



# Levittown LEADER

## STUDENTS REAP BENEFITS OF Nontraditional Classroom Designs

Each student has a unique learning style, so why should every learning environment be the same? Teachers throughout the district have embraced innovative classroom designs and flexible seating options to meet the needs of all learners while encouraging collaboration, increasing student concentration and incorporating kinesthetic learning.

In the past, classrooms were all set up the same way – rows of individual desks facing a chalkboard. Through research, educators found that students who feel the need to move do better academically with kinesthetic classroom furniture. Many of the elementary schools have incorporated an array of seating options fit for learners who need this extra boost. This includes housing wobble stools, bucket seats, minion chairs, rocking chairs and a seated strider desk, to name a few, in select

classrooms. While students are exercising their bodies they are exercising their brains, increasing focus and concentration.

Adding new furniture to a classroom does not define the success of a student, though. Teachers are key to ensuring that students are learning properly and must feel comfortable with this classroom change. Many teachers are embracing the new furniture by shifting towards more flexible instruction, allowing students to move and explore their learning preferences. Students can see what helps them learn best, preparing them for life outside of the classroom where learning does not only take place at a desk.

Some teachers have taken a creative approach to bringing flexible seating into their classrooms, such as creating Do It Yourself crate seats with cushions and fabric ties for sensory purposes. Bean bag chairs, floor cushions, couches and reading nooks with pillows are also giving students the freedom to focus on lessons without the rigidity of a solid chair.

With new furniture options available for students, desks may seem obsolete, but this is far from the case. Many classrooms still feature desks but schools are now beginning to add standing desks, high-top tables, low tables, portable desks and whiteboard desks into the mix. Whiteboard desks allow students to sort their ideas by writing on the desk itself and are large enough to fit multiple students so collaboration can flourish.

A more student-centered approach is taken when exploring classroom



*(L-R) East Broadway kindergartners Gabriella Popolizio, Cole Holland and Emma Cantwell worked comfortably while sitting on DIY crate seats.*

design. Many classrooms have desks situated together to form a table, or desks are eliminated and replaced with tables. This design boosts peer-to-peer collaboration and better utilizes classroom space.

MacArthur High School math teacher Joanna Stanford eliminated desks and incorporated large round tables into her math classroom. This spread to other math classes at MacArthur and Division Avenue High School, transforming a traditional math classroom into a community.

The district understands that students learn best when they are comfortable. As nontraditional classroom design and flexible seating grows throughout the schools, students will better understand their individual learning styles and have the tools to succeed both now and in the future.

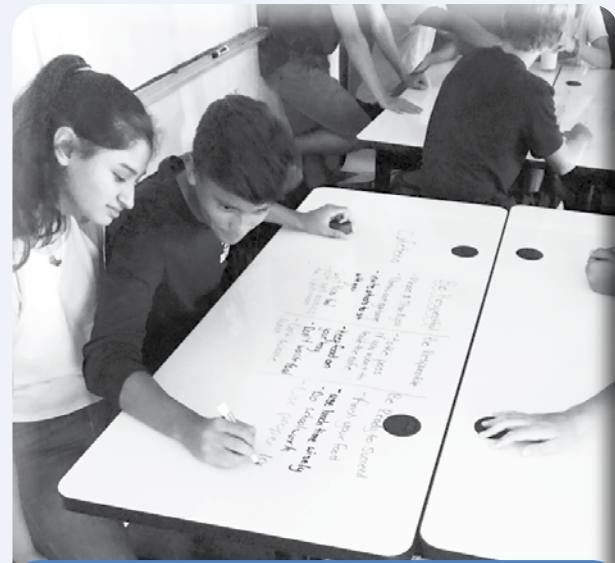


*Abbey Lane Elementary School fourth-grader Sophia Maldonado did her classwork while pedaling on the strider desk.*



# FLEXIBLE Learning

From elementary to high school, flexible furniture and nontraditional classroom design have taken shape throughout the district. The idea that students learn best when they are comfortable is evident, as students reflect on how their new classroom environment has served a positive role in their ability to learn.



Division Avenue High School students shared their ideas on the whiteboard desk.

**"I like the whiteboard tables because you can do your work right on them, and the teachers like it because you don't have to waste paper."**  
 – Northside Elementary School fifth-grader Ava Hunt

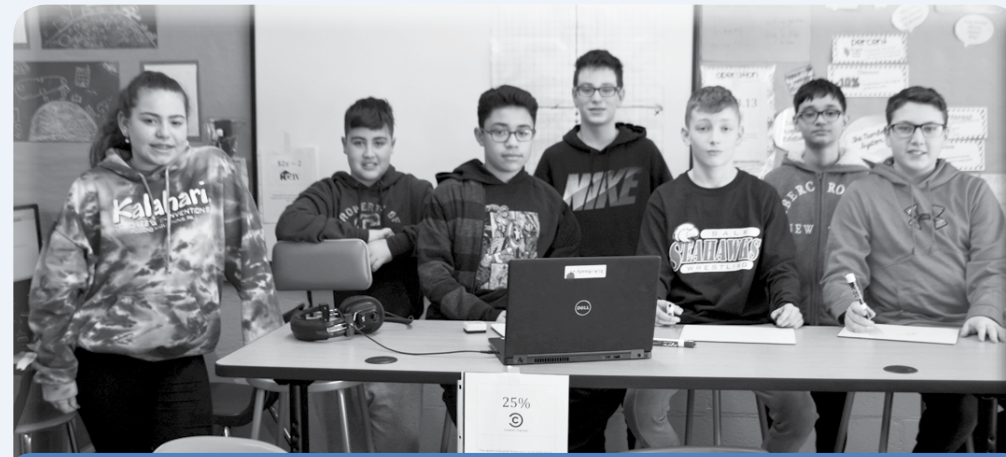
(L-R) Gardiners Avenue second-graders Muhammad Muzaffar, Gregory Nurick and James Duryea gathered in their reading corner filled with comfortable seating options.



**"The pedal desk helps me work harder in class so I can get more things done at a time. It's my favorite."**  
 – Abbey Lane Elementary School fourth-grader Sophia Maldonado



Northside Elementary School fifth-grader Josh Rodriguez reads in the comfortable reading nook in the back of his classroom. Cubbies were previously stationed here.



Jonas E. Salk Middle School students at a four-person, high-top desk.

**"The furniture makes me really comfortable and it makes me really focus."**  
 – Gardiners Avenue Elementary School second-grader Holly Zolla

**"I am a huge fan of the round tables. It makes math, a subject I have found to be overall cold, unforgiving and unfriendly, a more positive experience. I have been able to make new friends this quarter. I like that if I need help, my table partners can explain the work in a different way that may be better suited for my understanding."**  
 – MacArthur High School senior Valerie Pitts

MacArthur High School math teacher Joanna Stanford's class features seven large round tables where students can work together.



**"I like the floor cushions because they are really comfortable. We use them for math and reading groups and I feel like they are way better than the regular seats. They are more comfortable and let you move."**  
 – East Broadway Elementary School third-grader Caden Triolo

Lee Road Elementary School fifth-graders stretched out their legs while completing their work at a high-top standing desk.





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Drama club members at Summit Lane Elementary School performed Disney's "The Jungle Book KIDS" for the school community to enjoy.



SkillsUSA members at Gerald R. Claps Career and Technical Center raised more than \$250 and collected 215 winter items to donate to a nearby shelter during their first Head and Toes Valentine's Day fundraiser.



Wisdom Lane seventh-grader Chris Gordon practiced his golf skills during The First Tee of Nassau County's visit.

# School Snapshots

- MacArthur High School senior Kimberly Mestizo had her scientific research on protein crystallization, which she researched with her team at Brookhaven National Laboratory, published in the journal Crystals.
- Science Olympiad members from Division Avenue High School earned medals in 16 of 23 events during the Nassau East Regional Science Olympiad Tournament and qualified for the Science Olympiad C Division State Tournament for the 11th consecutive year.
- Gerald R. Claps Career and Technical Center students participated in the school's annual student competition. Students demonstrated their acquired skills, ranging from cosmetology to construction, for attendees including potential employers and colleges.
- The MacArthur High School varsity cheerleading team made

- school history as the Nassau County Champions in the Division I small school category and third place winners at the Universal Cheerleaders Association National Competition.
- Physics Olympics teams from Division Avenue High School and MacArthur High School won first and second place, respectively, at the Long Island Physics Teachers Association's 2019 Physics Olympics competition.
- Science Olympiad teams from Jonas E. Salk and Wisdom Lane middle schools competed at the Western Long Island Division B Regionals and qualified for the New York State Science Olympiad Tournament.
- Jonas E. Salk Middle School English as a new language students celebrated International Day by sharing their country of origin with their peers. The students set up booths filled with

information about their cultures, facts about their country and more.

- Students at Wisdom Lane Middle School participated in a golf unit hosted by The First Tee of Nassau County during their physical education classes. Representatives from The First Tee of Nassau County, spoke to students about important life skills and the game of golf.
- East Broadway Elementary School fourth-grader Logan Rodriguez, Abbey Lane Elementary School fifth-grader Nish Keer, Jonas E. Salk Middle School sixth-grader Meghan Lazzarini and Wisdom Lane Middle School seventh-grader Alex Gao qualified for the Long Island Regional Spelling Bee. Alex finished 6th in Nassau County.
- Third-graders at Gardiners Avenue Elementary School in Mr. Bencivenga's class learned about American signs and symbols with a virtual trip to the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.
- Abbey Lane Elementary School first-graders in Ms. Connor's and Mrs. Kaufman's classes and fifth-

graders in Mr. Schwartz's and Ms. Seo's classes presented their collaborative biography projects to family members. The students worked together in small groups to research and create a project about a famous individual.

- Northside Elementary School students learned about energy conservation with the PSEG Long Island-sponsored production of "The Conservation Caper."
- Members of the Summit Lane Elementary School Drama Club performed their musical production of Disney's "Jungle Book KIDS" for students and family members.
- East Broadway Elementary School student council members read to kindergarten, first- and second-grade classes in honor of Dr. Seuss' birthday and Read Across America Day.
- Lee Road Elementary School students donated 12 cartons of gently used books to The Book Fairies, a charity organization which donates books to high-poverty schools and organizations across Long Island and metropolitan New York.

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