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INSTITUT DE FORMATION
DE L'ÉDUCATION NATIONALE

IFEN Inspire Podcast

S3 EP 01: table ronde (EN summary)

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ENGLISH – detailed summary

The podcast discusses the importance of learning space design – the concept of “the space as the third teacher.” It explores how the layout and atmosphere of classrooms can influence teaching, learning, motivation, and student success.

Participants

- Jo Johannis, school development advisor, supports schools in pedagogical innovation processes.
- Laura Donven, teacher at Sainte-Anne School, implemented a classroom redesign project.
- Moderated by Ben Schreiner (IFEN).

Pedagogical Principles

According to Jo Johannis:

- The learning space should actively support students in their learning process.
- It should be flexible and diverse, allowing for individual work, group work, or whole-class activities.
- Teachers and students should collaborate in designing the space.
- Aesthetic and pleasant environments enhance motivation and willingness to learn.

Large investments are not always necessary – small adjustments can already make a difference: rearranging tables, offering alternative seating, using walls as learning surfaces, or integrating hallways as part of the learning environment.

Practical Example – Sainte-Anne School

When Laura Donven started teaching at Sainte-Anne, she found her classroom rigid and lifeless (rows of desks, white walls, a large teacher’s desk).

Feeling constrained, she launched a project to redesign the school’s learning spaces, aiming to make learning more dynamic and student-centered.

The project included:

- Workshops with teachers and students to identify needs and preferences.
- Students created their own classroom designs, featuring quiet corners, collaborative spaces, and ergonomic furniture.
- Teachers reflected on how to use the new layout to support various teaching methods.

Challenges

Key challenges included:

- Balancing the different needs of teachers and students.
- Meeting architectural and safety regulations (e.g., fire safety, fixed furniture).
- Managing budget constraints for new furniture and materials.
- Adapting to a new teaching mindset – moving from traditional frontal instruction to open, student-driven learning.



This shift required courage, openness, and reflection from all involved – teachers, students, and school leadership.

Observed Results

The transformation brought clear improvements:

- Greater student engagement and responsibility in their own learning.
- Fewer disruptions in class, as students could move freely and take self-regulated breaks.
- Increased autonomy and motivation.
- Teachers noticed a more positive classroom climate and better learning outcomes.

Future Directions and Recommendations

- Continue training and supporting teachers to make full use of new learning spaces.
- Encourage school visits and exchanges to learn from other institutions.
- Emphasize collaborative design between school leadership, teachers, and students.
- Treat classroom design as a pedagogical tool, not mere decoration.

Conclusion

The discussion highlights that the learning space is an active part of the educational process.

A thoughtfully designed environment fosters creativity, motivation, and self-directed learning.

It's not just about furniture – it's about a cultural shift in how we teach and learn.