



# Top 10 Take Aways from the Sandbox

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## 10. No Front (or Back)

This flexible learning environment is designed specifically to not focus on one wall or area. All furniture can be moved to face any direction or no direction at all. This allows students an opportunity to sit anywhere and feel comfortable. Also, there is no “teacher desk”. The space is meant for everyone to be working collaboratively, not for an instructor to be lecturing. Therefore, the instructor is part of the class and can work from anywhere in the space.

## 9. Write on the Walls

The first thing individuals notice is the walls and pillar are painted with white board paint. This allows students and instructors to have ample writing space. It encourages students to participate from where they are and to not have to move to the “front of the class.” There are no borders on this space and the width of the band is lower to the floor to provide a comfortable place to work while accommodating those of shorter stature, or someone in a seat or wheelchair.

## 8. Everything Moves

All furniture is on wheels and is mobile in order to allow for creativity and movement. An instructor can set up the room differently based on the activities planned for that session. The furniture is so simple to move that changes can quickly be made even in the middle of a class.

## 7. Hi-Tech Made Easy

The space contains new hi-tech tools that instructors and students can experiment and work with. However, the tools are set up so they are easy to learn and use immediately. Therefore, the emphasis isn't on learning the technology, it is on using the technology to learn.

## 6. “No Strings Attached”

The Sandbox Classroom has a wireless network for the computers, iPads, and the Mac-Minis in the space as well as any mobile devices students or instructors might bring to the space. No wires and fewer cords creates a safer environment with fewer tripping hazards and removes the limitations of mobility.

## 5. Plugged In

Even though the space is wireless, it also provides an abundance of electrical ports allowing users to plug in and recharge as needed.

## 4. Computers for All

The room accommodates 20 students and houses a laptop cart with 20 laptop computers and 10 iPads in order to provide a lab experience if needed. Every student who takes class in the space is required to complete a laptop agreement form that is kept on file with eLearning. This allows for personalized learning experiences where students are working with technology in an authentic way.

## 3. Training and Support

The Sandbox is a high-tech classroom. In order to feel comfortable using the space, eLearning provides instructors (and students) with training on how to use the space efficiently. The room is next to the elearning office, which relieves any

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anxiety about trying something new, as support is just on the other side of the glass door. In order for any new room or new technology to be truly integrated, professional development and support is essential.

## 2. Accessibility is Essential

In creating the space, Universal Design principles have been applied to every aspect. Movable tables help to accommodate users in the space. The whiteboard paint extends lower to allow everyone plenty of space to write. A border is left off the whiteboard area in order to encourage students to participate and write where they are comfortable. A variety of technology tools are available to allow for accommodations, group work and even 1:1 computer use. Wireless networks provide connectivity without wires causing trip hazards or getting in the way of assistive devices. Also, being able to move around the space with a laptop or iPad helps students stay engaged in their learning.

## and... 1. All about Student Learning

All of these takeaways come down to just one key point: **It is all about student learning.** The focus of the sandbox is to make learning exciting, accessible, and meaningful. Students who are engaged in their learning retain information and in the end perform better. The Sandbox data has shown instructors that follow a more hybrid approach to learning and incorporate a hands on or flipped approach have a minimum of 2% increase in final class average score. Students reported in end-of-course surveys that smaller class sizes and the hands-on technology-enriched environment has helped them to better understand the content.

Creating a similar space on campus isn't difficult. However, the essential change must be in how the space is utilized and the emphasis placed on why the changes are being made. If these components are not addressed, simply altering the space itself will not improve student learning.

For the complete end of semester reports, please go to the eLearning Faculty Resources Page to view the reports online.

