

Mode 3 – a strategy for the future

Claire Jeffrey discusses Civic Australia's Mode 3 approach to creating flexible learning areas

First there was Mode 1, a formal classroom structure with neatly arranged tables and chairs; it catered for an on-task approach with very limited allowance for social interaction and collaboration.

Mode 2 was an extension of Mode 1. With more flexibility, it incorporated a trans-disciplinary structure that included a break out area, usually at the back of the classroom where students could work collaboratively.

And Mode 3? It's a complete break away from the conventional... a flexible learning area that houses the *campfire* of concave ottomans to promote student discussion and teamwork, the *waterhole* for refreshments and informal conversation, the *mountain top* for teacher consultation and the *cave* for quiet, concentrated learning. This structure promotes a network of empowered brains that are free to explore.

Students are naturally creative. Compare the imagination of a five-year-old to a 50-year-old. The growing child's brain has the capacity to reach nearly 10 times the level of imaginative thinking. By building an environment that encourages each child's ingenuity, schools can inspire students to use their creativity to learn and develop.

Claire Jeffrey says: "For more than 10 years we have worked with schools, collaborating to align pedagogy and space through a combination of furniture and furnishings. We have found that the Mode 3 approach for classroom design is definitely the way of the future.

"The great benefit of Mode 3 is that it can be interpreted in different ways for each school. Of course it's all about providing the best for the student's growth and development but it also about choosing the shapes, the fabrics, the colours ... and everything in between to complete the Mode 3 learning area.

"Vibrant hues, diverse textures and styles that are specific to the school environment are becoming a popular trend, there is a greater focus on furniture that is custom-made with the school's choice of fabrics and finishes instead of off-the-shelf furniture."

Educational fit-out consultant Ben Rowland adds: "When I work with schools, I try to capture their vision and then put that vision on paper. It's a real exhilarating feeling for me to be able to translate the vision into a



3D life-like drawing and present it to the school – working through this process cements the foundations for the project."

Lourdes Hill College in Brisbane is a recent example of a school that has taken the Mode 3 approach. The school's Senior Hub endorses an interpersonal, self-directed mode of learning that stands apart from teacher-directed whole-group instruction.

Located in the centre of the Senior Building, the hub was conceived as a place for Years 10–12 students to hang out between lessons. It is an established principle at the College that senior students need to achieve a balance of socialising and learning in order to acquire the fundamental skills required for the future. The Mode 3 area covers more than 150 sqm and offers an array of modular seating, ottomans and small collaborative tables, all close to the creature comforts that a kitchenette provides.

"Our team members grew up in Mode 1 / 2 learning modes and we want our children to have the creativity opportunity of Mode 3 learning," Claire Jeffrey says.

"We are continually brainstorming new ideas to make the Mode 3 concept even better. The students of today and tomorrow deserve it... It's the ideal environment in which to develop independence, learn to be self-sufficient and find that work-life balance."

Wakakirri celebrates biggest ever Story Dance competition

Adam Loxley CEO of Wakakirri says that he is delighted with the response to this year's Story Dance competition. More than 35 secondary schools joined 250 primary schools to make 2015 the biggest season since it was launched in 1992 and by far the largest performing arts event for schools; Wakakirri now involves over 20,000 students in every state and territory.

A Wakakirri Story Dance is a three- to seven-minute performance by a group of students that tell a story using a combination of dancing, acting and creative movement to pre-recorded music.

"The quality of the secondary schools' performances was amazing... stories included mental health, social media and immigration policy, some were very powerful," Loxley said. "We have only been doing secondary schools



for the last three years and we experienced something special this year, many of the stories were very moving and made people stop and think about the issues."

He is anticipating an even bigger season next

year. Entries will open this month and close in April. The emphasis will be on the Artist in Residence program which was launched on a trial basis this year and proved to be very popular. The program provides talented choreographers to visit schools for up to 12 weeks and work with the teachers and students to get their Story Dance up and running.

"Justine Clarke and James Elmer are two of the National Panel members that will be running workshops. Having this level of talent available to help next year is great for schools wanting to be in Wakakirri but don't have the dance and drama skills on staff," Loxley said.

"We have had a lot of interest from South Australia and Western Australia already so we're expecting to see many new schools enter."

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