning:** Hi, and welcome to Schools in Focus, an 1105 Media podcast. I'm your host, Matt Jones, senior editor of Spaces4Learning and Campus Security & Life Safety. Today's topic is "Creating Worry-Free Environments in Education." We'll discuss choosing the right flooring solutions and the impact it can have on creating healthier, worry-free spaces throughout the lifecycle of the installation. We'll also touch on topics like creating productive spaces for students and staff, the impact of COVID-19 on cleanliness standards, choosing the right flooring solution and how to navigate the flooring decision-making process.

My guests today are Elizabeth Bonner, Design Director for Education and Hard Surface, and David Dembowitz, Senior Vice President of Sales North America, both with Mohawk Group. This episode is sponsored by Mohawk Group.

First off, can you tell us a little bit about yourselves? Elizabeth, would you like to go first?

**ELIZABETH BONNER:** Yeah, so I am the Design Director for Education and Hard Surface at Mohawk, which means that I lead the product development team that's responsible for the product that we sell into those categories. So, a lot of fun stuff. I come from a hospitality background, so I have a little bit of a wild vision when it comes to color. But education has been a wonderful fit because they seem to like color as much as I do.

**DAVID DEMBOWITZ:** My name is Dave Dembowitz. I'm the Senior Vice President of Sales on the education and government segments for Mohawk Group, based out of north of Atlanta, in Calhoun, Georgia. Been in the flooring industry for 22 years, and been in construction my whole life. So yeah, education and government is near and

**"Sound abatement is always a big topic of discussion for us...studies show that a stressed student is not a student that's learning. And with all the different learning styles out there for children, I think we all know that noise coming at you from all angles is only going to cause some stress and anxiety. So, anything that we can do to kind of deaden that, and your flooring is your best option, certainly."**

**— Elizabeth Bonner**

dear to my heart. Something I'm very passionate about is improving the lives of all students throughout the country, and actually North America, both on the facility side and the design side.

**S4L:** Okay, perfect. Let's go ahead and jump in, then. Our topic today is creating worry-free environments in education. And I'd like to talk about choosing the right flooring solutions and the impact that that choice can have on creating healthier, worry-free spaces throughout the lifecycle of the installation. Let's start off with creating productive spaces for students and staff. It seems like we can't talk about anything these days without at least mentioning COVID-19. So, can we go ahead and start with some of the cleanliness standards related to COVID-19 that helped create those productive spaces?

**DAVID:** Sure. EB, do you want me to start, or would you like to start?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah, if you want to take it away?

**DAVID:** Okay. So, with Mohawk and with the entire flooring industry, COVID-19 has upended facility departments. Cleanliness is something that is now mission-critical for all facility directors,



interior designers, staff, parents, students—it is top of mind. And it goes beyond just day-to-day spill now. It goes into infectious control. It's fascinating to see the changes on the facility side, getting into infectious control, similar to healthcare facilities. So, facility managers, facility directors, maintenance managers, directors, principals, superintendents, school boards...they have an unbelievably hard task. And that task is to create a safe, healthy environment for the students and faculty and parents that go into the facilities.

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So, every facility is slightly different: Some are new, some are old. Some have renovations. Some have exterior and interior walls and doors. There’s a host of different issues that they’re having to deal with. I don’t envy their position, because every facility—even in a school system, you know—a K–6 facility may be completely different from the middle-school facility, that may be completely different from the high-school facility. So, the schools really have to get their mind around different flooring solutions for different spaces.

Obviously, in the younger age groups, people are crawling around more; they’re learning on the floor; they’re reading; they’re using the floor more as a teaching space. Where, as you get into middle school and high school, that’s not necessarily the case. So, every floor, every classroom, every hallway, every music room, every... every cafetorium is completely different. And so, facilities are really having to gauge product—not just flooring, but anything that goes into the space—in terms of, “How easy can it be cleaned?”

They are also dealing with a lot of issues around staffing. You know, North America is dealing with staffing shortages on the maintenance side, on the repair side, on the cleaning side. And so, facilities are having to clean more square footage with less people, on top of the fact that they have to make

arrangements—or really keep an eye on—infectious control. It’s a daunting task. And I think facilities are getting their arms around it, they’re doing a great job, they’re doing the best they can with limited people. And, also, budgets have not been rising for facilities in terms of maintenance. So that is something that they’re grappling with, as well. So they’re having to trade dollars (possibly from another budget) to go into cleanliness; or fogging the classrooms to make sure that, you know, all COVID-19 is killed; to new lighting systems; to new mops; to new systems, in terms of vacuuming. There’s just so many things that are going on right now.

It’s pretty amazing the job that they’re doing. We’re seeing across the country each school system, each facility manager, each facility director doing things a little different based on their facility—and their superintendent and how the school board wants it to be run. So, I don’t think there’s a standard, easy way to do it right now across the board. But I do see that people are getting their arms around it. I believe there’s good parent involvement, good parent initiatives to help schools that are struggling a little bit with it. So, we’re seeing that they’re getting their arms around it, they’re doing the best that they can. But I think it’s going to continue to be a struggle over the next, at least, 12 to 24 months, on making sure that



the students, the faculty and parents are safe in these facilities.

**S4L:** And then another facet of cleanliness and productive spaces is indoor air quality. And a big part of that is reducing allergen and asthma risks for people inside the building: students, faculty, staff. Would you like to talk a little bit about the indoor air quality aspect of that?

**DAVID:** You can really get a lot of information out of the CDC guidelines and reporting. They’re out of Atlanta—shoutout to Georgia. They do a wonderful job of reporting these types of indoor-air-quality struggles that students are dealing with, and how they have risen over the past 20 years. So, the CDC says between 14–18% of all student absenteeism is due to different aspects of either allergies or asthma, things of that nature, where indoor air quality in a facility really makes a big difference. You know, these numbers are pushing 20%. So, one in five students may be sick at home because of the indoor air quality in a space. That’s daunting. That puts stress on the student; that puts stress on the parents; that puts stress on the



school system to be able to provide work for them at home. And obviously, going through the pandemic, we saw that that was a stress for all school systems. So, the better a school system can create a positive indoor air environment for their students and staff, the better their test scores will be, the better the grades will be. Less absenteeism equals better success rate in their facilities.

**S4L:** And then, can we talk about the impact of acoustics on learning?

**DAVID:** So, acoustics are very, very important, especially when you get into the early education classrooms. When you have hard surface products—not just flooring, but hard desks, hard countertops, things of that nature—sound tends to bounce around. And we think of sound coming from the teacher only to the students. But it really goes far beyond that. You’ve got people in the hallways, whether there are other classes that are transferring from one class to another. You’ve got buses coming on the outside. You might have lawnmowers. There’s a lot of sound that is transmitted throughout a school building. The better that we can deaden the sound or deaden the transmission, in terms of bouncing around, the more cognitive function—especially younger students—have.

It’s easy, being in the front of the room, to hear a teacher. But when you get towards the middle or the back of the room, and you’re reverberating sound from a teacher, on top of hearing people walk in a hallway, and hearing the mower out by the windows, that sound gets jumbled up. And there are a lot of studies out there that talk about... especially on the K–12, you know, K–6, K–4 kind of students, that their brain has not fully developed.

And I use the old example, you know, when you tell an adult or a high-school student, if you said, “Hey, the cow jumped over the...what?”, you know, we

think about that nursery rhyme: Cow jumped over the moon. Well, for a K–4 student, they’re thinking literal. So, if you said, “Hey, the cow jumped over the...”, they might say “the fence,” or “jumped over the farmer,” because their brain is just making a guess as to what that end of sentence is—because they didn’t hear the last part of the sentence, because of reverberation of sound in the classroom.

So, it’s really on the facility directors and the maintenance directors to make sure that they’re putting products into these classrooms that do have sound-deadening properties: whether it’s in the floor, or possibly in the walls or in the ceiling, or in the furniture, to be able to deaden that reverberation in order to allow those students to really hear and understand that teacher, and get that cognitive function that they need to be successful in the future.

**S4L:** And then, what kind of recommendations or solutions would you have for deadening sound?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah, so sound abatement is always a big topic of discussion for us, from a product-development standpoint. Obviously, soft surface has some wonderful qualities that just make it inherently better at deadening sound. And then LVT—on the hard surface side, when we’re talking about LVT and various other hard surfaces—the more research and development we do, the better we get at sound abatement. So those numbers—I see ratings, it’s the number that we use to measure that—and those numbers just keep getting better with everything that we introduce. Which is always, you know, a real positive, because as David was saying, studies show that a stressed student is not a student that’s learning. And with all the different learning styles out there for children, I think we all know that noise coming at you from all angles is only going to cause some stress and anxiety. So, anything that we can do to

kind of deaden that, and your flooring is your best option, certainly.

So a mixture...as David was saying, different age ranges call for different things. But any time you can get a mixture of products into a classroom, so that you can have an area of soft surface that will help deaden that noise, but then you also have your hard-surface area that’s going to be more appropriate for creative time and crafts—any time you need to get messy: science, class, the types of things where you get messy in the classroom. If you can do a mixture of those items, it really helps with that sound abatement.

**S4L:** And then, just to kind of wrap up, how does design flexibility impact high-performing schools?

**ELIZABETH:** So, I think “flexibility” is the key word in that. High-performing schools are going to have a variety of activities happening. Everything from

**Mohawk Group** believes in designing healthier, worry-free education spaces from the ground up. Offering a variety of floor coverings, including broadloom, carpet tile and planks, rubber, and LVT made here in the U.S., you’re sure to find a high-performance flooring solution for any space. Check out Mohawk Group’s Living Local Collection for the newest styles in LVT. You can even pair with soft surface styles from the Learn & Live Collection. These coordinating collections can be used across any application—and you can specify them with full confidence to meet your criteria for value, performance and design.



your lunch room, to your science lab, to your sports floors, to your classroom spaces, to your cozy settings that are meant for collaboration and lectures, you've got to hit on all of those different items so that the school works for everything. All of the needs of the students, and all of the needs of the staff, which makes things particularly interesting as we're coming out of COVID and we're trying to draw people back into the school system.

We've been out of the classroom—some people have been out of the classroom for so long they've, unfortunately, gotten comfortable where they are. So, we've kind of upped the game with the need to create more than just a functional space. It also has to be a space that is inspiring and brings the students back in, gets them excited about being in the classroom, makes them want to be in the classroom—which I think a lot of them do. I think a lot of them really enjoy that collaboration with fellow students. So, we've gotten lucky there, but you can definitely engage students with a colorful environment. And we've worked really hard to bring that back; we've seen an extreme influx.

And then we've also seen that spaces have changed. So, the traditional classroom where you sat in rows has changed a great deal. We're moving around to work with technology. We're moving around to meet the needs of the space requirements for COVID. All of those different things have kind of changed our approach to learning. So, the ability to create flooring—or to put flooring into a location that's flexible, that suits a lot of different needs—is really the best practice.

**S4L:** With that, let's narrow our focus a little bit, and let's talk about choosing the right flooring solution. In terms of solving the real problem of choosing the right flooring solution for a given environment (even a specific classroom or a specific



hallway), what are some of the aspects that go into solving the real problem?

**ELIZABETH:** I think you have to start with really understanding what the use of the space is. What are you going to do in the room? How messy are you going to get? How loud are you going to get? All of those kinds of things are going to feed into what type of product you're going to put on the floor. Because how are you going to clean it? You've got to pick a product. A soft-surface product—if you're looking for something soft surface—you've got to have something that you can clean up after, and keep it looking nice and all of those types of things.

**DAVID:** So, as I said earlier, you know, every space is different based on the students and faculty and staff that are going to be using the space—and what it's being used for. So, you know, typically, the bare minimum is a high-performance floor. And what I mean by that is, if it's soft surface—and let's say it's a music room that, you know, they have lots of music going on, it's very

loud, they don't want it to reverberate throughout the school, they might use soft surface—they really have to use a high-performance product that is easy to maintain.

And that starts with a nylon. I always say that the nylon is the tip of the spear or the tip of the iceberg. That has to be a high-performance nylon that can be easily cleaned. And what I mean by "easily cleaned" is with maybe vacuuming once a day. Right now, with staffing being so tight, maybe vacuuming, you know, couple times a week, and then spot-cleaning as necessary. And really being able to get out spots on a day-to-day basis very easily with maybe a little chemistry, or maybe just a little bit of hot water. And then, you know, a quarterly or biannual hot water extraction. So, you need to have nylon that will really perform on a soft-surface side.

And then you have to have an attached backing that's going to hold up long-term, because obviously, facility director budgets—maintenance budgets—are very, very tight, and they don't get a ton of money every year.

**“You know, when we’re selecting products—not just flooring, but any types of products—how often are you going to change it? And if a facility director or maintenance director says, ‘Hey, I need to keep this product for 20 years,’ okay. You’re gonna have to spend a little bit more money on the actual product upfront to have a high-performing product that’ll hold up through the test of time...So, what I always talk about is the lifecycle—not only of the product itself, but what it costs to maintain it.”**  
**— David Dembowitz**

So, the product really needs to hold up long-term. So whether they’re using a broadloom, they need to have a performance backing in that broadloom. Or if they’re using carpet tile, they have to have a high-performance carpet-towel backing that will really hold up to the day-in, day-out, high traffic, high moisture in a space.

When you’re dealing with LVT—depending on the space, obviously—you may want to use a thicker LVT to deaden that sound, as well. We talked about sound earlier in this podcast. But also, you really want a high-performance LVT product that is easy to clean. And what I mean by “easy to clean” is, one of the biggest complaints we get isn’t necessarily stains or spots, because those are pretty easily removed with just a mop or a dry brush. But what we hear is a lot of scuffing and scratching. So, you really need a high-performance wear layer in order to really make sure that when you do get that scratching and scuffing, it can come out very, very easily with a buffing pad, or just a buffing machine, without having to add chemicals to that.

So typically, what we recommend is,

if you’re in a space that you need sound deadening (like a music room), you use a thicker LVT with a minimum 20 MIL wear layer, with a high-performance coating on top of that. And then if you’re in a classroom—let’s say that you’ve got some soft surface and some hard surface—you could use a 2½ MIL thick or a thinner LVT. But you really need to make sure that you have a top-notch wear layer on top of that LVT in order to really prevent the staining, the scratching and the scuffing. So, if facilities and maintenance can really focus on that high-performance, worry-free type of product, I think they’ll be able to maintain their product with far less cost, far less man hours and be able to really keep that school looking great over a long period of time.

**S4L:** Do you have any other recommendations as far as making the maintenance of these flooring solutions worry-free?

**DAVID:** So, you know, one of the big things that we’re seeing is the chemical sensitivity really rising. We talked about that earlier in the podcast, as

well. And so, schools have got to—you know, when they have to clean, they want to try to eliminate as many of the cleaning chemicals for soft surface and hard surface as well. So, once again: Purchasing and using high-performance soft surface that allows you to clean with hot water and use as little chemicals as possible—especially when the students are involved—is big for a facility. Not only is it big for a facility, but that wastewater has to go somewhere. And you know, we talk a lot about overall water treatment coming out of the schools, coming out of our commercial buildings. So, the less chemicals that we use to clean, the better—not only the internal environment of a school will be, but also the external environment over time. So, the least amount of cleaning chemicals used in a hard-surface or a soft-surface product will be truly beneficial to that school system and the ecosystem around that school system.

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah, so from a product development side, we’re always, in research and development, trying to come up with new ways to help make this easier on the facilities managers. So, with our soft surface, we have incorporated a fiber that we call Duracolor Tricor. It is a solution-dyed nylon fiber that actually has a hollow core that kind of helps with that cleanliness. So not only is it solution-dyed nylon, so you can clean it with anything, but it also has inherent qualities to it that...it hides staining better than any other fiber that you can use in those types of environments. So, it’s really great for that sort of thing.

And then, on the hard surface side, we have what we call our M-Force Ultra wear layer that we put on all of our LVTs. So LVT is kind of an interesting solution, in my opinion, for education spaces because the maintenance on it is very low. The days of having to shut the school down in the summertime so that

you can wax the floor multiple times to get it ready for the next school year are kind of behind us. Whenever you start talking about LVT, its M-Force Ultra wear layer doesn't require any of those wax sessions that we used to have to do. It's just there; it's an inherent part of the product. It is very, very scratch-resistant. So, you can drag desks across the floor, you can rearrange the classroom any way you need to, and you're not going to scratch up these surfaces that are also easy to clean and easy to keep looking great.

And then, of course, we also work within a tile format for both soft surface and hard surface, which does give you the ability that—if you do happen to have a situation where something on the floor gets ruined, you have the ability to just pull up the area that's affected and replace it. And we do that a couple of different ways. In soft surface, we use our yarn placement—and the way that we put the yarns into the product in kind of a rolling fashion—so that it hides that, and gives it the ability to be what we call mergeable. You can pick it up, replace it with a new piece, and it looks like the rest of the floor. It doesn't stand out, like this one square's been changed. And then the same thing with our hard surface. That M-Force Ultra wear layer is going to keep that hard surface from fading over time, especially if it's in sun situations. So, you can pop a tile out, replace it with a new one, and just keep plugging away, and the floor is going to look as great as it did whenever you installed it in the first place.

**S4L:** And then, finally, let's move into how to navigate the flooring decision-making process. Probably the most important aspect of that for schools is the budget. Do you have any tips for schools or education facilities on how to maximize their budget as they're trying to decide on a flooring solution?

**DAVID:** So, Matt, that is the age-

old question for most facilities and maintenance directors. Budget is the lifeblood of how they keep their facilities looking great and performing the way they need it to. So, you know, the one thing that I always talk about is lifecycle. You know, when we're selecting products—not just flooring, but any types of products—how often are you going to change it? And if a facility director or maintenance director says, "Hey, I need to keep this product for 20 years," okay. You're gonna have to spend a little bit more money on the actual product upfront to have a high-performing product that'll hold up through the test of time, because you have so much high traffic, high moisture, high staining, things of that nature. So, what I always talk about is the lifecycle—not only of the product itself, but what it costs to maintain it.

And it's no different from flooring, to furniture, to light, to fabric, to HVAC. There are better products in the world that will hold up and perform and have a great warranty than others. And so,

the facility has to balance how long they want to keep it with, also, how hard it is to maintain. So, for a facility director, they really want to have a product that will hold up through the test of time and look good long-term. So, there's a pride of ownership for the faculty and the staff and the kids, which obviously creates better test scores as well, because they're proud to be in a facility. So, there's a lot of different factors that go into it. And so, when customers talk about products, they really want to focus on that lifecycle of the product. And for them, if they really buy a product that will hold up well—easily maintained, worry-free product in any type of environment—they'll be happy, the faculty will be happy, the students will be happy because it looks good. It holds up well, and they don't have to replace it for a long time.

**S4L:** Did you have any other tips or recommendations for how to choose long-term results and how to maximize that lifecycle?

**“So, we like to talk about handprints over footprints. We are tracking all of the carbon emissions and water emissions and all of those things that happen during the manufacturing process. And we're actually offsetting those outputs with positive inputs. And not just carbon-neutral; a lot of industries talk about carbon-neutral, but we're taking it a step further. And we're actually carbon positive and water positive. So that ability to actually put things back into the environment, in a better state than the way that we received them, is part of that.”**

**— Elizabeth Bonner**





**DAVID:** One of the biggest things I tell everyone is get some local references. So, you know, talk to your friends in the marketplace and see what they're using, and what they're happy with, and what's successful. One of the other big things that I would strongly recommend is, if they've got an interior designer or an architectural firm that's building a new space or renovating a space, get some recommendations from them, as well. They've obviously been in the specification world for a long time; they have some good ideas and some good references as to what has worked for them in the past.

So, you tally all of that up, and then you want to work with a very reputable company that manufactures your products—as well as, you want to work with a reputable company to install your products. The installation of any product in a space is just as important as the purchase of that product. So, you wrap all of those together, you get your good references, you know what works, you know a company that's been around for a long time—that's been successful,

that creates high-performing products—you'll have a great frame of reference in order to be successful in the selection of your product for the space.

**S4L:** Lastly, let's talk about sustainability a little bit. Do you have any recommendations for schools about how they can launch achievable goals for sustainability?

**ELIZABETH:** I love to talk about sustainability, especially in conjunction to education. Obviously, we're trying to protect the planet for future generations. And the interesting thing is that the future generations are now the ones that are actually demanding it. We're getting more and more pushback for sustainable everything from these young generations, which has been really fun to watch. But being on the research and development side, sustainability is definitely something that we're always talking about. Because the ownership is really on manufacturing. We can all preach sustainability. But we can't actually be sustainable unless we have

the ability to purchase products within our budget that are actually sustainable and being cognizant of the environment.

So, we're constantly working towards—we kind of pick something. And some of that happens as conversation around sustainability evolves; something comes up, and it's like, "Oh, my gosh, well, this is not a great practice." So, we stepped back. And we have to determine how we can take that and change that and make it a better practice.

And one of those ways is—we've developed it just recently, this is just one of my examples—that the space dye process came into conversation recently, which is one of those things that's used a lot for products that are education-specific. Just because space dye is a natural dye process where you get lots of different tones and lots of different hues of color all in one fiber. It's really great for wear, and for stain-resistant—you know, for hiding staining and things like that. So, education spaces love it. It brings in pops of color. But a great deal of water is used in the dye process. We were taking a step back, trying to figure out, "How do we remove? How do we make this different? How do we change this?"

So, we were actually able to come up with an extruded fiber that then makes the fiber...it's solution-dyed, it's Duracolor, it has all of those wonderful qualities that we like to sell into education spaces. But it's also still now multicolored and has the visual appearance of that space dye. But we're able to do it without using any water at all, which has been kind of a really fun thing to launch. We launched that in just the last year, but it's a wonderful example (I think) of how we can take things and change them: keep the same look and feel that we want, but make them more appropriate and make them more cognizant of the impact that it has on the environment.

And kind of branching off of that,

there's also a lot of research that goes into the chemicals and dilates and things that we don't want off-gassing into the environment. We take it upon ourselves to make sure that we stay Red List-free. And I think that's an important quality when you're shopping for products to bring into an environment, especially an education environment. Can we get products that are Red List-free? Can we replace some of the old products that maybe we used to be using with things that aren't going to have any harmful chemicals? Because children are going to interact—especially in your K–12 spaces—they're going to interact with the floor, they're going to be down on the floor. So, you want to make sure that they're not interacting with anything that's harmful, that we're not off-gassing anything that's harmful. So that's where the Red List-free comes into play.

And companies are taking that into account by using what's called Declare Labels. So, all of the products that we offer—and this is not just a flooring trait. This comes into play with all of your different furniture and fixtures that you're going to come across for education spaces. You have the ability to look for products that have a Declare Label. And basically, that's just saying that we are being open and honest about everything that's in this product. It's all listed on this label. So, you can do your own research to determine what you think is appropriate for your environment, or maybe what you're trying to avoid. But we're definitely going to be open and honest with you about what it is that we're putting into these items.

And then, to take that even a step further, we go into what we call Living Product, which is kind of my favorite portion of the sustainability conversation. And that's where we're, as a manufacturer, we're taking ownership of the impact that we have on the environment. So, we like to talk about handprints over footprints. We are

tracking all of the carbon emissions and water emissions and all of those things that happen during the manufacturing process. And we're actually offsetting those outputs with positive inputs.

And not just carbon-neutral; a lot of industries talk about carbon-neutral, but we're taking it a step further. And we're actually carbon positive and water positive. So that ability to actually put things back into the environment, in a better state than the way that we received them, is part of that.

And then, also, can we take from the proceeds of any of these Living Products and actually give back in even more impactful ways to the environment, and to our communities around us? And one of my favorite ways that we've done that is through the donation of solar flowers. So, when we sell Living Products, we kind of calculate all of that and give away solar flowers, on a regular basis, that go into education systems and actually become part of this STEM education process. So, the students actually have to maintain these solar flowers and get to be a part of having this solar energy source at the school. Which is a great way to not only be sustainable, but to kind of increase their hands-on learning experiences and kind of have an interaction directly with the students, which is just one of the tiny ways that we offset in those Living Products. But I think it's one of the most fun ones.

**S4L:** That sounds like a lot of fun. That sounds like a great way to get the students involved and understanding a little more about it, and about the importance of sustainability and concrete ways that they can make that happen. And it looks like that's about everything that we had prepared for the day. Did either of you have any last words or last thoughts that you'd like to get in?

**DAVID:** Hey, Matt, thank you for your time today. I hope your listeners get a lot out of this podcast. I want to take

a minute to thank all of the facility directors, maintenance directors, their staffs, faculty, teachers, principals, superintendents, anyone listening to this. They have gone through an unbelievable thing over the last 20 to 22 months, now, during the pandemic. And they have truly maintained a level of professionalism that, quite frankly, the rest of the world could learn a lot from.

So, I just wanted to say thank you to them for all their hard work and effort: not only in keeping the spaces safe, keeping them open, keeping them clean, but really taking a step further from what they've ever had to do before and become infectious control experts. And really just make a space that people want to come back to and be a part of. So, you know, on behalf of everyone at Mohawk—myself and the 26,000 employees—I just wanted to say thank you for everything that they've done to keep the kids safe, and the teachers safe, and the parents safe.

**ELIZABETH:** I do appreciate being here. We always love to talk about education and education spaces. Like David was saying, it's been a tough year for education in general, a tough couple of years. I can't believe we're already a couple years in. We definitely are in the background, trying to come up with wonderful ways to kind of help solve some of these flooring issues or coming up with flooring solutions for education spaces—ways to draw students in and ways to get students energized and excited to be back in the classroom.

If you'd like to hear more from **Mohawk**, check out one of our previous episodes of *Schools in Focus*, "[Flooring Design Solutions in the Era of COVID-19](#)," from June 2021.