Thinking About Space

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Custom Claustrophobic Classrooms

I went to a school that was often compared to a prison, it had no windows in the classrooms, false walls, and terrible lighting. A select few teachers were fortunate enough to have their own rooms and often opted to paint their rooms bright colors with their favorite quotes and pictures of their favorite actors. While those customized classrooms made them more personalized for the teacher, they lacked functionality and purpose for students. By functionality, I mean there was no place for students to research something on a computer, no neutral place to read a book, and no designated space to work on a creative project. I think that teachers must strive to utilize their small spaces to promote creativity rather than relying on nifty paint jobs. According to William Ayers (2019), the classroom is the "third teacher", which "can be your best friend and trusted ally, or your adversary and opponent." (pp. 45-70). If spaces are uninspiring, how can teachers expect kids who are more creative and hands-on to thrive? I think that looking at the maker movement and appropriating some of its use of space is central in creating my ideal inclusive classroom.

The maker movement is centered around ensuring students "actively engage in the physical creation of objects through the assistance and support of digital and analog technology" (Schad and Jones 2019, p. 66). The culture of the maker movement is defined by "risk-taking, learning from mistakes, problem-solving, and developing an ability to persevere when tasks are difficult" (Hughes 2017, p. 2). In the Schad and Jones (2019) piece, they discuss "Maker Narratives" which blend making and storytelling, hoping to work off humans' "deeply ingrained desire...to share stories" (p. 71). In the case study, they conclude that maker narratives help "bridge student bias of STEM subjects through the use of storytelling." (Schad and Jones, 2019,

p. 72). I think that maker narratives are a great example of how being hands-on doesn't have to be reserved for the science classroom but has a distinct place in even the ELA classroom.

Maker spaces can include expensive items such as green screens and 3D printers but don't necessarily demand massive investment to be useful, they can even be fueled by "recycling and upcycling" which can "empower students to make in eco-conscious ways" (Hughes 2017, p. 3). Maker spaces don't have to be an elitist "adult, white, middle-class pursuit, led by those with the leisure time, technical knowledge, experience, and resources to make," but rather can be fed by utilizing available technologies. (Schad and Jones 2019, p. 66) I think that by employing maker culture in the classroom, it can aid teachers to create a more inclusive space for hands-on learners. While I realize that maker spaces may not be practical for every classroom setting, I believe that if teachers want to cater to different learning styles they must try to promote creativity alongside traditional literacy.

References

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