



## MULTI-FUNCTIONAL CLASSROOMS FOR FUTURE-PROOFING TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE

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In the evolving landscape of education, today's classrooms are undergoing a remarkable transformation to align with the dynamic needs of students, the influence of evolving technologies, and progressive pedagogical approaches. The essence of learning space design has shifted to emphasize flexibility and fluidity, acknowledging the diverse ways in which students engage with content and collaborate with peers. Beyond just physical layout, these spaces are now carefully curated to foster a sense of community, where students feel connected and empowered to exchange ideas. Additionally, the contemporary classroom prioritizes productivity, integrating tools and strategies that enhance both individual and collective learning outcomes. This multifaceted approach underscores the crucial role of classroom design in shaping the educational experiences of today and nurturing the leaders of tomorrow.

### Flexibility and Fluidity will be essential skills

As we strive to equip students for the years ahead, many of us grapple with envisioning the landscape of the future workforce. In an article titled "Future of Jobs Report" (2023, The World Economic Forum), the discussion revolves around the profound transformations in the skills of today's and future employees. Focusing on the advancements in information technology, advanced robotics, artificial intelligence, and evolving work environments, the article foresees a demand for skills that will transcend what we see today as traditional boundaries. These proficiencies encompass self-reliance, self-regulation, adept communication across diverse platforms, and the capacity to bridge concepts across various disciplines and content areas.

Prairie Junior High School of District 126 in Alsip Illinois recently installed Artcobell's award-winning [NXT MOV Mobile Desk](#) in their classrooms. Principal Mareen Paulmeyer shared her experiences in transitioning to multi-functional learning spaces with us for this article.

*Classroom instruction has evolved over the years, and we value the importance of having a learning environment that allows the students to move around, work together, and learn the skills necessary for their futures. We are excited to be incorporating the NXT MOV mobile desks into the Prairie Junior High classroom environment. [Mareen Paulmeyer](#), Principal, Prairie View Junior High School, Illinois*



Envision a setting where each student possesses the freedom to shape their daily surroundings – a space that shifts and adapts in tandem with their needs. Navigating uncharted territories and problem-solving meaningful paths independently become essential proficiencies, underlining the significance of responsible autonomy.

This groundbreaking educational setting not only champions cognitive growth but also emphasizes physical movement. However, orchestrating movement within the classroom demands careful consideration, avoiding clutter, and maintaining optimal space. The demand for comfort and safety necessitates the integration of flexible seating and portable work surfaces. Enter the NXT MOV desk, a transformative solution that enables workspaces to be effortlessly moved about the space and stored against walls or in corridors, symbolizing the evolution towards adaptable and empowering learning spaces.

## **Creating a sense of community in classrooms**

As the landscape of work experiences undergoes rapid transformation due to innovative technologies, workplaces are embracing novel concepts such as remote work, co-working spaces, and virtual meetings. Interestingly, these very influences are making their way into the education spaces. Students now find themselves engaged in remote learning, navigating virtual platforms both independently and as part of collaborative teams, all while adapting to hybrid learning environments. Recognizing the importance

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of students' physical and emotional well-being, it becomes crucial to foster a sense of community within the classroom. By promoting communication and collaboration, we not only nurture their interpersonal skills but also facilitate their social development. Furthermore, granting students the autonomy to choose how and where they learn empowers them to shape spaces that resonate with their sense of security, bolstering their confidence and emotional well-being.



The creation of environments that foster shared agency immerses students in a sphere where peers, educators, families, and communities converge. These spaces provide the canvas for exploring ideas, nurturing critical thinking, and facilitating seamless access to information, mentors, and educators. Furthermore, offering furniture that supports collaboration empowers students to connect and communicate, cultivating an atmosphere that encourages learning and growth.

## **Productivity through movement**

The significance of movement in enhancing student comfort and productivity has been extensively studied and documented. Drawing heavily from research conducted by the Texas A&M Ergo Center under the leadership of Dr. Mark Benden, Ph.D., CPE, we look at creating environments where students have the freedom to move. Allowing students agency to choose their workspace based on the task they're working on. Accommodating a range of postures throughout the school day, including standing,

sitting, leaning, propping, rocking, perching, and walking. The research reinforces the connection between physical activity and cognitive focus, highlighting that our ability to tackle complex tasks is closely linked to sufficient physical movement. The NXT MOV desk directly incorporates this understanding, offering students choices that can combat fatigue and enhance concentration.

*At Prairie Junior High, we are constantly striving to create the most flexible and productive learning spaces that we can for our students. A key part of that will be our implementation of the NXT MOV desks into our classrooms. With the NXT MOV desks, our teachers will be able to create an environment that is collaborative while at the same time, making the best use of the classroom space. [Mareen Paulmeyer, Principal](#)*



The NXT MOV® Mobile Desk is Artcobell's response to the growing demand for individual work surfaces that are space-efficient, versatile, and mobile in classroom settings. This innovative design concept was born as a solution for single-student workspaces that can be easily maneuvered, both for individual tasks such as independent work and for collaborative endeavors like group projects within pods. The creative team at QDesign, who had previously developed the NXT MOV Seating in 2021, also aimed to ensure that the NXT MOV desk complemented the sleek aesthetics of the NXT MOV series. This compact desk serves a multitude of purposes, finding its place in media centers and learning hallways, as well as in adaptable classrooms where students can effortlessly roll up to their assignments with their chosen work surface.



**Maureen Paulmeyer** is the visionary leader of Prairie Junior High School of District 126 in Alsip, Illinois. She has 16 years of educational experience as a Special Education teacher, Assistant Principal, and 11 years as a principal. Her leadership is focused on providing safe, positive, and caring environments for her kids and staff.

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