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Title: Toward Usable Environment Design Knowledge for Teachers

Abstract

Research supports strong ties between the quality of the physical environment and students' learning at school. Too often, however, the environmental quality of the classroom remains a backdrop for learning rather than an integral part of the learning process. Design knowledge we have is not effectively translated to practice, and as a result the physical environment is often neglected as a critical factor in improving instructional effectiveness. This can be especially devastating for the young developing child who depends heavily on environmental quality for early learning. More effective use of design knowledge by teachers can make a difference in children's performance, health, safety, self-esteem and well-being in early classroom settings. Toward this goal, a core curriculum for early educator preparation and professional development in classroom design is proposed. The curriculum framework outlines basic principles, essential concepts, and strategies that develop teachers' design knowledge and skills. Next steps for including more usable design content in teacher education are suggested, as well as some action steps that can be undertaken right away.