



# Virtual Seminar

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## 9 Design Questions that Set the Stage for Creativity

intentional design / inspirational / agile



**Dr. Robert Dillon** has served as a thought leader in education over the last 25 years. He has a passion to change the educational landscape by building excellent engaging schools for all students. He speaks throughout the country and shares his thoughts and ideas in publications. He is the author of six books on intentional design.

The creative economy is one that separates humans from machines. As we design learning opportunities for our students, it is essential that there are elements that support creativity. This includes: instructional, technological and physical space components. The questions below provide school leaders and educators an opportunity to think about the essential ways to set the stage for greater creativity in their schools.

### What do we have to work with?

Every space has natural limitations. It is within these limitations that we can design for students and teachers. As we try to build additional creativity into our learning environment, it is important to recognize and notice the natural limits that are in place. This doesn't mean that they are forever barriers but we are always designing inside of systems and inside of these systems is where we can find some of the best solutions.

### Who will the design impact? Have they played a role in the design process?

Every design project should begin with a recognition that change impacts individuals. All individuals that are impacted should be a part of the design process. Without this participation, the solution is often half-baked and misses the mark for what is truly needed. As you try to design more creative spaces, continue to ask the question: have all voices been included in the process?

### Why does this design blend or contrast with its surroundings?

Every design has a choice. It can blend with past design, or it can contrast the past design. This is an intentional design choice, and in making this choice, you create harmony or dissonance. We often find creativity in dissonance when it is sprinkled into a design appropriately. This can apply to small changes or large-scale changes at a school. Continue to ask: will this element blend or will this element stand out? Whatever the answer is, then ask yourself is this going to support learning and the creative mind?

### **How do we honor and respect what came before us in this space?**

Learning spaces are designed on land that has been cultivated and cared for generations. As a designer, are you considering those that supported this land before the space as it currently exists? This can include people of the First Nations, or it can include the property owner that tended to the land before the school was built. Either way every space should speak to and respect what came before it. In doing so, you capture the power of previous creativity and Infuse it into your space.

### **What beauty is designed into the space?**

Inspiration is a deep part of creativity. Beautiful things inspire us. This can include art, nature and music. It is essential that our schools are filled with this type of art and artifacts. Not every student is surrounded with beauty on a daily basis, but our schools can be this place of beauty. In designing this way, we are bringing the best out of our students and encouraging their creativity, focus and attention to the learning that is upon them.

### **How is nature inspiring or involved in your design?**

Natural elements reduce our stress and anxiety in the workplace and in the learning environment. When we go outside or bring the outside in, it is an opportunity for our brain to rest but also to flourish. It is an opportunity for our creativity to be recharged, and nature also allows us a window into potential solutions that might exist. Nature is telling us the solution to many of our problems if we allow our creativity to lean into them.

### **In what ways does your design support creation?**

So much of learning these days is about consumption. It is about consuming facts and knowledge. It is about consuming from our screens both our smartphones and computers. It is essential that our schools also be places of creation. How does your schedule allow for additional student creation? How does your school make it a priority to showcase students as creators? Making these areas a priority allows for a culture of creation to permeate throughout the school by design.

### **How is your space designed to contribute to the current instruction?**

By designing for creation, it doesn't mean that we aren't designing with the current reality. Instead it means how do we nest our current instructional practices with additional opportunities for creation. Often this is about allowing students to showcase their work in new, exciting and relevant ways. Continue to look for ways to link your instructional model to your aspiration for students to be creative.

### **Is our design flexible enough to be something else?**

Even the best designs evolve. So often we are designing for a single solution, and we don't think about what our design might be in the future. It is important in an age of sustainability that we not only design for current problems, but ask ourselves if the solutions that we are bringing to the table are flexible and agile enough to solve the next resource puzzle.

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## learning objectives

- Rethink the changing landscape of community engagement process.
- Consider the future of space as way to support teacher effectiveness.
- Support the thinking on how to help schools change practices through design.
- Develop new mindset on partnering around instructional design.



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