

**Building Excellence – Linking the Curriculum for Excellence to the Design of Learning Environments**  
**Kenn Fisher: Presentation to the Scottish Government, May, 2007**  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/920/0050809.pdf>

**Curriculum for Excellence**

Fisher's *Aspirational Agenda* defines what he means by *Curriculum for Excellence* in ways which are very similar to those articulated in our own national setting (NZ Curriculum, 2007) and local context (WSC Charter). See [page 3](#).

He identifies the competencies of *successful learners* (page 4), the attributes of *confident individuals* (page 5), the characteristics of *effective contributors* (page 6), and the qualities of *responsible citizens* (page 7) in language which closely resembles the Vision and the Key Competencies of the NZC. See [pages 4-7](#).

These aspects of personal and social development are presented as drawing together the different areas of the curriculum into a coherent whole expressed in the ethos and life of the school as a community and also in the form of interdisciplinary projects and studies. See [page 8](#).

**Aligning Pedagogy and Space**

Retaining a focus on the competencies, Fisher begins to identify the spatial implications of the key features of learning in the Expressive Arts and Mathematics. See [pages 9-11](#).

He starts to explore the links between pedagogy and space by identifying a hierarchy of effective learning methods. See [page 12](#).

These references differentiate between active (experiential) learning and passive learning, pointing to the former as the source of *deep and meaningful learning*. See [pages 13-14](#).

Fisher emphasises the need for planning which takes account of the importance of staff professional development achieved through collaboration with colleagues and team teaching. See [page 15](#).

He stresses the need for a balance of explicit teaching and independent learning, and pinpoints the key pedagogical approaches which distinguish the *teacher as facilitator* and *learner-centered approaches*. See [pages 16-18](#).

Here Fisher differentiates between the physical attributes of the traditional classroom and the modern learning studio. See [page 19](#).

Fisher cites the characteristics which identify the digital natives of the Net Generation (page 20), and links their traits to principles of learning, learning space features and IT applications (page 21). See [pages 20-24](#).

Links between pedagogies and spaces are illustrated by showing how spatial configurations and settings change to match different teaching and learning approaches (pages 26-27). A matrix provides space or venue descriptors which follow continuums for both independent and collaborative learning (page 28). A range of (11) learning settings is depicted centred on a *student home base* (page 29). *Clusters* (page 32) illustrates the concept of clustering various learning settings around a common learning hub. See [pages 26-33](#).

### **Designs for Flexible Learning**

Fisher distinguishes between reflective, creative and interactive activity zones (page 35). He identifies the needs for belonging, exploring, retreating and sharing as equally valid learning modalities (page 36) which apply to varying degrees according to the age of students (pages 38, 41 & 44). In this section on primary schooling (pages 37-52) he applies these zones to floor layout (pages 47-48), also raising the use of space dividers as opposed to walls (page 49). Towards the end of this section (pages 50-52) he invites us to consider the inside/outside dynamic as part of the flexibility equation.

Middle school (Years 5-8) planning and layouts are covered on pages 53 & 54.

The Australian Science and Maths School (Years 10-12) on Flinders University campus in Adelaide is given case study treatment on pages 55-61. Fisher indicates again how pedagogical approaches drive the design of the facilities. The ASMS planning layout integrates nine learning settings .

The remaining pages illustrate technology enabled active learning (page 62) and flexible learning centres (pages 63-65) which allow a variety of settings and pedagogies to take place within one space. The final principle informing the design of the MediaLab (page 66) is: *Keep it simple and flexible, and design around people, not technology.*

Ken Havill