

# Reimagining the Teaching Space

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**“When the atmosphere encourages learning, the learning is inevitable”** -Elizabeth Foss

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- Students receive and retain information based on many factors, including the **physical space** the information is shared in.
- What is your current “go to” in terms of a physical classroom plan?

# Why reimagine the classroom space?

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- “Space—whether physical or virtual—can have an impact on learning. It can bring people together; it can encourage exploration, collaboration, and discussion. **Or, space can carry an unspoken message of silence and disconnectedness.** More and more we see the power of *built pedagogy* (the ability of space to define how one teaches) in colleges and universities.”
  - Diana Oblinger, The University of North Carolina
  - Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), *Designing Space for Effective Learning: A Guide to 21st Century Learning Space Design*, p. 30,

# Before class begins

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- Take the time to make a plan for cultivating the classroom space.
- Recognize any limitations.
- Think of the space not just in terms of the physical layout, but also the unspoken messages that the space is sending to the students.

# Music as a tool

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As you are setting up the space, have music playing that might connect to the material you are studying or help to establish a welcoming energy to the space. The music can be a nice way to fill the “awkward” moments before class begins.

# Making yourself present in the space

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- If possible, before class begins, make yourself present in the space, preferably near the entrance.
- Having doors open, where possible, before class begins.



# Typical Classroom Configuration



# Things to consider while reimagining

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- How do I physically alter the space, or myself within the space, to make it more effective?
- What practical things can I do in a reasonable amount of time?
- When/how often can I alter the space within a semester, or even within a single class meeting?



# The Big Moves

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- Changing the configuration of the chairs
  - Large Circle
  - Small groups
  - Pairs

# Alternate Configuration: Large Circle





# Alternate Configuration: Small Groups

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# Alternate Configuration: Pairs



# Try taking a stand...

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- Standing while learning increases executive functions, such as:
- problem solving
- analyzation
- time management
- organization of written thoughts
- <https://theconversation.com/letting-kids-stand-more-in-the-classroom-could-help-them-learn-53606>

# Turn things inside out

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Begin the class outside by meeting at a landmark on campus and walk to the classroom as a group, using that time to discuss the assigned reading in pairs as you walk.

# It's “your” move

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- Re-think your “teaching position” within the space:
  - What does your current position say to the class?
  - How can an alternate position change the way the students receive the information?

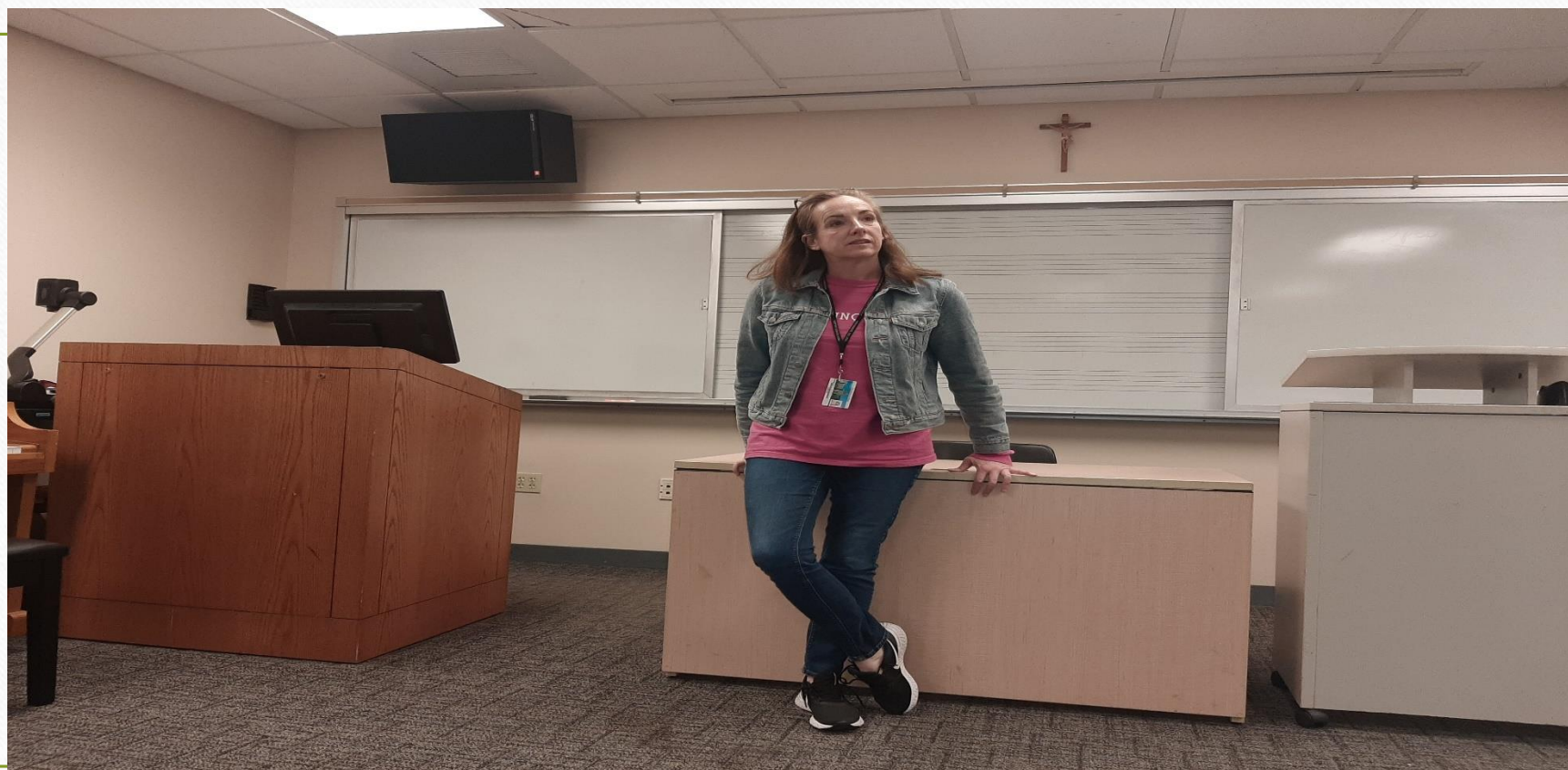


# From the student's perspective....

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Staying open to the possibilities...



# Takeaways

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- There are many roads that lead to an effective teaching space
- When creating your syllabus, take time to think about how certain assignments and activities might be enhanced by altering the space
- Do reconnaissance to have a plan of action for reimagining your classroom
- Start off small. This doesn't need to be an overhaul.