

Workshop Summary and Suggested Timeline

Building Community in Learning Environments

Workshop Summary and Suggested Timeline

Summary

Any project 's success is directly tied to the user engagement during programming and design phases of the project. Conducting workshops with the end users at the programming phase and Schematic Design Phase would ensure that the design of the project is informed by the needs and wants of the end-users.

In the context of designing a learning environment with the goal of fostering community, the workshop is intended to facilitate a discussion with the occupants (either students, faculty, or both) about what community is, what it might mean in the context of the learning environment, and to identify elements that would help build community and those that need to be avoided. This workshop should prompt participants to think about procedures, policies, furniture and finishes, classroom layouts, built environments, and more, as it relates to building a sense of community in a learning environment.

Based on the process that was employed for conducting the workshops undertaken as part of our research, following is a suggested methodology for conducting workshops, which take anywhere between 2.25 and 3 hours

–

Workshop Preparation

Supplies

Personality Test Printouts

Workshop Printouts

In-depth Questionnaire Printouts (student and/or faculty questionnaires as needed)

Post-it notes – four colors recommended

Pens or pencils

Whiteboards or similar – portable whiteboards recommended!

Whiteboard markers – 2-3 colors recommended

Workshop set-up (10 minutes prior to start of workshop recommended)

Check the space used for your workshop- if portable whiteboards are not available, we recommend using a space with wall-mounted whiteboards or similar. Ensure enough seating is available for participants, and for facilitators.

Printouts of the personality test and workshop questionnaire should be available for distribution, as well as post-it notes, pens and paper. The whiteboard, or similar, should have the key questions/prompts from the printouts written out, with enough space below to document answers for each prompt.

First whiteboard: 4-way chart of the personality types, with space to write participants' names.

On a second whiteboard, write: 'Community is...' Post-it notes from the first exercise will be placed here.

Additional whiteboards (we recommend 3 portable whiteboards if possible) with questionnaire prompts broken up by elements, strategies, and design elements. If space is available, feel free to write the complete question, if not, write only the **bolded** portions. Hide or veil these whiteboards until the community workshop portion begins.

The significant questions we were seeking answers for were –

1. What elements make people feel welcome in learning spaces? (**Welcome**)
2. What elements affect learning outcomes in classrooms? (**Classroom / Learning**)
3. What elements encourage the use of shared spaces? (**Shared space / Collaborate**)
4. What strategies can be used for supporting group activities beyond class time? (**Group activities / out of class**)
5. What strategies can be implemented to make everyone feel comfortable in a space? (**Comfortable**)
6. What strategies can be used to incorporate school culture/spirit in the campus design? (**Culture / Spirit**)
7. What design elements help faculty and students develop respectful relationships? (**Respectful Relationships**)
8. What design elements can encourage independence and leadership? (**Independence & Leadership**)
9. What design elements evoke feelings of exclusion? (**Exclusion**)

A final whiteboard, with one column labelled 'Community', and another column labelled 'Exclusion', for the small-group exercise.

Workshop

Intro (15 minutes) Take some time prior to beginning the workshop to allow the participants to get food and drink (if provided).

Icebreaker (10 minutes) Begin by handing out the personality tests to participants. Allow about five minutes to fill out the tests. Once complete, ask participants to share what result they got, and chart the group results on the whiteboard. These results will be used on the final break-out activity.

Workshop Overview (10 minutes) Begin your workshop with a brief overview of community, community in learning environments, and the 4 strategies of community formation noted in our paper / on our website.

Exercise (15 minutes) Hand out small piles of post-it notes to participants. If you have multiple colors of post-it notes available, assign a color for each personality type, and hand them out accordingly. Ask your participants to write at least one short response (3-5 words) on post-it notes in response to the question, 'What does community mean to you?' Multiple responses are welcome! Once participants are done, collect the post-it notes, and place them on your board, or similar surface. Discuss the notes as you place them with your audience. If you see multiple similar responses, group them together on your board. Take note if you see patterns between personality types, and responses.

Community Workshop (45-90 minutes) Wheel out (or unveil) the whiteboards with our 9 questions (see preparation section above). For each question, ask your participants to share answers and write them on the appropriate section of whiteboard. Depending on the age and interest of your participants, expect to take 5-10 minutes on each question before moving on.

Note: If you have a lot of 'lion' personalities in your group, or aren't hearing from everyone, you may need to be more active in facilitating these answers. In certain situations, consider having the participants answer sequentially for a set amount of time (30 seconds to 1 minute per response).

Small-group Exercise (20 minutes) Instruct your participants to break out in groups of 3 or 4 people, with the different personality types represented as much as possible. Within each group, each participant should describe one space they felt part of a community, and why, and one space they felt excluded, and why. In the last ten minutes, groups can share their examples with the rest of the workshop. Again, write participant responses on your whiteboard under 'community' or 'exclusion' columns.

Event wrap-up (10 minutes) Hand-out the in-depth questionnaires to all participants and ask that they complete and return them at a later date. If time permits, ask participants to share something they learned or realized about community. Thank everyone for attending.

Clean-up! (10 minutes)

FACULTY QUESTIONNAIRE

BUILDING COMMUNITY IN LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Section 1 – The Learning Environment

The goal of this survey is to evaluate what elements of built environment affect student experience. Feel free to use any part of your educational experience as a reference. If you prefer, just refer to your most recent educational environment.

16. What is your role at the school / district?

17. How did you get to school?

- a. By walking
- b. By bicycle
- c. By car
- d. By school bus or public transportation
- e. Drop off by others

18. Which of the following options do you think make students and faculty feel welcome in the space: (Choose all that apply)

- a. Walkways and spaces are reasonably organized.
- b. Materials are durable and aesthetically appealing.
- c. Colors are well designed and arranged.
- d. Materials and colors helped people find their way around.
- e. The signs in and around this school are easy to understand.
- f. Navigating in the school environment, I feel I am treated with respect.
- g. I have no experience with any of these options.
- h. I don't feel any of these options are welcoming.

Examples / reasons:

19. Which of the following options do you think affects your students' ability to learn in the classroom:

(Choose all that apply)

- a. Vibrant and appropriate colors
- b. Ability to re-arrange the classroom.
- c. Access to different types and scales of learning spaces (lecture, breakout, lab, maker space).
- d. Availability of equipment and access to supplies.
- e. Access to the exterior/windows.
- f. Access to ancillary spaces (lounges, break rooms, etc.)
- g. I have no experience with any of these options.
- h. I don't feel any of these options affect my students' ability to learn in the classroom.

Anything else? Do you think these apply to teachers/staff as well?

20. Which of the following options encourage your students to spend more time in a learning environment? (Choose all that apply)

- a. There are private and/or quiet spaces to study or relax
- b. There are a variety of spaces for me to hang out with friends or make new friends.
- c. Individual storage space/lockers are available and easy to find.
- d. Restrooms and/or drinking fountains are available, accessible and attractive.
- e. Eating/food preparation spaces are available and easy to find.
- f. All facilities/service departments are easily accessible. (Easy to find entrances, reasonable walking distance, adequate waiting area, etc.)
- g. The school environment gives everyone a sense of belonging.
- h. None of these apply to my experience.
- i. I didn't feel any of these encouraged my students to stay in the learning environment.

Of your selections, what is the most important to you and your students, and why?

21. Do students and/or staff participate in any group activities? (Choose all that apply)
- a. Class study groups
 - b. Creative groups (theater, band, choir, etc.)
 - c. Student cultural clubs
 - d. Academic or professional organizations (by department, major, etc.)
 - e. Volunteer groups
 - f. Student Government
 - g. Athletics
 - h. Student mentoring
 - i. Staff mentoring
 - j. Staff social groups
 - k. Other
 - l. I didn't participate in any group activities.
 - m. No group activities were available to me.

Where do these activities take place? How could these locations be improved?

Section 2 - Interior Environment Characteristics

22. Evaluate the level of comfort of your learning environment:

(1 to 5: strongly disagree to strongly agree)

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. The spaces are well illuminated | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. The space is not visually noisy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. The air in the school is fresh and clean. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. The space is not too loud. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. The temperature is comfortable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

23. Which of the items below affect your comfort, or your students' comfort, in the learning space?

(Choose all that apply)

- a. Materials are durable and aesthetically appealing.
- b. Colors are well-designed and arranged: not too bright or busy, not too bland or dull
- c. Spaces are well-lit: not too dark, not too bright
- d. Spaces have access to day-light.
- e. The space is not too noisy.
- f. The space is not too warm or too cold.
- g. The air is fresh, not stale.
- h. Strong smells do not linger in the space.

- i. Faculty and students have access to personal space.
- j. Faculty and students can control and modify their personal environment.
- k. Spaces have a connection to nature (e.g., plants in-doors, natural materials, etc.)
- l. None of these affect me.
- m. None of these were available to me.

Of your selections above, what are your top 3? What is the most common complaint you hear in spaces you frequent on campus?

Section 3 – Furniture Characteristics

24. Evaluate the furniture in your learning environment.:

(1 to 5: strongly disagree to strongly agree)

- a. Furniture is comfortable and easy to use. 1 2 3 4 5
- b. Furniture is durable. 1 2 3 4 5
- c. Furniture is easy to reconfigure. 1 2 3 4 5
- d. Furniture meets variable needs: 1 2 3 4 5
 finishing homework, group discussion,
 working on private tasks, rest, etc.
- e. Furniture is aesthetically appealing 1 2 3 4 5

Which of these furniture options affect the ability of your students to effectively use your learning environment?

- j. Furniture is comfortable
- k. Furniture is durable
- l. Furniture is aesthetically appealing
- m. Individual pieces of furniture can be used in different ways
- n. Furniture can be reconfigured to create different environments.
- o. Furniture is made of sustainable and/or natural
- p. Students have the ability to select different pieces of furniture
- q. None of these apply to furniture in my learning environment
- r. None of these affect my use of learning environment

Of your selections above, what are your top 3? What type of furniture would enhance your experience in the learning environment?

Section 4 – Personal Experiences

Describe your individual experiences in the learning environment. Provide examples when you can.

25. Are you aware of or do you feel school culture/spirit in the areas you frequent on campus? What about those spaces help create a sense of culture/spirit?

26. What does school culture/spirit mean to you as it relates to the campus as a whole vs. within your classroom? How are they different?

27. How did you create a sense of community during COVID with on-line learning? What are the significant differences between on-line school and in-person school to you? After Covid, what experiences or tactics will you bring with you to in-person school?

28. What aspects of the learning environment encourage you to be more independent and take a leadership role?

29. Does your experience in the learning environment make you feel you are influencing your community? Share an example if you can.

30. What are features of learning environments that evoke feelings of exclusion? Share an example if you can.

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

BUILDING COMMUNITY IN LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Section 1 – The Learning Environment

The goal of this survey is to evaluate what elements of built environment affect student experience. Feel free to use any part of your educational experience as a reference. If you prefer, just refer to your most recent educational environment.

1. Which grade level are you in?
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
 - e. Other
2. How did you get to school?
 - a. By walking
 - b. By bicycle
 - c. By car
 - d. By school bus or public transportation
 - e. Drop off by others
3. Which of the following options do you think make students and faculty feel welcome in the space: (choose all that apply)
 - a. Walkways and spaces are reasonably organized.
 - b. Materials are durable and aesthetically appealing.
 - c. Colors are well designed and arranged.
 - d. Materials and colors helped people find their way around.
 - e. The signs in and around this school are easy to understand.
 - f. Navigating in the school environment, I feel I am treated with respect.
 - g. I have no experience with any of these options.
 - h. I don't feel any of these options are welcoming.

Examples / reasons:

4. Which of the following options do you think affects your ability to learn in the classroom:
(Choose all that apply)
- a. Vibrant and appropriate colors
 - b. Ability to re-arrange the classroom.
 - c. Access to different types and scales of learning spaces (lecture, breakout, lab, maker space).
 - d. Availability of equipment and access to supplies.
 - e. Access to the exterior/windows.
 - f. Access to ancillary spaces (lounges, break rooms, etc.)
 - g. I have no experience with any of these options.
 - h. I don't feel any of these options affect my ability to learn in the classroom.

Anything else? Do you think these apply to teachers/staff as well?

5. Which of the following options encourage you to spend more time in a learning environment?
(Choose all that apply)
- a. There are private and/or quiet spaces to study or relax
 - b. There are a variety of spaces for me to hang out with friends or make new friends.
 - c. Individual storage space/lockers are available and easy to find.
 - d. Restrooms and/or drinking fountains are available, accessible and attractive.
 - e. Eating/food preparation spaces are available and easy to find.
 - f. All facilities/service departments are easily accessible. (Easy to find entrances, reasonable walking distance, adequate waiting area, etc.)
 - g. The school environment gives everyone a sense of belonging.
 - h. None of these apply to my experience.
 - i. I didn't feel any of these encouraged me to stay in the learning environment.

Of your selections, what is the most important to you and why?

6. Do you participate in any group activities? (Choose all that apply)
- a. Class study groups
 - b. Creative groups (theater, band, choir, etc.)

- c. Student cultural clubs
- d. Academic or professional organizations (by department, major, etc.)
- e. Volunteer groups
- f. Student Government
- g. Athletics
- h. Student mentoring
- i. Other
- j. I didn't participate in any group activities.
- k. No group activities were available to me.

Where do these activities take place? How could these locations be improved?

Section 2 - Interior Environment Characteristics

7. Evaluate the level of comfort of your learning environment:

(1 to 5: strongly disagree to strongly agree)

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. The spaces are well illuminated | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. The space is not visually noisy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. The air in the school is fresh and clean. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. The space is not too loud. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. The temperature is comfortable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

8. Which of the items affect your comfort in the learning space? (Choose all that apply)

- a. Materials are durable and aesthetically appealing.
- b. Colors are well-designed and arranged: not too bright or busy, not too bland or dull
- c. Spaces are well-lit: not too dark, not too bright
- d. Spaces have access to day-light.
- e. The space is not too noisy.
- f. The space is not too warm or too cold.
- g. The air is fresh, not stale.
- h. Strong smells do not linger in the space.
- i. Faculty and students have access to personal space.
- j. Faculty and students can control and modify their personal environment.
- k. Spaces have a connection to nature (e.g., plants in-doors, natural materials, etc.)
- l. None of these affect me.
- m. None of these were available to me.

Of your selections above, what are your top 3? What is the most common complaint you hear in spaces you frequent on campus?

Section 3 – Furniture Characteristics

9. Evaluate the furniture in your learning environment.:

(1 to 5: strongly disagree to strongly agree)

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Furniture is comfortable and easy to use. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Furniture is durable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Furniture is easy to reconfigure. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. Furniture meets variable needs:
finishing homework, group discussion,
working on private tasks, rest, etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. Furniture is aesthetically appealing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Which of these furniture options affected your ability to effectively use your learning environment?

- a. Furniture is comfortable
- b. Furniture is durable
- c. Furniture is aesthetically appealing
- d. Individual pieces of furniture can be used in different ways
- e. Furniture can be reconfigured to create different environments.
- f. Furniture is made of sustainable and/or natural
- g. Students have the ability to select different pieces of furniture
- h. None of these apply to furniture in my learning environment
- i. None of these affect my use of learning environment

Of your selections above, what are your top 3? What type of furniture would enhance your experience in the learning environment?

Section 4 – Personal Experiences

Describe your individual experiences in the learning environment. Provide examples when you can.

10. Are you aware of or do you feel school culture/spirit in the areas you frequent on campus? What about those spaces help create a sense of culture/spirit?

11. What does school culture/spirit mean to you as it relates to the campus as a whole vs. within your classroom? How are they different?

12. How did you create a sense of community during COVID with on-line learning? What are the significant differences between on-line school and in-person school to you? After Covid, what experiences or tactics will you bring with you to in-person school?

13. What aspects of the learning environment encourage you to be more independent and take a leadership role?

14. Does your experience in the learning environment make you feel you are influencing your community? Share an example if you can.

15. What are features of learning environments that evoke feelings of exclusion? Share an example if you can.
