

## 'My brain is in my bum'

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It is funny, but the most powerful statement I have ever heard about Innovative learning spaces was from a year 8 boy at an intermediate school, who, when I asked why he was standing to do his maths, told me, "For reading, I like to sit, but when I do maths, it is like my brain is in my bum, and when I sit on my brain I cannot do my maths".

I have been lucky enough to experience a number of new innovative learning environment's over the last few months. It was great to see the Cultural Aspect of [CORE Education's five areas of change](#) reflected continually in the development of these spaces. This cultural aspect was evident in how these teachers and learners set the purpose and expectations for the learning areas and culture within the learning space. This was done through a number of activities and exercises to develop a collaborative culture that would ensure student engagement, wellbeing, and achievement was high.



The activities involved working with the learners to name the spaces, define and describe the space, and set the expectations and behaviours for the area. A great example of this and one of the Seven Principles of Learning from the OECD [1](#) is in the [Year 7/8 Toroa hub at Marshland School](#).

The first principle — Learners at the Centre: "The learning environment recognises the learners as its core participants, encourages their active engagement and develops in them an understanding of their own activity as learners" — is reflected in the example from Marshland School.

# Dream Boxes

## PURPOSE:

Dream Boxes are designed for small groups or individuals to relax, reflect and learn.

## LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:

Dream Boxes are positioned along the East side of the hub. Each Dream Box is brightly coloured with soft cushioning provided for learners. Ample light and idyllic views provides the learner with a sense of serenity.

## EXPECTATIONS: This is where we

- Collaborate on learning tasks
- Have a maximum of 4 within each box
- Noise at a **medium** level

[Dream Boxes](#) by the Toroa Hub teachers and year 7/8 students

Other activities involved thinking about another one of the Seven Principles — The Social Nature of Learning: “The learning environment is founded on the social nature of learning and actively encourages well organised, cooperative learning”. This involved setting up a collaborative culture within the class by focussing on building relationships and trust through a series of activities and experiences. The outcome was learners who are able to socialise and work with one another in the space.

I have been reflecting on my own learning, and have begun to recognise the way I learn over only the last few years. Before that, I learnt the way I was told, often sitting, and with large amounts of reading, and very little doing.

I have decided that “my brain is also in my bum” for aspects of my learning. So, starting working for CORE Education really opened my eyes to how I learn, and also gave me the confidence to learn the way I need to. For me, this involves a lot of standing and wiggling, watching videos, or listening to text-to-speech, or talking with colleagues to clarify and reflect on my thinking.

I wonder what opportunities we give our students to discover how they learn? I am amazed at how many teenagers and adults I talk to cannot verbalise how they learn. I am not talking about learning styles, but rather, knowing when, where, and how they learn best. For example, a friend of mine is studying at the moment, and he has recognised that after lunch his learning is impeded if he sits down, so his solution is to work standing up at the kitchen counter.

A great part of my personal discovery of how I learn was creating myself a modified Learner Profile, recording how I learn best and least. I got the idea of a [learner profile](#) from the [Inclusive Education TKI Website](#). These are some sub headings use in the learner profile:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About me</li> <li>• I learn least ...</li> <li>• I work best...</li> <li>• Instead of... can I...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who am I</li> <li>• School is ...</li> <li>• When I am grumpy...</li> <li>• My support is...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I learn best ...</li> <li>• When I need help...</li> <li>• I get frustrated...</li> </ul>
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Some possible subheadings for a learner profile focussing on learning and space could be:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The space I choose to learn in at home is...</li> <li>• When I need to relax I...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My favourite place in the room is... because</li> <li>• I feel sleepy at...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I organise myself by...</li> <li>• I am most awake...</li> </ul>
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We have all these new learning spaces available to our learners. However, do we need to be teaching them how to recognise how they learn and where they learn best, or is this something the learners will discover for themselves?

How will students who have been in siloed classes for part or all of their schooling adapt to the new learning spaces if they are unsure of how they learn?

### Links:

- Learner Profile example: [Rachel, a Year 10 student – created by student, Rachel for her teacher](#)
- [Breaking the ruler: Melbourne school lets students choose when to learn, what to study](#)
- [The Nature of Learning — Seven Principles of Learning](#)
- [7 Essential Principles of Innovative Learning](#) — By [Katrina Schwartz](#)

Image source :

[Standing Desk by Lyndsey McGuinniety — South Hornby School — Senior School Teachers.](#)

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1 The Seven Principles come from the document — [The Nature of Learning](#) — Using Research to Inspire Practice. These principles were identified from analysis of research on Learning Sciences and categorised into concrete traits that help educators create Innovative Learning Spaces.



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