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Student Choice and Alternate Work Spaces

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Research Question

- How can **student choice** impact emotional and behavioral **engagement** at alternate work spaces?

Literature Review

- Braniff (2011) states that students were more attentive when they were able to move around the classroom.
- Student choice and fluid seating can have positive effects on student learning, such as students being able to use class time efficiently and effectively (Kilbourne, Scott-Webber, & Kapitula, 2017).
- Bicard, Ervin, Bicard, and Baylot-Casey (2012) found that students were twice as likely to show disruptive behaviors when they selected their own seats.
- Seating arrangements that promote interactive and discussion-style learning can increase on-task behavior (Rosenfield, Lambert, & Black, 1985).
- In the study by Hastings and Schweiso (1995) they discovered that it was easier for students to stay on-task with their individual morning assignment when their desks were placed in rows, however, most of the students preferred the group style seating arrangement.

Methodology

- The participants in this study included 22 fourth grade students from a low-income, suburban elementary school.
- The alternate work space seating options were purchased by a grant that my cooperating teacher received.
- Students ranked their top 5 seating choices and were then assigned alternate work spaces based on these preferences.
- Over the semester I collected field notes and anecdotal records, observing students working at the different work spaces.

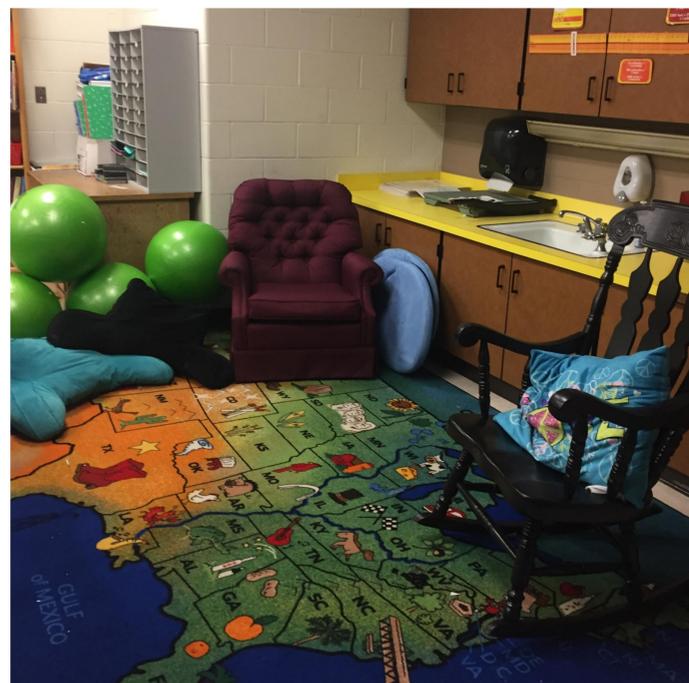


Figure 1. Shown are a variety of alternate work space options, such as stability balls, pillows, rocking chairs, back patter's chairs, and the carpet. When students were able to choose their alternate work spaces, these were often their favorite choices.

Results and Data Analysis

- When looking through my field notes, I noted that students verbalized their enjoyment of utilizing the alternate work spaces.
- Students were also noted as being quieter and less distracted by other students while sitting at their desks.
- When students were able to choose their own sitting option, the class was most often noted as noisy and not focused.
- Anecdotal records show that each student was able to focus better at different alternate work spaces.

Conclusion

- Teachers should be aware that using alternate work spaces can be a way to emotionally engage students, but choosing their work spaces for them may help engage students behaviorally.
- More research should be conducted to observe how student choice can impact the cognitive engagement of students at alternate work spaces, to see if students choose a work space where they can be immersed in the content or learning task at hand.
- Teacher education programs may wish to include the importance of seating or work space choices as a way to engage students both emotionally and behaviorally.