

## Conference Takeaways

EDspaces held their annual conference in Houston, Texas from November 11th to 14th, 2024. Their mission is to educate and redefine learning spaces and facilities for the next generation of learning. Partnering with the Campus Safety Conference, EDspaces tackles current issues happening across the education field through panels, information sessions, and exhibition booths. Here are my five biggest takeaways from attending the conference.

### MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

**1** Creating a supportive environment for students begins with the staff. Katelyn Forcucci, Chief Education Strategist with MEiN, shared in her session entitled “The Prosocial Classroom: Intentional Environment Design for the Social Brain” that “dysregulated adults do not produce regulated students.” Beginning the conversation with supporting staff needs is the first step to helping student mental health needs. We are seeing more schools programming a dedicated room for teachers to decompress, others are implementing this into their teachers lounge.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN DESIGN

**2** When programming and developing a building, we often leave out one of the biggest users of the space: the students. There are ways to involve students of all ages in some aspect. Involving students in furniture selections, providing feedback on existing spaces, and helping adults understand their needs to learn are all great first steps in involving students.

### ACTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

**3** Having spaces that are adaptable to different learning styles, lesson types, and age groups is an important consideration. Collaboration is at the heart of many school functions and practices. By providing options and opportunities to staff, operable walls, modular furniture, and interactive technology, classrooms can be used for more than the standard lecture.

# EDspaces

## CAREER ORIENTED COURSES

**4** Including space for career and technical learning courses for students to try out and learn about different career opportunities is important for student success in the future. While at EDspaces, I was part of a tour group visiting the Reese Career and Technical Center, a dedicated CTE course building serving all 12 high schools in the Fort Bend Independent School District. This facility allows students in grades ten through 12 to experience hands-on learning with certified professionals and allows students to graduate high school with certificates in their selected program.

## FURNITURE IS ADAPTING

**5** Gone are the days of the standard four-leg chair and rectangular desk being the best option for students. Furniture integrating tactile elements, purposeful fidgeting opportunities, and more modular and customizable options are on the market. Creativity shouldn't stop with completion of a building on how flexible and functional furniture can help students.



**Lauren Kettner,**

*LEED Green Associate,*

is an Interior Designer at frk architects + engineers, Iowa's leading architectural firm focused on education.

