Welcome to WASDA’s March edition of our online Newsletter!

Spring is coming! The WASDA Annual Educational Conference is also right around the corner and will be held at the Madison Concourse Hotel in Madison, April 10-12. The complete program can be viewed at www.wasda.org. We have an exciting program and hope to see many members there!

Complete details about all of WASDA’s events for the remainder of the year can be found on our website at www.wasda.org.

We are always looking for new ways to serve our members. If we can ever be of service to you, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are here to serve you!

Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators
4797 Hayes Road
Madison, WI 53704
608/242-1090
608/242-1290 - FAX
www.wasda.org
WASDA President’s Message
WASDA Executive Director’s Report
The Capitol Report - John Forester, Dir. Of Gov. Relations
WASDA Annual Educational Conference
2019 WASDA Summer Legal Seminar
Election of WASDA Board Members
WASDA Recognition Awards
Richard Yenchesky Obituary
Are You Retiring in 2019?
First Year Superintendents Workshop V
Hearing From Students: When’s the Last Time You Asked?
Christy Brooks Receives George Tipler Award
DEMCO - Why Educators Love Flexible Seating
Superintendent Vacancies
WASDA Calendar of Events
Building their future

Your students deserve the best. The best teachers. The best programs. The best facilities. Hoffman will help you create the best learning environment for your students to thrive and grow.

Your students deserve first-rate facilities. You deserve a partner ready to make that happen.

Visit us at hoffman.net
Dear WASDA Friends and Colleagues,

By the time you are reading this I hope that we have put behind us the challenges of the three W's - Wisconsin. Winter. Weather. While that seems to be overly optimistic, I know that the various forms of winter weather which we all faced in the months of January and February have placed us in positions to become creative with how to find time for lost instruction due to late starts, early dismissals, and full day school closures.

It would appear to be unlikely that some of the days lost will be "forgiven" either by the Governor or our Department of Public Instruction. Frankly, I am not sure that we want to advocate for having time lost "forgiven" when we all speak of the value of having students attend school regularly and that the experiences that they have while in our classrooms is difficult to replicate. The challenges presented by the winter of 2019 might lend credence, however, to advocating a change in the school start date requirements currently in place. Let's be honest, adding days to the school year in June is not ideal when lost instructional time takes place in the third quarter of the school year.

I know that everyone is reviewing your existing school year calendars, counting minutes and hours of instruction that is reflected in that calendar, and finding ways to account for some of the classroom time that has been lost this winter. Extending the existing student daily schedule, using previously scheduled professional development days as "kid days," canceling scheduled conference times while finding alternative ways to communicate out student progress with parents, and creating alternative lessons and projects for students to do while not physically present are all being used to replace time that has been lost.

Clearly, some of the aforementioned scheduling options are dictated by existing employee handbooks, local school board policy, past practice, and community expectations. What is present, and most likely underappreciated, is your ability to think creatively and respond appropriately given the specifics of the problem facing you. On behalf of your students, their families, and your local community - thank you.

Let's put winter behind us and look forward to spring. As a reminder, please be sure that you place on your calendar the annual WASDA 2019 Annual Educational Conference scheduled for Wednesday April, 10, through Friday, April 12, in Madison at the Madison Concourse Hotel. This gathering always offers timely and practical opportunities for your own learning, as well as powerful networking with your colleagues from around the state. This is also the event at which we collectively celebrate professional milestones with superintendents who have reached 15 years in the position (and in five year increments forward) as well as 2019 retirees. As a profession we also recognize the WASDA Outstanding Educator, WASDA Distinguished Service recipient, and WASDA Award of Special Recognition for Service to Wisconsin.

Think spring! It is bound to arrive soon!

Respectfully,
Dr. Steven M. Bloom, District Administrator
Palmyra-Eagle Area School District
WASDA President
sbloom@peasd.org
BUSINESS & LEADERSHIP INTEL:

Using Analytics to

- Increase Student Achievement
- Promote Equitable Achievement Opportunities
- Increase Business Performance

A personalized, customized workshop designed for 1st Year Superintendents!

8 – 8:30 am – Registration

8:30 – 11 am – Data Informed Leadership – Forecast
5Analytics/5Sight

Before you can lead...you must understand!

11 – 11:15 am – Break

11:15 am – 12 pm – Proven Strategies to Improve Student Achievement – Practitioner Panel

Find out from practitioners what really works!

12 – 12:45 pm – Lunch & Networking

12:45 – 2 pm – Closing the Achievement Gaps – National Equity Project Presenters

Investing Courageous Leadership, Sense of Urgency and Critical Strategies

2 pm – Workshop Adjourns

REGISTER AT:

www.wasda.org
Please click on the link below to hear a message from Jon.

CLICK HERE.

Please send your comments and questions to Jon - jbales@wasda.org.

Drinking water keeps kids’ teeth strong and healthy. Through its new Cool Water Program, the Delta Dental of Wisconsin Foundation will provide grants to replace existing drinking fountains with new water fountain and bottle filling stations in Wisconsin schools.

**Schools selected will receive:**
- Grant for installation costs
- Toothbrushes
- Reusable water bottles

Apply now at DeltaDentalWI.com/Foundation
2019 WASDA ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

Madison Concourse Hotel - Madison

April 10-12, 2019

To reserve a room, please call 1-800-356-8293 BY MARCH 12, 2019!

*When calling, please identify yourself as part of the WASDA Annual Educational Conference when making your reservation.*

REGISTER AT WWW.WASDA.ORG

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2019 WASDA SUMMER LEGAL SEMINAR

Mark your calendars now and plan to attend WASDA’s Annual Summer Legal Seminar at the beautiful Stone Harbor Resort in Sturgeon Bay. This year’s seminar will be held July 24-26.

WASDA members can call the Stone Harbor Resort now to reserve their room for the evenings of July 24 and 25. Please call the resort directly at 1-920-746-0700. Please do not wait long to book your room as the resort typically sells out for this event!

To assist in your planning, the seminar will kick-off with a reception at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 24, followed by dinner and the first presentation. The seminar will continue all day on Thursday and adjourn by noon on Friday, July 26. There will also be an informal golf outing at noon on Wednesday, July 24.

The program will be planned this spring. Registration information should be available online at www.wasda.org in May.

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WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT ASSISTANTS

The association for those who work directly with or for the school superintendent.

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL WASSA SPRING CONFERENCE

April 25-26, 2019

Holiday Inn - Stevens Point

COMPLETE DETAILS COMING SOON!
ELECTION OF WASDA BOARD MEMBERS

The following terms of board members currently serving on the WASDA Board of Directors expire as of June 30, 2019:

- **CESA #3** Bryce Bird - Riverdale *(2-year term)*
- **CESA #4** Cindy Zahrte - Tomah
- **CESA #7** John Zegers - West DePere
- **CESA #8** Todd Carlson - Gillett
- **CESA #10** Paul Schley - Cornell
- **Lg. Schools** Todd Gray - Waukesha

**John Zegers and Paul Schley** are eligible for reelection for a three-year term on the board. The other board members are NOT eligible for reelection.

**Bryce Bird**, the representative for CESA #3, will be retiring effective June 30, 2019. Therefore, a special election needs to occur to complete the remaining two years on his term. All of the other positions are for three-year terms on the board.

Members of the WASDA wishing to place their names on a ballot to run for the board position open in their respective CESAs must notify the WASDA office on or before April 15, 2019.

Special note for the Large Schools Representative on the board: WASDA voting members employed as chief school district administrators within the twenty (20) largest Wisconsin school districts shall be eligible to elect a board member. District eligibility shall be determined by the most current enrollment data as reported by the Department of Public Instruction.

**In order to have a name placed on the election ballot, voting members of the WASDA must follow one of the two following procedures:**

1. A written letter of declaration (or email) by the voting member sent to the WASDA office. OR
2. By three voting members of the WASDA signing a nomination paper requesting the name of a WASDA member to be placed on the ballot.

In the event more than two candidates qualify for the ballot, there shall be a primary election held not less than 30 days before the general election, to be conducted in the same manner as the general election. Ballot order shall be determined by draw of names by the Executive Director of the association in the presence of two voting members who are not candidates for the office. The ballots shall be distributed to the voting members no later than May 15, 2019, with an established deadline for return of the completed ballot of June 1.

15, 20, 25, 30 & 35 YEAR RECOGNITION AWARDS

Those members who will have achieved 15, 20, 25, 30 or 35 years of service as a superintendent as of June 30, 2019 will be recognized at the Recognition Banquet on Wednesday, April 10, at Madison Concourse Hotel in Madison. This awards ceremony will also include recognition of the 2019 WASDA retirees and the recipients of the three major WASDA awards. Also, the convention fee will include all meals held in conjunction with the convention. Therefore, there will not be an additional charge to attend the Wednesday evening banquet.

If you will have 15, 20, 25, 30 or 35 years of service as a superintendent as of June 30, 2019, please email Nancy Lund at nlund@wasda.org with the details (district and years served; i.e., 2000-2004) so that we are able to recognize you at our Annual Recognition Banquet on April 10.
YOUR GOALS. OUR MISSION.

We share your commitment to public education and our children’s futures. And we’re ready to help you meet the challenges that the school year will bring.

Green Bay - Toll Free: (844) 833-0830 • Madison - Toll Free: (844) 626-0901
Oshkosh - Toll Free: (844) 833-0830 • Service Center in Milwaukee

strangpatteson.com
Wallace, MI - Richard 'Dick' V. Yenchesky, 80, of Wallace, MI, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, January 16, 2019 in Boynton Beach, Florida. He was born February 7, 1938 to Valentine and Dorothy (Leverenz) Yenchesky.

Dick was proud of the work ethic he developed both on his parents' farm in Marion, WI; as well as his time on Grandma Yenchesky's Farm in Pound, WI. Dick spent many summers working and playing golf on his Grandpa Leverenz's golf course, Quit-Qui-Oc Golf Course in Elkhart Lake, WI. Where he was Junior Golf Pro.

During his High School years at Marion, WI, Dick became a three sport Letterman in football, basketball, and pole vaulting. After high school he continued playing football as he studied at Lakeland College and UW-Stevens Point. Upon graduation, he continued in athletics by trying out for the Chicago Bears, playing for the Manitowoc Chiefs (Semi-Professional Football team), and being a Golden Gloves boxer (State of Michigan Champion) all while continuing his education at Northern Michigan University and Western Michigan University.

On July 31, 1970 in Marion, WI, Dick married Karen Mittag of Marinette, WI. She preceded him in death on December 16, 2009.

Dick spent any available time working on his Upper Michigan Camp (a true Yooper at heart) - being here and sharing it with family and friends was one of his greatest joys. Dick was an avid hunter locally and across the world (Western States, Alaska, Canada, South Africa, Zimbabwe, New Zealand, Argentina, Russia).

Dick passionately believed 'children came 1st' and led by this philosophy throughout his career in education. Dick began his work as a Biology teacher in Stephenson, MI; he moved to Wausaukee, WI, in 1962 - teaching and coaching football & basketball; subsequently, he enrolled at Mott Community College in Flint, MI, to complete an Administrative Fellowship. In 1966 at the age of 28, Dick became Superintendent in Crivitz, WI, at which time he was Wisconsin's youngest Superintendent. His 35 year career as a Superintendent continued in Hilbert, WI; Baraga, MI; and back to where his career in education started - Stephenson, MI. In 2001, Dick retired from the Unified School District of De Pere, WI, at the age of 63 as Wisconsin's oldest Superintendent, where he had been for the last 17 years of his career.

Dick is survived by his children: daughter Jacqueline (James) Larsen and their children: André (Erica) Larsen with great grandchild Adelaide, and Austin Larsen; son Richard E. Yenchesky; and son Chad (Cherie) Yenchesky and their children: Elle, Isla, and Crew Yenchesky; his 'ANGEL' Beverly Kovach, who cared for him and was his constant companion in his final years; his siblings: Marilyn Jane Perkins, James (Bette) Yenchesky, Roy (Sandy) Yenchesky, and Faye Yenchesky. He was preceded in death by his parents Valentine and Dorothy; his wife Karen Yenchesky, and lifelong family friend Louis Seidl.

A memorial fund has been established to honor Dick Yenchesky - forward memorial donations to either funeral home. Please visit www.ryanfh.com or www.andersondiehm.com to send online condolences to Dick's family.
### 2019 NEW BOARD MEMBER GATHERINGS

Join us for an informal orientation to:

- Discuss essential information for your first board meeting.
- Meet your WASB regional director.
- Network with new and experienced school board members in your WASB region.
- Learn about WASB services that can help you in your new role.

All board members and district administrators welcome. Experienced board members are encouraged to attend with their new board members to offer input and guidance.

No registration required.

Visit WASB.org for more information.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thurs., April 18</td>
<td>Spooner High School Choir Room 801 County Highway A, Spooner</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Tues., April 16</td>
<td>Three Lakes Jr. and Sr. High School IMC 6930 West School St., Three Lakes</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Tues., April 16</td>
<td>Green Bay School District Administrative Building 200 South Broadway, Green Bay</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Thurs., April 18</td>
<td>Durand-Arkansaw High School Board Room 604 7th Ave. E, Durand</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Tues., April 16</td>
<td>Marathon High School Library 204 East St., Marathon City</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Tues., April 16</td>
<td>CESA 4 923 Garland St. E., West Salem</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Wed., April 17</td>
<td>CESA 6 2300 State Highway 44, Oshkosh</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Tues., April 16</td>
<td>Reedsville High School Library 340 Manitowoc St., Reedsville</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Thurs., April 18</td>
<td>CESA 3, Large Conference Room 1300 Industrial Dr., Fennimore</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Wed., April 17</td>
<td>Gerstenkorn Administration Building 305 E. Slifer St., Portage</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Wed., April 17</td>
<td>Muskego-Norway Educational Services Center (District Office) Board Room S87W18763 Woods Rd., Muskego</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Thurs, April 18</td>
<td>Deerfield High School, IMC 300 Simonson Boulevard, Deerfield</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Wed., April 17</td>
<td>Elkhorn School District, Dewey Room 3 N. Jackson St., Elkhorn</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Wed., April 17</td>
<td>Germantown High School, Room 230A W180 N11501 River Lane, Germantown</td>
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ARE YOU RETIRING IN 2019?

The requirements to receive the Honorary Life Membership and be recognized at the retirement banquet held in conjunction with the WASDA Annual Educational Conference are as follows:

A. The recipient must have retired from school work.
B. The recipient must have total experience in educational work on any level of at least twenty-five (25) years.
C. The recipient must have been a member of the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators at the time of retirement and for the five (5) years immediately preceding retirement.
D. CESA administrators who were county superintendents are to receive credit for the years served as county superintendents.

If you are retiring this year, please email the WASDA office. ALL WASDA members retiring will be recognized at the banquet. This year’s convention will be held April 10-12 at the Madison Concourse Hotel in Madison. (Conference begins with a reception at 5:30 p.m., April 10, followed by the Recognition Banquet & ends at 12 noon on April 12.)
WASDA FIRST YEAR SUPERINTENDENTS WORKSHOP V

Sponsored by

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2019
Madison Concourse Hotel - Madison

PROGRAM

7:30 a.m. REGISTRATION/CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST
7:30 a.m. Registration/Continental Breakfast

8:00 a.m. Welcome and Reflection
Finishing Strong and Planning Proactively for the Next Year.
The school year is coming to a close. Many accomplishments have been realized in your first year. But one good year doesn't make a good run. Expectations will actually increase if you've had a good year. Attention to several tips can help ensure you have a strong finish to your first year and a productive start to your second.
Discussion facilitated by Cooke and Gallagher

8:15 a.m. Financial Literacy - Debt 101
There are many procedures and statutory provisions relating to bonding and indebtedness. Learn from the experts, what superintendents need to know including understanding the debt issuance process, Funds 38 and 39, EMMA filing requirements, the bond rating process, role of bond counsel and other related topics.
Lisa Voisin, Baird Financial Team

9:15 - 9:30 a.m. Break/Networking

9:30 a.m. Legal Update
The rapidly changing legal landscape continues to offer topics that must be mastered to avoid legal entanglements. Gain insights from the "Legal Eagle" in a discussion of current issues with implications for your actions.
Presenter: Attorney Kirk Strang of Strang, Patteson, Renning, Lewis & Lacy

10:30 a.m. Providing Leadership When Expectations Conflict
Successful leaders understand that expectations of the staff, community or board may conflict. But rather than feeling caught in the middle, they employ strategies to identify and build common ground and ownership for direction, while serving as a child advocate. Learn tips utilized by experienced leaders who have successfully prevented or navigated conflicting expectations to create a culture of high expectations, transparency and results.
Panelists: Brian Busler, Supt., Oregon; Louise Blankenheim, Retired Supt., Kiel

11:30 a.m. Lunch/Networking
12:30 p.m.  

Strategic Communications to Achieve Results
Effective communications don't happen by chance. They result from deliberate, intentional planning. This session will assist us to understand and apply a communications planning approach to identify communication goals, develop messages, select communication tools, involve stakeholders and assess results. Participants will work with the presenter to apply communication planning concepts for crisis communications and for communicating in advance of a referendum. Come prepared to examine your greatest communication challenge in light of the concepts presented.

Presenter: Joe Donovan, Donovan Group

1:30 p.m.  

Reflection on Learning
Complete KWL and survey/reflection - Degree to Which Academy Affected Thinking and Practice

2:30 p.m.  

Priority Planning for 2019-20
How should WASDA Meet your Needs during Your Second Year as Superintendent.

3:00 p.m.  

Adjourn

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Over 1/2 of your employees are likely stressed about their finances.*

Employees who suffer from financial stress cost your district money. Member Benefits can help you create and implement a financial wellness plan for your employees at no cost to the district.

- Individual financial consultations.
- Financial seminars.
- Monthly e-news.
- Financial resources including calculators, eBooks, videos, and more.

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Imagine

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The Baird Video Library is your district’s go-to school finance resource for training, continuing education and talent development. Whether you’re looking to increase your finance team’s efficiency or speak knowledgeably with your district’s stakeholders, our easy-to-use and interactive videos can help you understand and address the important finance issues impacting your district.

Baird’s School Business Solutions Team
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schoolbusinesssolutions@rwbaird.com
bairdvideolibrary.com

Want to become an expert on Wisconsin school finance? Check out the Baird Video Library!
Hearing from Students: When’s the Last Time You Asked?

By: Jerry Kember, School Perceptions Consultant

Students are in your buildings every day experiencing the culture and environment of your school system. Is it possible they might have valuable insight on how to improve their educational experience? Have you asked them lately?

There’s no doubt that staff, parents and the community have opinions about how you’re doing, but student perspective shouldn’t be overlooked. After all, they are the ones living your delivery system and experiencing it first-hand. When it comes to hearing what they have to say there are numerous ways to find out, but few that allow all students to be involved in a non-threatening, open, and honest manner.

Schools have an important role in building resilient youth. Throughout the last two decades, educators, researchers and politicians have focused on the fundamental purpose of education as teaching and learning. The recent research and evidence surrounding social and emotional learning (SEL) substantiates the value of not only focusing on students’ cognitive and academic skills but also their social and emotional development (Durlak et al, 2011).

A student that is engaged in both their school work and school community experiences greater success both in and out of the classroom as well as upon graduation from high school. Understanding how a student spends their free time, their perceptions of the rigor and relevance of their school work, how they utilize various support systems and the planning they have done for life after high school is critical for a school system to best meet each student’s individual needs. “If we want to build resilience in our students both in and out of the classroom, we must first look critically at what factors impact their engagement,” shares Bill Foster, the President of School Perceptions, a firm that conducts student engagement surveys for school districts in Wisconsin and throughout the country.

School Perceptions has been supporting school districts in gathering culture and climate data for over a decade. The School Perceptions Student Engagement Survey™ offers schools a way to measure how students perceive their learning as well as examine the factors that impact student engagement. The Survey examines seven indicators of student engagement: connectedness, drive, citizenship, preparation, social and emotional aptitude, wellness and academic and career planning. School Perceptions’ software allows a district to look at student engagement through the various lenses of your student population (e.g. ethnicity, gender, etc.). Customization of survey questions is also possible so that school initiatives or issues of immediate concern can be addressed.

For more information contact: Jerry Kember, 262.644.4300
jkember@schoolperceptions.com

Jerry Kember has served public schools in New York and Wisconsin since 1970. He retired as Superintendent of Schools after 22 years as an administrator in the School District of La Crosse. Throughout his tenure Kember was committed to regularly connecting with the community to share the “good news” of the District and gather feedback from residents.
MILWAUKEE, WI - Randall D. Crocker, President and CEO of von Briesen & Roper, s.c., today announced that Attorney Christy A. Brooks received the George Tipler Award for Distinguished Service in School Law. The award is presented annually at the Wisconsin School Attorneys Association membership meeting.

George Tipler initiated and founded the Wisconsin School Attorneys Association and was a long-serving advocate for the boys and girls of Wisconsin. The Wisconsin School Attorneys Association Board of Directors established the George Tipler Award and annually selects two recipients to recognize distinguished members of the legal profession who have dedicated their careers to helping Wisconsin schools.

Brooks is a Shareholder at von Briesen & Roper, s.c. She advises school districts on state and federal laws affecting pupil matters including discipline and special education. She previously served as President of the Wisconsin School Attorneys Association.
Why Educators Love Flexible Seating
By Liz Bowie

Editor’s Note: This article originally appeared on the Demco Interiors Blog.

Does it seem like every year there are students in your classroom who are overly chatty or have difficulty focusing? Do they exhibit behavior problems that get in the way of learning?

What if there were a way to make these students (and your entire class) better behaved, more motivated, and more productive? Some educators say flexible seating arrangements are the answer.

We asked practicing educators about why they decided to implement flexible seating in their libraries and classrooms. Hear what they had to say below about the positive impact the change had on their students and their learning environments.

Lauri Taparluie, Teacher Librarian
Grades 1–8

Why Flexible Seating?

After my first year in the library, I noticed that the students naturally gravitated toward working on the floor, reading under tables and in little nooks and crannies, and using the built-in steps to work with a group, as opposed to using the provided tables and chairs. In the summer prior to my second year as teacher librarian, I decided that I wanted to make the library a more comfortable learning environment that catered to students’ natural

“When my students entered the library for the first time, they couldn’t wait to use the more comfortable seating choices.”

– Lauri Taparluie, Teacher Librarian
tendencies to be more productive and happier when they were in various nontraditional positions and workspaces.

I began by revamping the three “comfy” office chairs we already had in the library that the students would race to (and sometimes fight over) at the beginning of class — they were the coveted spots! I re-covered some of the worn-out cushions. I also purchased three beanbag chairs and a classroom carpet to help create a comfy zone and a more comfortable area for the students to work. I also was able to gather a couple of sturdy side tables that could be used as seating and a couple of small plastic chairs that would work for the younger students to create another reading area. I had a metal stool already in the library, and when other teachers saw that I painted it, I was also able to get another matching one from a colleague’s classroom to have a matching set. I purchased some clipboards for students to promote them moving about to find a productive work location.

**Student Reactions**

When my students entered the library for the first time, they couldn’t wait to use the more comfortable seating choices. I implemented the changes slowly and was very explicit with the expectations for how to use the new seating choices. The three beanbags became the coveted spots, so I often chose students who were demonstrating model behavior to use the beanbags for the period and tried to give all the students a turn.

**Positive Outcomes**

Once I implemented flexible seating in my library, I also had to realize that it’s a complete mindset change on my part. The student working under the table was fine as long as he or she was working. The student who looked uncomfortable was fine. So, I think the most positive outcome overall is the impression and attitude toward the library. While it hasn’t changed for every student, I feel like the majority of students feel that the library is the heart of the school. They come to see me at recess to be a helper or to read or to do homework. They know it is a comfortable and safe space. Flexible seating has helped make it warm and inviting. My students are ultimately more productive and more predisposed to learning if they are happy and comfortable.
Melanie Wood, Teacher
Grades 4

Why Flexible Seating?

After attending a workshop on innovative classroom design in 2016, I decided to take the plunge into flexible seating. I had seen beautifully designed rooms all over Pinterest and Instagram for years but never fully understood the “why” behind flexible seating. At this workshop I got to work alongside an interior designer who specializes in classroom design to promote engagement and collaboration. I was afforded the opportunity to travel to three area schools and speak with educators who transformed their classrooms. After hearing their success stories, I knew I was ready to give it a try!

Student Reactions

My students LOVED the change. They were already finding innovative ways to utilize our space (sitting on the floor with pillows or lap desks, standing at tables, working on wobble stools, etc.), so they were thrilled to have the green light to use furniture other than the traditional school furniture they were used to. Throughout the year I allow students to help rearrange the room to fit their needs as learners. I can tell my students take great pride in our classroom and especially love showing it off to visitors.

Positive Outcomes

My students are more engaged in their learning! Students have explicitly stated that having a comfortable place in the room to work helps them focus while working. Not only that, I have noticed that my students are developing valuable problem-solving and social skills while choosing workspaces in our classroom since we do not have any assigned seats. As the teacher, I try my hardest not to intervene when two students are heading to the same spot. I encourage students to use their strategies to problem-solve on their own.

Julie Ballew, Teacher
Grades 5

Why Flexible Seating?

I had been thinking about trying it for several years, but I couldn’t figure out the logistics and was too scared to try it without working out every possible detail. Then I found myself with a class full of especially fidgety students, and I couldn’t stop thinking about how hard it is for me to work in an uncomfortable seat. I often do my best planning curled up on the couch or spread out on the floor. As an adult, I almost always get to choose where I work. Why shouldn’t my students be offered that same choice?
Student Reactions

Students were thrilled from the very first day. Their parents were apprehensive at first sight, but the kids’ excitement often spilled over on the ride home from school, so their parents were sold quickly too.

Positive Outcomes

Small behavior problems ended almost immediately, and the amount of stamina my students had for challenging work increased rapidly. The logistics were so much easier than I had anticipated, and I only regret that I waited so long!

Sherah Cash, Teacher
Grades 5

Why Flexible Seating?

At the time, I was working in a high-poverty neighborhood in which the children could benefit from more of a home-type atmosphere where they felt safe to learn and share. From that point, it worked so well that I’ve continued it for the past nine years of teaching.

Student Reactions

The students were excited and thrilled that I took time to consider their needs. They quickly took to the space and wanted other teachers to do the same. It worked especially well for students that needed to move a lot. They didn’t feel so confined by being in the same seat day after day. One of the rules with my flexible seating is to pick a different seat every day.

Positive Outcomes

Overall the most positive outcome would be the conversations it has promoted. Students feel free to share with their peers and are exposed to different peers on a daily basis.

Sarah Rao, Teacher
Grade 1

Why Flexible Seating?

“I almost always get to choose where I work. Why shouldn’t my students be offered that same choice?”

– Julie Ballew, Teacher
I decided to implement flexible seating after researching the positive impact it can have on young students’ learning and focus.

**Student Reactions**

My students love flexible seating. We learn how to use each type of seat appropriately, and students can pick the type of seat that works best for them each day.

**Positive Outcomes**

The most positive outcome I saw from implementing flexible seating in my classroom was the amount of focus students could maintain. Students are able to make smart choices about what style of seating works best for them and where they learn best in the room. This empowers kids to think about how they learn best.

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**Stephanie Wilson, Primary Teacher**  
**Grade 1**

**Why Flexible Seating?**

I decided to implement flexible seating because I believed each child needed to be comfortable while completing their work to truly give their best. As I read blog post after blog post, I became intrigued and decided to play around with it. I started by allowing my first-graders to use a clipboard and sit or lie on the carpet area to complete assignments if they wished. Then I had a student that could not stay seated for more than a minute. I allowed that student to stand at a cart to complete assignments. The change was amazing. I couldn’t believe how much the student’s performance improved.

I started thinking about my own children. Before I became a public school teacher, I homeschooled my own children from elementary to part of their middle school and high school years. My children never sat at a desk all day to do their work. At the time, I was taking classes for my master’s degree as well, and I thought about how I liked curling up on the couch to work and read. All these observations combined compelled me to give flexible seating a chance.

**Student Reactions**

I was a nervous wreck implementing full flexible seating this year. This meant my first-grade students would come in on the first day without assigned seats. It went better than I could have ever expected! The students love the choices. They came in the first day and just found a seat. I took the time to teach, model, and practice procedures for each type of seat, and I haven’t had any trouble.
It’s interesting how most of them pick a different seat each time we leave whole group to find a spot to work. Have I had to move students away from one another? Absolutely! But I had to do the same every year with assigned seating. I was also nervous how the parents would react at Meet the Teacher night. I took the time to explain why I had chosen this type of seating and how it would benefit their child, and I have had nothing but positive feedback. My parents love the idea!

Positive Outcomes

The most positive outcome has been the way students get right to work and focus when they find a seat. I believe the amount of movement the students get from choosing “right” work spots and the ownership that comes from choosing their own space causes them to concentrate more fully on assignments.