

## How to Boost Student Performance With Active Learning Environments Webinar Q&A Log

Questions from Live Demco Webinar, as answered by Josh Kerst, Principal Ergonomist at SAFCO Products, and Liz Bowie, Demco Content Manager

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**Q: In a public library, where people can come and go at their own pace, how can our layout encourage APLE?**

**Josh:** I like to provide varying types of learning neighborhoods with varying degrees of movement options. Wayfinding and easy flow and navigation of the public library space are keys to supporting an activity-permissive learning environment. Provide creative neighborhood names that describe each area (e.g., “Think tank” for a heads-down focus area), and use colors and themes to separate the zones. In general, I try to place active collaboration areas up front by the library entrance and have soft seating areas centrally located.

**Q: I have been trying to promote our libraries as Learning Commons. Do you have any articles or the like that you can share using that terminology? I would like to pass this webinar on to our corporation office. I think it demonstrates the direction I want to take as a media specialist in our 6 schools.**

**Liz:** Here are a few resources that might help you in your quest: [Library as Learning Commons: 3 Key Zones](#) and the [Demco Learning Commons Pinterest Board](#).

**Q: Are there grants, stipends, or scholarships for furniture to meet the needs of these active learners? How can we meet this expense?**

**Liz:** Demco offers a [free Grants Database](#) where you can find funding sources that fit your particular needs.

**Josh:** There are many sources. Here are a few:

- [Stand Up Kids](#)
- [Donor's Choose](#)
  - Donors Choose is where teachers post classroom project requests. Donors then browse project requests and give an amount of their choice. Once a project reaches its funding goal, Donors Choose delivers the materials to the school.
- [Grant Wrangler](#)

- Grant Wrangler makes it easier for teachers, librarians, and parents to find funding, including grants and awards for arts, history, mathematics, science, history, and more.
- [Grant-Finder Tool](#)
  - The SPARK Grant-Finder Tool helps you locate funding for your physical education, after-school, early childhood or coordinated school health program. Grants can be used for curriculum, teacher training, or equipment.
- [Grants4Teachers](#)
  - Grants4Teachers is a complete online resource for information related to K-12 grants. Search for grants and sign up for their free weekly emailed newsletter for grant alerts.
- [Aetna Foundation Grants](#)
- Grant Writing Tips Presentation via SlideShare: [Writing an Effective Grant Proposal](#)

**Q: Are there other aspects to consider when designing school interiors?**

**Josh:** Furniture is important for APLE, but we also must consider things like lighting (quality and intensity), colors, air quality, and even indoor/outdoor applications. There’s too much to describe here—a webinar about these topics is probably needed in the future!

**Q: What steps do I need to take to rearrange my room for active seating?**

**Josh:** I’d start with a class assignment on sitting disease and have them learn about the risks for discussion, as well as having kids start standing at the beginning of the day and after lunch. Once the discussion is started, my approach is to pilot a small area within a classroom or grade and then expand. Start with getting a few standing height desks and arranging them in a pod of 3 or 4. Remember to give kids a chance to voice their opinions, guide them through proper use (the 20-8-2 concept I discussed in my presentation) and encourage them to self-regulate their needs. Some schools create internal projects. For example, I know of a few schools that incorporate High School PBL upright projects to make desk risers (using 3D printers) for elementary classrooms. Also be sure to have facilities and administration involved so no new risks are introduced into the classroom.

**Liz:** You might also find this Demco Ideas and Inspiration blog post helpful: [Top 3 Reasons to Use Flexible Seating in the Classroom](#). In it, 30-year teaching veteran Kelly Almer describes the process she undertook to implement flexible seating in her classroom.

**Q: What’s the best approach for different styles of users in the same space?**

**Josh:** Be respectful that kids have different needs and we should provide different learning neighborhoods. I usually suggest two mostly standing desks with optional perching or leaning seating available and some traditional desks or soft seating if needed. Give kids choices and lots of accessories such as fidgeting tools, active seats, or wobble boards.

**Q: I'm instructing a class of 20 with no other adults. What's the best way to manage problem behaviors with students on active furniture?**

**Josh:** Behavior issues can be disruptive and problematic if not addressed. If I have a really active whole-body fidgeter in the classroom, I position them in the back so as not to disrupt the classroom. The beauty of the AlphaBetter desk is that most fidgeting occurs under the desk on the fidget bar (which is out of normal sightlines) so kids can be positioned anywhere!

**Q: Can you offer some affordable ideas?**

**Josh:** The bottom line is **Sit Less, Move More** and start with education for the kids. A short lesson plan on the effects of sedentary positions on their health might be a great place to start. Practice the 20-8-2 rule within your lesson plan (i.e., stand-up presentations, stand-up learning after lunch, group move to new area around the room, etc.). Engage the high school teams, who perhaps have access to a makerspace or FabLabs, to make some fidget tools or even low-cost desk risers. Facilitate mobile learning with stand-biased desks or podiums, active seating, and elements such as moveable white boards and magnetic workspaces.

#### **Resources**

- [Demco Free Grants Search Tool](#)
- [Active Furniture Idea Gallery](#)
- [Activity Permissive Learning Environments Pinterest Board](#)
- <http://www.techlearning.com/default.aspx>
- <http://www.safcoproducts.com/alphabetter/>
- <http://standupkids.org>