

ITEM FOR INFORMATION**SPOTLIGHT: SPATIAL PROFICIENCY & ELEMENTARY FURNITURE****SUMMARY**

Staff will spotlight spatial proficiency and intentionally designed learning environments.

BACKGROUND

Beginning in the 2022–2023 school year, Beaverton School District brought together classroom teachers, district TOSAs, Teaching & Learning administrators, facilities staff and Arcadis design consultants to develop an updated furniture standard aligned to the district’s instructional vision. As the team explored both the practical function of student furniture and the relationship between physical space, student agency and learning, a larger insight emerged: to ensure a strong return on investment, the district needed more than new furniture—it needed a shared practice for using space in service of instruction.

That work connected naturally to spatial proficiency, developed by VS America’s Jill Ackers and Dr. Hilary Hughes, which provides educators, designers and architects with a common language for aligning space with teaching and learning values. Together, this work has helped BSD frame furniture not as an end in itself, but as a tool to support cognition, collaboration, belonging and student well-being.

This year, Beaverton’s spatial proficiency cohort focused on how intentionally designed learning environments can deepen cognition, strengthen discourse and promote student well-being. This work has been essential to ensuring a strong return on the district’s investment in furniture and learning spaces by connecting those dollars directly to instruction. Rather than viewing furniture as an end in itself, the cohort has centered how teachers and students use the environment to improve learning experiences and outcomes.

The presentation will highlight the development of the spatial proficiency rubric, early classroom success stories across the district and a plan for continued professional learning. At the heart of this work is a simple belief: space is not neutral. When used with purpose, it can reduce barriers to learning, foster belonging and create the conditions for every student to thrive.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff will present information on spatial proficiency and elementary classroom furniture. No action is needed.

Belong. Believe. Achieve.