

Literacy Leader and Administrator Study Guide

# CLASSROOM DESIGN for STUDENT AGENCY

Digital  
Spaces as  
Extended  
Wall Space

Working with  
the Space You Have!

The Power of  
Baskets for  
Organizing  
Books

Curating  
a Quality  
Classroom  
Library



**Create Spaces to Empower  
Young Readers and Writers!**

Lynsey Burkins & Franki Sibberson

Foreword by Carla Shalaby and Afterword by Detra Price-Dennis



Welcome! In *Classroom Design for Student Agency: Create Spaces to Empower Young Readers and Writers*, authors Lynsey Burkins and Franki Sibberson invite us to reenvision our classroom design. The authors remind us that every student in every school is in a classroom, and we have the privilege and joy of designing this space to empower them.

Administrators and literacy coaches know far better than most what Patrick Lencioni said about leadership: “If you could get all the people in an organization rowing in the same direction, you could dominate any industry, in any market, against any competition, at any time” (The Five Dysfunctions of a Team). This means everyone works toward common goals regardless of their role. Leading learning not only includes nurturing a learning community—one that takes risks together, makes mistakes together, and grows together—it means leading toward those goals. That includes how you use professional learning time, observations, evaluations, and resources.

While this study guide will provide tips, resources, suggested reading excerpts, and ideas to support you in leading this work for your faculty and staff, research suggests that you should study the book using the [Educator Study Guide](#) with your faculty. Your commitment to continuously learning alongside teachers will strengthen the collaborative culture in your school.

The *Literacy Leader and Administrator Study Guide* is organized around five areas of evaluation and professional learning that are impacted by classroom design:

## Standards for Establishing an Environment for Learning

- Creating a culturally responsive environment
- Organizing and managing the classroom

## Social Emotional Learning Standards

- Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making

## Dispositions Outlined in CCSS<sup>1</sup>

- Demonstrate independence
- Use technology and digital media strategically and capably
- Come to understand other perspectives and cultures

## Standards for International Society for Technology in Education<sup>2</sup>

- Students leverage technology to take an active role in choosing, achieving, and demonstrating competency in their learning goals
- Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts, and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others
- Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats, and digital media appropriate to their goals

## Making Student Thinking Visible

- Student thinking is regularly on display
- Student thinking is used as formative assessment

Taking the time to reflect on your community’s vision and goals will help you support your teachers in creating spaces to empower their students. These suggestions are meant to be scaffolds, not prescriptions. Use them to help you start the process, then allow your priorities, standards, and professional learning process to lead the way.

## Standards for Establishing an Environment for Learning

- Creating a culturally responsive environment
- Organizing and managing the classroom
- [Read:](#) pp. 7-21
- [Reflect:](#)
  - How are you supporting your faculty in establishing an environment for learning?
  - Do you embed classroom design and culturally responsive environments into professional development?
  - Is classroom design part of your evaluation process? Do you encourage your faculty



to set classroom design goals?

- Have you thought about the design of the school? How does it support student learning?
- How can you make the design of the school culturally responsive?
- **Tip:** Visit classrooms and discuss design choices with teachers. Create time for teachers to visit each other's classrooms and debrief about design choices with each other.
- **Try:** Host faculty meetings in different classrooms and provide time for faculty to discuss the classroom and classroom library design.

## Social Emotional Learning Standards

- Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making
- **Read:** pp. 57–60
- **Reflect:**
  - How does your office design support social emotional learning?
  - What messages about power does the design of school spaces send?
  - How do the spaces in the school reflect a “YES environment” (pp. 66–67)?
  - Do you include students in designing shared spaces throughout the school?
- **Tip:** Encourage teachers to think about how the ELA curriculum can support social-emotional learning. Include these standards in ELA professional development standards
- **Try:** Work with faculty to reflect on and revise the design of school spaces to demonstrate the kind of school community you want to build.

## Dispositions in CCSS

- Demonstrate independence
- Use technology and digital media strategically and capably
- Come to understand other perspectives and cultures
- **Read:** pp. 163–166
- **Reflect:**
  - How do your plans get in the way of faculty and student choice?
  - Is your goal to increase access when it comes to community supplies?
  - How does your leadership help faculty learn something about themselves and/or others?
  - How does your leadership help faculty support students to learn something about themselves and/or others?
  - How does the school design create spaces in which every student can be a successful and contributing member of your intellectual community?
- **Tip:** Talk with families and caregivers about ways to support students using technology and digital media strategically and in balance with other activities at home.
- **Try:** Focus on how to integrate perspectives, culture, and anti-oppression practices into instruction throughout the year.

## Standards for International Society for Technology in Education

- 1.1 Empowered Learner: Students leverage technology to take an active role in choosing, achieving, and demonstrating competency in their learning goals

- 1.3 Knowledge Constructor: Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts, and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others
- 1.6 Creative Communicator: Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats, and digital media appropriate to their goals
- **Read:** pp. 75–80
- **Reflect:**
  - Are you supporting teachers in using technology in the classroom?
  - Have you financially supported classroom design around the placement of technology?
  - How are you including the use of technology and digital tools in professional development?
  - How are you supporting students/caregivers having access to digital tools and resources outside the classroom and the school day?
  - How are you intentional about the ways you integrate technology into professional development to help teachers support student agency?
- **Tip:** Use platforms, tools, and digital media with teachers during professional development sessions.
- **Try:** Organize a learning walk to talk with students about how they are using technology to communicate clearly and express themselves.

## Making Student Thinking Visible

- Student thinking is regularly on display
- Student thinking is used as formative assessment
- **Read:** pp. 61–65

## Notes

1. Common Core State Standards. (2024). <https://corestandards.org/> Check your individual state's standards for specific language.
2. ISTE. (2024). ISTE Standards: For Students. <https://iste.org/standards/students>



*The Educator Study Guide* is designed for your faculty to work together. Ideally, you could use grade-level, PLC, school, or district planning time. Also, consider organizing a study group before school, after school, or over the summer. The possibilities are endless!

Head over to the [Educator Study Guide](#) and get started!

- **Reflect:**
  - How are you using the school budget to support faculty in designing an environment to amplify student thinking?
  - How can you include making student thinking visible in professional development, observations, and evaluations?
  - How are you creating opportunities to display student thinking in spaces throughout the school?
  - How are you budgeting for the must-have tools teachers need to empower students in making their thinking visible?
- **Tip:** Try using classroom displays to demonstrate thought processes during professional development and faculty meetings with teachers.
- **Try:** Include student displays and responses in data meetings and in student evaluation.

With more than 25,000 members, we're a leading partner to and professional home for teachers of English and language arts at all levels. Explore how you can benefit from NCTE membership.

