



CASE STUDY:

REGINA PUBLIC SCHOOL'S STRUCTURAL INNOVATION INITIATIVE
AND 10-YEAR RENEWAL PLAN



What 21st Century Learning Looks Like

“The first approach was from the inside out, relating to the individual learner’s perspective.”

Described as some of the most structurally and pedagogically innovative learning facilities in Canada, Douglas Park School, Arcola Community School, and Seven Stones Community School within Regina Public Schools (RPS) are paving the way for educational excellence nationwide.

The three new schools are designed to nurture and engage Creative Age learners and support RPS’s Structural Innovation Initiative.

“We hadn’t built a school in Regina for more than 12 years,” explains Ron Christie, General Manager, Educational Facilities, RPS. “A lot had changed. Nobody was really familiar with what the best practices were. We knew our student achievement rates had not been moving. We knew that students were not engaged with their learning and that our dropouts were not improving. So we knew that we had to do things differently.”

Best Practices and Design Patterns in Learning

To kick off the project, Fielding Nair International (FNI), planner and design architect for the new schools, held an interactive presentation on “Design for the Creative Age” to share global best practices in learning and design principles for 21st century educational environments. This laid the foundation for visioning workshops in which students, teachers, parents, and RPS leaders shared their thoughts through discussions and a “carousel” activity where attendees moved around the room, posting their ideas and discussing other people’s

ideas. Everyone’s ideas were then tabulated into a written and illustrated Discovery Report.

Another key benchmark for each community included Design Pattern workshops. Tables of eight students, teachers, and parents then developed their own key patterns from two perspectives.

“The first approach was from the inside out, relating to the individual learner’s perspective,” says Randall Fielding, Founding Partner and Principal-in-Charge, FNI. “The second part involved design patterns from the outside in, relating to the neighborhoods, climate, and individual site opportunities and constraints. We then discussed our work and came to a consensus on the most important approaches to learning, architecture, and site design.”

Onsite curriculum-mapping workshops allowed teachers to weigh in on the arrangement of spaces and to continue a dialogue about the integration of learning and the physical environments.

A More Student-Focused Environment

During all of these best practice and design pattern workshops, it came through loud and clear that everyone was ready to move away from a lot of isolated classrooms and corridors to a more flexible and varied model. “The schools incorporate seven design principles that everyone agreed are essential for successful student engagement



Photo © Patricia Holdsworth

"The classroom is just a box, and the most important thing you put into it is the furniture. If we didn't have the right furniture, we were never going to achieve any of our seven principles, especially the primary one of flexible teaching arrangements."

and outcomes," says Christie. These principles are:

- Flexible teaching arrangements and instructional grouping
- Teacher collaboration
- Interdisciplinary, project-based, and inquiry-based teaching and learning
- Inclusive practices
- Safe and secure personal learning communities
- A stimulus-and technology-rich environment
- Integrated environmental design and curriculum

Each school is built around three Personal Learning Communities: pre-K through 2, grades 3-5, and grades 6-8. Each community has between 75 and 150 students along with their teachers, "allowing students to develop a strong connection to a group of peers and adults where everyone knows your name," explains Fielding.

In each community, learning studios and learning suites are

organized around common areas with a direct connection to the outside, as well as wet and messy and soft seating areas. Each community also includes a teacher collaboration room, encouraging communication between professionals.

Learning Communities in each school are further organized around a larger, central commons, the heart of each school, which faces south to maximize light and vistas.

Ultimate Flexibility

Because the Personal Learning Communities support diverse learning activities simultaneously student presentations, teacher lectures, project-based learning, small group learning, individual research, and technology-based learning the Furniture Selection Committee opted for a versatile assortment of VS furniture.

"What VS offered us was the ultimate in flexibility," explains Christie. "The classroom is just a box, and the most important

thing you put into it is the furniture. If we didn't have the right furniture, we were never going to achieve any of our seven principles, especially the primary one of flexible teaching arrangements.

"Anytime we heard from teachers and administrators, it was always the flexibility of the classroom, how can we make it more flexible. The beauty of VS is that they recognized all that," adds Christie. "We demonstrated, evaluated and sampled all these different manufacturers from across the

country and hands down everyone selected the VS furniture."

"VS furniture," says Fielding, "perfectly matches the architecture by providing a broad variety of ergonomic products to support all the multiple learning modalities. They are built to last with thoughtful detailing. As designers we feel confident that VS furnishings will still function well many years into the future."

Series 2000 mobile folding screens provide spatial definition



for a variety of learning spaces. High-quality casters make them easy to fold away when one large space is needed. Tackable on one side with a whiteboard on the other side, Series 2000 screens also give teachers and students multipurpose display space.

Series 600 open and lockable storage modules not only house books and supplies, they can also be rolled around the classrooms to divide the learning studios into multiple smaller spaces when needed, say for different work groups or testing.

Quick change

Recognizing that if teachers couldn't easily change the furniture around to suit different learning activities, they wouldn't, the Furniture Selection Committee chose an array of VS mobile tables.

FlipTables have roomy and easy-to-clean six-foot tops. When extra room is needed, the tops tilt up via a quick-release mechanism for compact, nested storage.

"Everybody in our school division wants the FlipTables. They love them because they make achieving flexible arrangements effortless," says Christie.

The LiteTables are also popular. Extraordinarily strong and durable, they are light enough that students can quickly move them together for small group learning activities or stack them up and out of the way for large group events.

RondoLift sit-stand tables let students choose between sitting and standing throughout the school day, which encourages healthy movement. They're easy and safe for even younger students to use, lifting and lowering effortlessly via a built-in gas spring with release lever.

Computer friendly, Network tables have segmented channels that unsnap from the frame so cables can be laid in and then snap back into place. Optional front and side modesty panels give the tables a desk-like appearance.

Additionally, the committee selected height-adjustable Uno-M Step and Ergo-III tables for student desks. Uno-M features step height adjustment with hexagon key locking. Ergo-III allows continuous height adjustment via a crank handle. Both have a wire bookshelf and backpack hook.





Photos © Gerry Kopelow



“The teachers can’t get enough of the Hokki stools. And the kids just love sitting on them.”

Teachers use MyCaddy stand-at modules that they can roll from learning activity to learning activity throughout the day. Castered and lockable, MyCaddy features open and adjustable shelves, a materials drawer, a dual handle/coat hanger, and a spacious worksurface for laptops.

Value in Movement

When it comes to seating, PantoSwing-LuPo and PantoMove-LuPo chairs are used everywhere. Both promote movement and changes in posture which research shows has a positive effect on student learning.

The PantoSwing-LuPo is a forward-flexing chair (available in six different heights) that supports two key postures: a

relaxed posture when the backrest is utilized, usually when a student is listening or reading, and a forward posture that supports students while sitting and working at a desk or table.

The PantoMove-LuPo adjusts up and down, swivels and rocks, letting students change their sitting position throughout the day.

“Growing bodies have a natural need to move,” explains Dr. Dieter Breithecker, Europe’s foremost expert on the relationship between ergonomic design in educational furniture and the physical development of school children. “Increased opportunities to move while seated improve blood flow and oxygen to the brain, thereby increasing attention and concentration levels.”



“Dr. Breithecker came in several times to talk to us about ergonomics and the value in movement and how it balances mind, body, and soul,” says Christie.

Additionally, primary grade teachers have PantoMove-VF KiGa swivel chairs with special height-range adjustment. The KiGa model is designed specifically for use in pre-K through 2 learning environments and has an exceptionally wide range of stepless height adjustment from adult seat height all the way down to children’s height levels. At the same time, it offers the comfort of an adult-sized upholstered seat shell.

“The ergonomic design of the PantoMove KiGa chair is really something,” says Christie. “It allows teachers to sit comfortably as they work individually with students rather

than having to crouch down or kneel on the floor.”

Freely shaped Puzzle tables and wiggle friendly Hokki stools are also big hits in the pre-K through 2 learning communities.

“The teachers can’t get enough of the Hokki stools. They are far superior to anything that’s out there. Every teacher who sees them wants them,” enthused Christie. “And the kids just love sitting on them.”

Special Spaces

The school commons acts as the heart of each school, unifying the three personal learning communities and allowing them to expand and borrow space as needed. Like a theatre or stage





Photo © Patricia Holdsworth

“The students really appreciate the furniture we chose, especially the seating. They’ve actually come to us and thanked us for building such beautiful schools.”

for learning, the commons can be rearranged to accommodate all school meetings, performances, and films. Cloud beanbags and pouffes, ClubLounge chairs, and SitzCouch elements provide comfortable seating arrangements.

“What we like about the lounge furniture is the durability. We haven’t had any issues with seams splitting or the fabric wearing out,” says Christie. “We also like that it’s at the same height as the tables. It’s not too low to pull a 28” high table to it,” says Christie.

Developmental Centers accommodate students with special needs to help better integrate them with the mainstream.

“We found that the type of furniture that these students really use a lot of are more the fixed-type desks,” Christie explains. “We used the Duo-Tec tables because they have enough adjustability to them due to the inclining top. We also used lots of Cloud beanbags because these kids are very tactile; they really love how the beanbags feel.”

In the DaVinci Arts and Science Studio, Series 8000 cupboards

have built-in compartments for storing musical instruments, while Series 600 provides plastic bins, adjustable shelves, and drawers for sorting and holding art supplies.

High Marks All Around

Reaction to the new schools has been overwhelmingly positive.

“The students really appreciate the furniture we chose, especially the seating. They’ve actually come to us and thanked us for building such beautiful schools,” says Christie.

Teachers also give the new facilities an A-plus, saying things like: “It’s just amazing. Every time I walk in I feel so fortunate to be able to work in this school.”

And, at the grand opening of Arcola Community School, Regina Board of Education Chairperson Katherine Gagne described the new school as “a great example of how our schools can meet the needs of students and their community today and well into the future.”

Project Profile: Regina Public School’s Structural Innovation Initiative and 10-Year Renewal Plan

Project Team:

Educational Planner & Design Architect:

Fielding Nair International

- Randall Fielding, Founding Partner & Principal-in-Charge, RPS projects
- Isaac Williams, Principal, Washington, DC Studio for Design
- Chris Hazelton, Senior Educational Planner for Education Integration and Curriculum Mapping
- Jennifer Lamar, Senior Interior Designer for Interiors and Furnishings

Executive Architect for Douglas Park School:

Number TEN Architectural Group

- Greg Hasiuk, Partner

Executive Architect for Arcola Community School:

P3Architecture Partnership

- James Youck, Principal and Architect
- Vanessa Keilback, Project Architect
- Sarah Turnbull, Lead Interior Designer

Executive Architect for Seven Stones Community School:

Number TEN Architectural Group

- Greg Hasiuk, Partner

Regina Public Schools Furniture Selection Committee:

- Ron Christie, General Manager Education Facilities
- Darren Boldt, Superintendent
- Morgan Reed, Superintendent
- Mike Walter, Deputy Director
- Dixie Nelson, Principal of Douglas Park School
- Allen Wills, Principal (retired), Arcola Community School
- Jay Fladager, Principal
- Lori Daelick, Vice Principal
- Melanie Little, Vice Principal
- Joanne Patron, Teacher
- Carol Hart, Librarian
- Brenda Whittam-Neary, Special Needs Consultant
- Deb Christie, Interior Designer, P3Architecture Partnership

Key Design Principles:

- Flexible teaching arrangements and instructional grouping
- Teacher collaboration
- Interdisciplinary, project-based, and inquiry-based teaching and learning
- Inclusive practices for special needs students
- Safe and secure personal learning communities
- A stimulus-and technology-rich environment
- Integrated environmental design and curriculum

Applications:

- Common areas
- DaVinci Arts and Science Studio
- Developmental Centre
- Learning studios and suites
- Media Resource Centre
- Music room
- Teacher collaboration and workrooms



Project Scope:

Four new schools in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, designed to nurture Creative Age learners and support Regina Public School’s Structural Innovation initiative.

- Douglas Park School: 400 students; 60,000 sq. ft.
- Arcola Community School: 415 students; 48,000 sq. ft.
- Seven Stones Community School: 357 students; 49,902 sq. ft.
- North Central Shared Facility: TBD

Completion Dates:

- Douglas Park School: September 2012
- Arcola Community School: November 2012
- Seven Stones Community School: Set to open 2014-2015
- North Central Shared Facility: TBD

Products:

- PantoSwing-LuPo Chairs
- PantoMove-LuPo Chairs
- PantoMove-VF Chairs
- PantoMove-VF KiGa Chairs Swivel chair with special height-range
- Cloud Beanbags and Pouffes
- ClubLounge Elements
- Hokki Stools
- SitzCouch Elements
- Ergo-III Skid Tables
- Duo-Tec Drawing Tables
- FlipTables
- LiteTables
- Network Tables
- Puzzle Tables
- RondoLift Tables
- Uno-M Step Tables
- MyCaddy Stand-at Modules
- Series 600 Storage Modules
- Series 2000 Mobile Folding Screens
- Series 8000 Cupboard/Music Room Storage
- Mobile Whiteboards

Awards & Recognition:

Douglas Park School:

- LEED Gold Certification by the Canada Green Building Council
- Finalist for the prestigious Council of Educational Facility Planners International’s James D. MacConnell Award

Arcola Community School:

- People’s Choice Award from the Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI) Pacific North West Conference



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