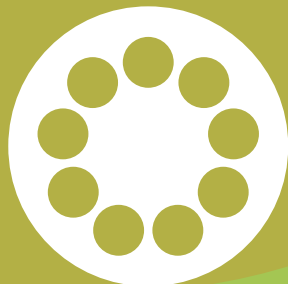


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IRE** ISTITUTO  
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RICERCA EDUCATIVA



# LEARNING SPACES <sup>1+4</sup>

1+4 LEARNING SPACES FOR A NEW GENERATION OF SCHOOLS IN ITALY



# LEARNING SPACES <sup>1+4</sup>

## “WHAT IS AN EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE STUDENTS OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM?”

The findings of INDIRE’s research on that topic can be expressed with the formula 1+4 learning spaces for schools of the new millennium.

“**1**” stands for the former classroom, now a modern learning environment that is open to the rest of the school and to the world. “**4**” stands for the four school’s main types of spaces: Agorà, Individual area, Informal area, Exploration lab.

The school as a whole is a learning landscape enabling different types of activities where flexible settings and network technologies are available.

The **learning space** model is based on multiple theoretical levels which are focused on different nested strands of the learning context (Brofenbrenner, 1989). The school is not regarded as the sum of classrooms (Airoldi, 1978) but as a place that includes the teaching dimension, the social context and the social relationships (Leemans e von Ahlefeld, 2013, Lefebvre, 1991).

### Four different lines of investigation:

- » identification of case studies at European level;
- » analysis of educational policies that foster innovative learning spaces;
- » in depth study of technical guidelines in different countries in the school building sector;
- » review of literature in this field.

The **research methodology** includes: desk research, comparative analysis of the international technical specifications, observation visits to innovative European and Italian schools, semi-structured interviews to architects, pedagogists, head-teachers, teachers, students, parents



### EXPLORATION LAB

- \* **SYMBOLIC VALUE:** Exploration and discovery zone.
- Σ **FUNCTIONAL VALUE:** The spaces need to have the kind of richness that different disciplines themselves possess. Dedicated tools and resources to observe, experience, explore, experiment.

### INDIVIDUAL AREA

- \* **SYMBOLIC VALUE:** Individual insight area to concentrate, read, reflect.
- Σ **FUNCTIONAL VALUE:** A quiet zone to catch up on work, study, read, write, take a test, or reflect and can offer pods, caves, reserved zones with reading/writing tools.



### GROUP LEARNING SPACE

- \* **SYMBOLIC VALUE:** Place where students build and maintain their identity.
- Σ **FUNCTIONAL VALUE:** Group area that enables multiple flexible settings and solutions to meet the needs of different types of learning activities.

**CREATE:** Learning setting for the design and creation of artifacts or multimedia objects. The learning group area becomes a modern atelier where students can express their creativity.  
**PRACTICE:** Setting for individual activities: reading, listening, testing, evaluation, exercise. Traditional one-to-all classroom configuration where students are involved individually.  
**PRESENT:** Setting for the presentation of individual or group works. One-to-many corner for demonstration or exhibition to the whole class group.  
**COLLABORATE:** Setting for collaboration. Flexible group work desk islands possibly equipped with mobile devices and network connection.  
**BRAINSTORM:** Setting for communication, interaction and generation of new ideas. The whole classroom should be able to sit around a big table and discuss face-to-face around shared themes.

### INFORMAL AREA

- \* **SYMBOLIC VALUE:** Area for relax and informal meetings.
- Σ **FUNCTIONAL VALUE:** Soft seats and comfort zones for breaks encourage individual reflection, informal discussion or social activity for small groups.



### AGORÀ

- \* **SYMBOLIC VALUE:** Space for the whole school community.
- Σ **FUNCTIONAL VALUE:** Students can work towards common goals. It creates occasion to discuss what was learned, make connections, pose questions, present other perspectives, and engage in reflection.



“Instead of offering the conventional, anonymous, box-type classroom solution, they deliberately broke up the space into a number of linked learning areas, each with a special function and character which positively invited a particular activity.”

*(Eric Pearson, 1972)*

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In 2013 the Italian Ministry of Education has set up a working group in order to draw a new framework for the building of new schools at national level. INDIRE research team had the aim to provide a new vision of the schools spatial organization based on the outcomes of educational research and on the analysis of best practices in Europe. The necessity to analyze the relation between space organization and pedagogy emerged in Italy for three main reasons: the raise of innovative student centered pedagogies, the shift of focus on learning outcomes from knowledge to competencies and the widespread of devices and digital contents in classroom. The above elements required a deeper analysis of the role of the learning environment considering the space as a “third teacher” (Malaguzzi, 1992) within an ecologic-systemic approach (Brofenbrenner, 1989).

The research results promote a new vision of the school and the learning environment. The classroom should be designed as a multipurpose space, where a students can work and play and the learning space should become a learning landscape (Weyland, Attia, 2015), a place where formal and informal learning come together to focus on individual and concentration dimension.

#### **Technological Area**

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#### **The Institute**

INDIRE - Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione, Innovazione e Ricerca Educativa (National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research) is the oldest research institute of the Italian Ministry of Education. It was founded in 1925 as a National Educational Exhibition with the aim of collecting and exploiting school activities of that period. Over the years, it has always accompanied the evolution of the Italian school system. Today, the Institute is the reference point for educational research. INDIRE promotes school innovation processes: developing new teaching models, testing the use of ICT in education and training, redefining the relationship between space and time in learning and teaching.