

Modernizing the Library Facility: Parkside Elementary

Transitioning school libraries into 21st century libraries is essential in preparing students for a more complex life and work environment. Students need a space to promote creativity, communication with peers, critical thinking skills and a safe environment for collaboration and exploration. The library at Parkside Elementary in Georgetown, Texas was established ten years ago and just missed out on this wave of change that is sweeping the educational system. In order to keep up with current trends, the library was evaluated for simple changes that could be made to update the library for its 1200 patrons. It is important to note that the campus was originally built to hold a maximum of 800 students and now far exceeds that amount with no addition to the library facility.

Parkside library is a large, open space with roughly 2000 square feet of usable space. The library contains a main room, AV storage, media room, and a multipurpose room that is currently being used as the librarian's office, workroom and also stores the teacher materials. There are very large windows on three sides of the library providing an excellent source of natural light and allows for natural integration into the school ambiance. The library is situated at the front of the school right when you walk in and just off the main corridor. The drop ceiling creates visual interest for the room. There is also an AV screen mounted to ceiling and a white board for teacher use.

One of the current perks of the library is that there is a clear line of sight from pretty much every angle in the room. I would suggest moving the circulation desk to make

more room for small group tables and a Maker's Space. The circulation desk itself needs to be reconfigured to include a drop box in between the two work stations so that two people can be processing books when they are dropped.

The library has beautiful floor to ceiling windows along the west wall that provide amazing natural light to the room. However when it needs to be darkened, the current metal blinds on the windows are hard to use and are very noisy. I would suggest replacing them with solar shades that can easily (and quietly) be rolled up and down. They also provide natural light but filter the damaging effects of the sun's rays on the books.

Creating an independent learner and thinker is a key goal of 21st Century classrooms. To facilitate this, the library shelving also could be color coded by section. Colored end labels (perhaps painter's tape) need to be easy to see, replace and reconfigure. An increase in visible signage with graphics would also increase the independence of patrons. Shelf end labels need to be bold and clearly designate what is on the entire stack. More specific labels can be added to the popular sections so that students can find the books easily. Labeling should have the graphic, name, and call letters for the topic.

Technology access in the library is completely sufficient. Students have access to laptops and reliable Wi-Fi. There are also numerous outlets near tables or study carrels

to recharge. The space could use an interactive whiteboard and possibly a smaller, moveable AV screen that could be used in the pop-up classroom or maker's spaces.

A primary focus of the library is to fully utilize the space in a way that allows for different types of learning to happen simultaneously; large group, small group and independent. The current bookcases, tables, and chairs in the space are bulky, heavy and hard to move. Ideally, all of this furniture would have casters so that the furniture could be easily moved to create new workspaces and even temporary "rooms" or spaces with the bookcases. The current bookcases(wooden, 3'x3' double sided) could be repurposed by adding heavy duty casters that would also allow for the space to be repurposed easily for guest presenters and high traffic events like book fair.

Creating safe spaces for children to learn and explore is necessary for the library to transition into a 21st century classroom. The current large group story area is not big enough for an entire class to sit in the space. This results in behavior issues erupting due to not enough personal space or ability to see. An elevated story well could be added to create additional seating and a "classroom in a classroom" feel. The back side of the well could be bookshelves. I would suggest placing the easy reader fiction on the back of the well and also moving the easy fiction collection closer to the story well to make it easier for the librarian to help younger patrons and coordinate activities at the circulation desk.

Effective collaboration skills are necessary for 21st century learners. Students must be able to work in diversified groups with minimal teacher supervision. Small group learning space (watering hole) is a must for the library. Kite tables would be lighter and easier to move into adaptable table sizes. The space would also benefit from moveable partitions and white or smart boards to create mini-classrooms. Cheese-hole partitions allow for some privacy but not total seclusion so the librarian can see that students are on task.

Independent space (cave) can easily be added with a series of comfy chairs and study carrels. Patrons come to the library for different reasons and sometimes need to step away from life and escape into a book. Once the bookcases are on wheels, it will be easy to make space that is out of the way for patrons. At any point, mirrors can be added to any blind spots created by moving furniture so that the librarian has a clear view of what is going on in the library.

One of the big pushes by the American Libraries Association is the “Libraries Transform” campaign. Librarians are encouraged to have dedicated learning labs or “maker’s space” in the library. There is a section of the library that is historically underutilized between the circulation desk and the AV storage. This space currently has a few stagnant book cases and can be repurposed. Due to space constrictions, a key requirement here would include maker’s space tables that have storage underneath and stools rather than chairs so students can sit closer or stand while they work. A Lego wall would be an excellent contribution to the space and definitely encourage patrons to visit the library outside of their scheduled times.

The library lacks space for general communication and displaying student work. Other than the tops of bookcases, there is no dedicated space. Wall space is limited because of the enormous windows on three sides of the room. Bulletin boards on wheels could be added to make announcements. Display areas could be incorporated into the circulation desk area and limited wall space available. New display cases could also be mounted on outside walls to entice students to come in and see what's going on inside. Display cases could feature upcoming events, new books or an author spotlight. The color scheme of the library is dated and could use a contemporary color palette. Walls are currently taupe, the carpet is dark blue and the furnishings are all brown wood. Seat cushions are a maroon red color. I would suggest brightening up the walls with a light gray, soft turquoise and lemon accent colors. Pops of color could be added with lime green and orange accents or furniture to create an updated look. These colors are gender neutral and would add to the light-filled feeling of the classroom.

Overall, the Parkside Elementary library is primed for a smooth transition to becoming a 21st century learner space. Changes would need to be prioritized by need and budget. Easy fixes could make the space more flexible however most items will require money, time and could interfere with the library's accessibility during the school year. However some items could happen with very little budget and minimal downtime like relabeling sections and moving furniture around for better flow. In the long run, all of the proposed changes will benefit the entire school community and make the library a hub for diversified learning.

Problem	Solution	Visual
Circulation Desk drop box is only accessible by one station.	Reconfigure desk where the drop box is in the middle of the two work stations allowing for greater ease in access for processing.	
Windows have noisy/dated blinds that are difficult to manipulate.	The library has floor to ceiling windows along the West wall. In order to use the afternoon light and block the morning harsh light, solar shades would replace existing miniblinds that are easier to clean, less noisy and easier to use.	
General Shelving	The current shelving is in excellent condition. One of the biggest problems with the shelving is that it is HEAVY and hard to move. We would put appropriate casters on the existing 3x3 bookcases to make them easier to move and create new spaces in the library. Having moveable shelving also allows for the library to be used for special events when more space is needed like author's visits and book	

	fair. Shelving also needs to be color coded by section for students to become a little more independent in the library. The colored end labels (painter tape?) need to be easy to reconfigure. I.e./red-fiction, green-easy, blue-nonfiction, purple-biography.																									
Entrance/Exit	The lights automatically come on when you enter the room. There is a fire exit in the NW corner. The main entrance has a set of double doors that open out with kickstands to prop them open.																									
Shelving-Non Fiction	Currently the non-fiction is housed in four large bookcases. I would propose reshelving all of the non-fiction to the perimeter wall shelving(yellow) and labeling the sections with descriptions including graphics.	 <table><tr><td>Fairy Tales 3q8.2</td><td>Dinosaurs 567.9</td><td>Money 332.4</td><td>World Records 031.02</td><td>Egypt q32</td></tr><tr><td>Snakes 597.9</td><td>Drawing 743</td><td>Astronomy 520</td><td>Frogs 597.8</td><td>Magic Tricks 7q3.8</td></tr></table>	Fairy Tales 3q8.2	Dinosaurs 567.9	Money 332.4	World Records 031.02	Egypt q32	Snakes 597.9	Drawing 743	Astronomy 520	Frogs 597.8	Magic Tricks 7q3.8														
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Shelving Easy Fiction	Currently the easy reader section is furthest from the circulation desk. If it were moved closer towards the circulation desk, this would allow the librarian to better see the students and move back and forth easily. Easy to read/understand/move end and author/character labels and interior labels would be added/updated.	 <table><tr><td>Franklin the turtle</td><td>Clifford the big red dog</td><td>Alphabet abc books</td></tr><tr><td>Froggy</td><td>Dr. Seuss theodor seuss geisel</td><td>Magic School Bus</td></tr><tr><td>The Berenstain Bears</td><td>Maisy numbers, shapes, colors, etc.</td><td>Disney books</td></tr><tr><td>Little Critter</td><td>Math numbers, shapes, colors, etc.</td><td>Cartoon Network</td></tr><tr><td>Cartoon Network</td><td>Fancy Nancy</td><td>Nickelodeon, PBS Kids and more</td></tr><tr><td>People</td><td>Thomas the tank engine</td><td>Robert Munsch books</td></tr><tr><td>David Shannon books</td><td>Animals</td><td>Thomas the tank engine</td></tr><tr><td>Fairy Tales and other folklore</td><td>ABC Song Books</td><td></td></tr></table>	Franklin the turtle	Clifford the big red dog	Alphabet abc books	Froggy	Dr. Seuss theodor seuss geisel	Magic School Bus	The Berenstain Bears	Maisy numbers, shapes, colors, etc.	Disney books	Little Critter	Math numbers, shapes, colors, etc.	Cartoon Network	Cartoon Network	Fancy Nancy	Nickelodeon, PBS Kids and more	People	Thomas the tank engine	Robert Munsch books	David Shannon books	Animals	Thomas the tank engine	Fairy Tales and other folklore	ABC Song Books	
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Campfire: Story Well w/bookshelf back	The current story space is not large enough for the 30+ students that come in during class each hour. Not having a dedicated “space on the rug” causes behavior issues during story time/presentations. This seating arrangement does create a small blind spot in the library that can easily be remedied with mirrors being placed strategically.	
Moveable Walls	The library is currently one, wide open space. Moveable walls would allow teachers to use just a portion of the library for class while other activities happen simultaneously. I like the peep holes in this version so you can still keep an eye on students.	
Watering Hole: Kite/Moveable Tables	The current library tables are incredibly heavy and hard to move around to configure. The chairs are bulky and heavy. Moveable tables with casters would make it much easier to reconfigure workspace and lighter chairs would be easier for kids to move and stack.	
Maker Space with under the table storage.	The library current lacks a dedicated Maker's Space. Tables with stools and built in storage would be perfect for the current space that is kind of a “dead space” right now between the circulation desk and the fiction section.	

MakerSpace Lego Wall	A Lego wall would be an excellent addition to the library and would encourage more students to visit outside of their class visits. Students could build, explore and connect with new friends in this creative social space.	
Updated color scheme	I really like the non-gender blends of aqua and soft lemon yellow with pops of orange and lime green for contrast.	
Moveable white board/bulletin board	The library currently does not have a bulletin board or place to write messages to visitors. A moveable board would allow for greater communication.	
Cave/Independent Space	Comfortable pod style furniture where students can be alone with their studies/reading. Furniture can also be pulled together for more of a group/campfire setting as needed.	