Changing the Learning Environment to improve learning

As some parents have heard already Alice, Marg and I attended a workshop on Saturday morning at the end of Week 2, entitled “De-institutionalise your learning environment”. We thoroughly enjoyed the presentation and understand why this will be a good thing for us to do. Through this Learning Journal we would like to share with you, throughout the year, our journey. One of the first things for us to do is de-clutter and we have made a start. 😊

Improving learning environments does not need to be expensive, says Professor Peter Barrett


We all know the spaces we live and work in affect us. We are likely to find soft colours soothing, clutter distracting and high temperatures soporific. But this idea may not be fully accepted when it comes to schools. Recently, the DfE stated: "There is no convincing evidence that spending enormous sums of money on school buildings leads to increased attainment. An excellent curriculum, great leadership and inspirational teaching are the keys to driving up standards."

Of course teaching is central – but what if spending small amounts of money, or just doing things a bit differently at no extra cost, could make a real difference to students’ attainment?

I led a pilot study of 751 primary students in seven Blackpool schools, which established that, all other things being equal, a child in the best environment could be expected to make two SATs sub-levels more progress during a school year than an equivalent child in the "poorest" classroom environment. That equates to a whole year's average improvement for a child in reading, writing and maths.

The Head Project (Holistic Evidence and Design), a research study of the impacts of the built environment of UK primary schools (4-11 years) on the learning rates of students, is the first study to identify the impact of the built environment on children's learning.
Six factors came out as particularly influential: light, choice for the user, flexibility, connections (such as corridors and the way different areas fit together), complexity (for instance having different types of learning areas) and colour.

There were surprises. It appears easier to over-stimulate students with vibrant colours and busy displays, than to create calm but interesting environments suitable for learning.

Daylight is important, but it also needs to be linked to effective glare control and users need to remember not to block the light with furniture or by leaving blinds down.

Many important factors that impact learning rates are not expensive to change and can be organised by teachers and students, such as the layout of the room, the choice of display or the colour of the walls.

Of course teaching is key – but intelligent choices about spaces are very important too.

From this .... to this- in the R-2 room.

To see our Learning Journal in full colour go to http://www.wirrabps.sa.edu.au/newsletter.htm 😊
R-2 Class

Science
In Science we have been learning about matter and to identify solids, liquids and gases. Over the last few weeks we have become scientists and are learning how to question, hypothesise, experiment, observe and have lots of fun!

English
So far this Term we have been focusing on the elements that make up a story and have made a big chart in our classroom to remind us what we need to make a great story. Most days we start the day with Daily Dash (5 minutes of writing). We are also creating some fantastic books in Writers Workshop.

Maths
In Number we are working on reading and ordering numbers and place value. This week our question was, ‘What does 100 look like?’ for the older students and for the younger students ‘What does 10 look like?’ We had lots of fun with this and tested out our estimation skills.
In Art, we used the simple line technique to draw a bird.

In Science, we used electrolysis to separate the copper in a copper sulphate solution.

In Maths, we’ve looked at mapping and giving directions. Mrs Wheeler created a giant map on the floor for us to direct people around.