

SEEN & HEARD 2024

Voice of Educators Survey

How flexible learning spaces can support
today's learning recovery

Experience
+ Positive.

EdWeek
Research Center™





Dear Educator,

Much has been written and said about the learning losses students sustained over the pandemic, and how learning recovery is now at a critical point of acceleration. What do teachers and administrators need to sustain the momentum? Within their education spaces, schools now must address a growing list of physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs among a diverse array of students.

That's why we at School Outfitters, in conjunction with the EdWeek Research Center, conducted The Voice of Educators 2024 Survey; as former educators, we know that to be empowered and effective, teachers and administrators must be seen and heard.

You told us, loud and clear, that in today's post-pandemic environment, students and teachers can best flourish when the traditional classroom has been deconstructed, then redesigned into multiple, flexible learning spaces. These spaces are collaborative, mobile, and inclusive, supporting the way teachers best teach and students now learn.

Throughout the report we have given context to our findings with quotes, related facts and statistics from trusted sources. We conclude with a section on proven ways that schools can put federal funding resources to work.

In the spirit of collaboration and sharing best practices, we are proud to have had the privilege of capturing your voice, the voice of educators. Thank you for talking with us.

Sincerely,



Sherron Days
Masters of Education, 2009
Special Education for 17 years
School Outfitters Sales Team



Jessica Steele
Masters of Education, 2010
High School Principal for 7 years
School Outfitters Sales Team

2024 TRENDS

Based on the Voice of Educators 2024 Survey, the experiences of our partners, and other sources of information, we surfaced three trends related to school furnishings and learning recovery:

Learning recovery is happening right now—and can be accelerated in new ways

Flexible learning spaces can be a critical factor in helping students to recover from pandemic learning loss, which continues to manifest in high absenteeism, lower scores on state assessments, and mental health challenges.

Flexible learning spaces can support student learning and achievement

Compared to their peers with traditional classroom setups, teachers with flexible learning spaces are over 50 percent more likely to say the furnishings in their classrooms help make learning a positive experience for their students. Administrators with flexible learning environments are roughly 70 percent more likely to say classroom furnishings support student learning, which can be a useful tool for learning recovery.

Educators prefer deconstructed classrooms and flexible learning spaces

Teachers and administrators prefer flexible learning spaces that allow them to collaborate with students, facilitating:

1. Supportive classroom environments
2. Individual or small group instruction
3. Interactive learning
4. Emotional and social support
5. Equity and inclusion of different learning styles and needs

What is a flexible learning space?

Flexible learning spaces feature mobile desks, worktables, partitions and seating options that facilitate a range of teaching methods and classroom configurations, encouraging adaptable pedagogies and approaches to teaching and learning.

The Upshot: Experience Positive

Flexible learning spaces create positive learning environments

Teacher Impact



63%

of teachers with flexible learning spaces say they are better and more effective teachers

Student Experience



76%

of teachers with flexible learning spaces agree their learning spaces support students' experience

Administrator Advantage



73%

of administrators with flexible learning spaces believe they support student learning achievement

TREND 1

Learning recovery is happening right now—and can be accelerated in new ways

We find that student achievement did improve between Spring 2022 and Spring 2023: in fact, students recovered approximately one-third of the original loss in math ... and one quarter of the loss in reading ... Such improvements in grade levels in a single school year mean that students learned 117 percent in math and 108 percent in reading of what they would typically have learned in a pre-pandemic school year.

— Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University & The Education Opportunity Project at Stanford University

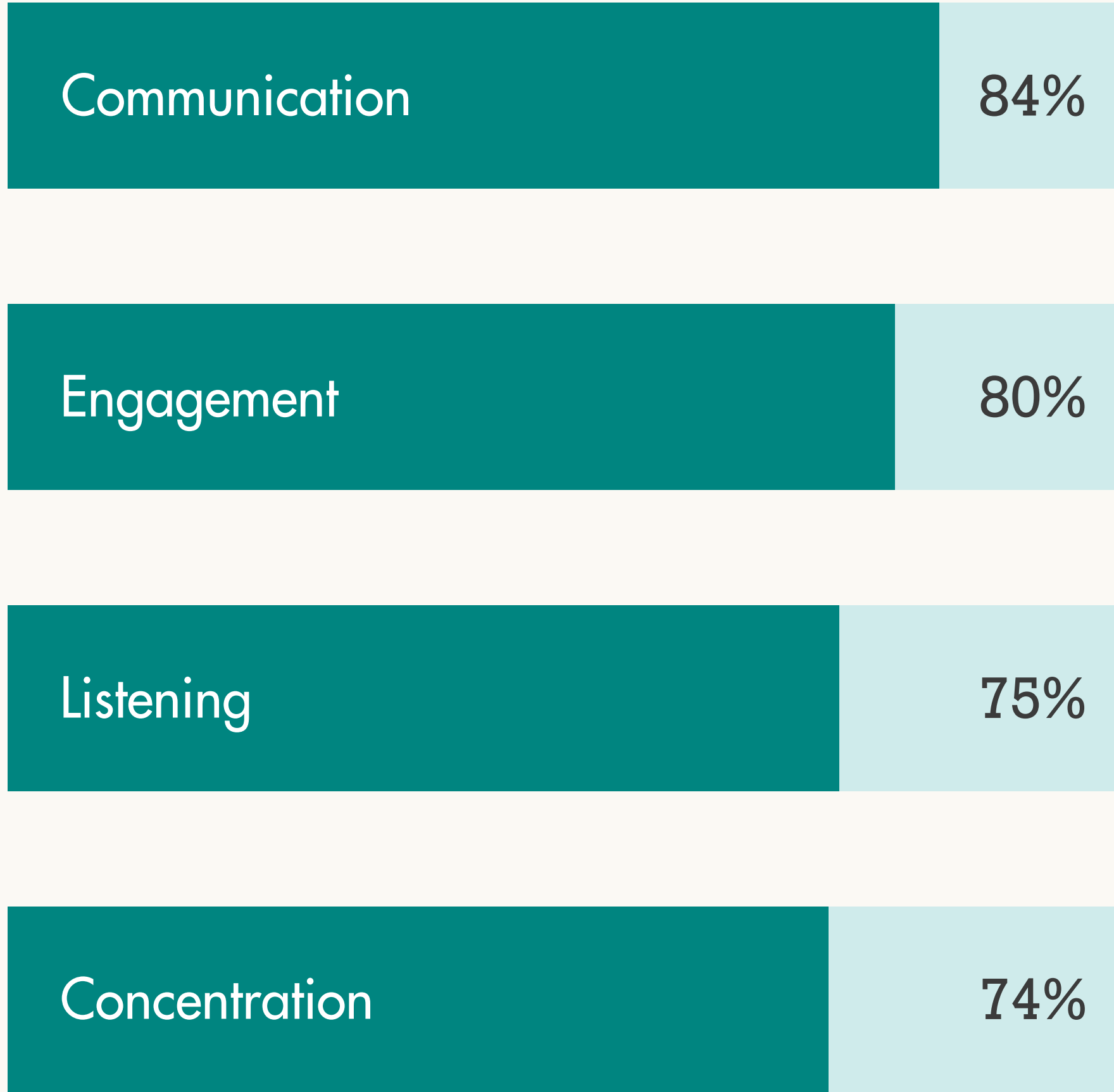
Communities hardest-hit by pandemic learning losses “have to teach 150 percent of a typical year’s worth of material for three years in a row—just to catch up... Any district that lost more than a year of learning should be required to revisit their recovery plans and add instructional time—summer school, extended school year, tutoring, etc.—so that students are made whole.

— Thomas Kane, Faculty Director
Center for Education Policy Research

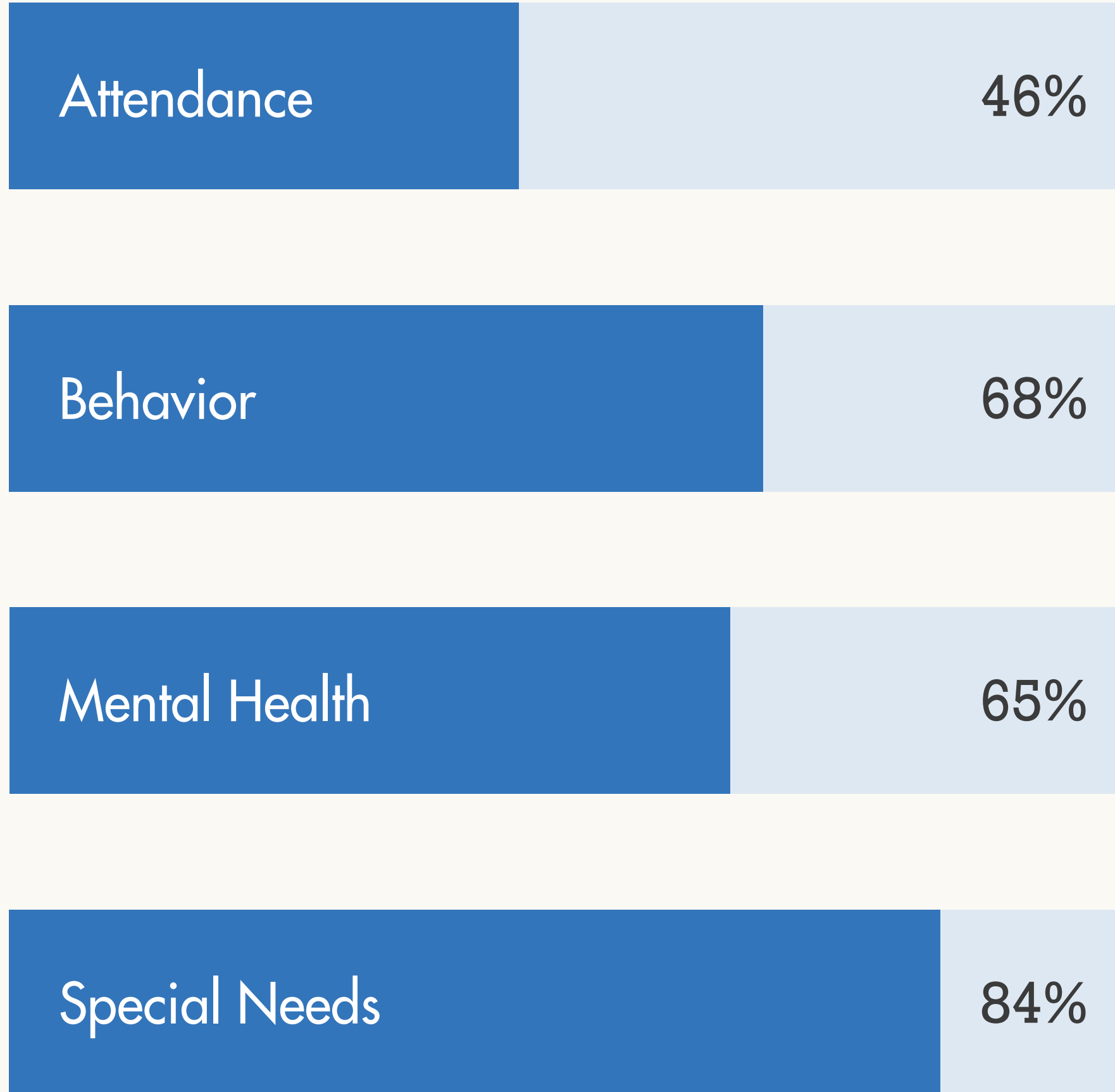


Teachers want to teach. Students need to learn.

Administrators believe flexible learning spaces can support key drivers of learning recovery...



... and can improve students' essential learning skills.



Positive experiences can supercharge learning recovery

Flexible learning spaces can be a critical factor in helping students to recover from pandemic learning loss, which continues to manifest in high absenteeism, lower scores on state assessments, and mental health challenges.

TREND 2

Flexible learning spaces can support student learning and achievement

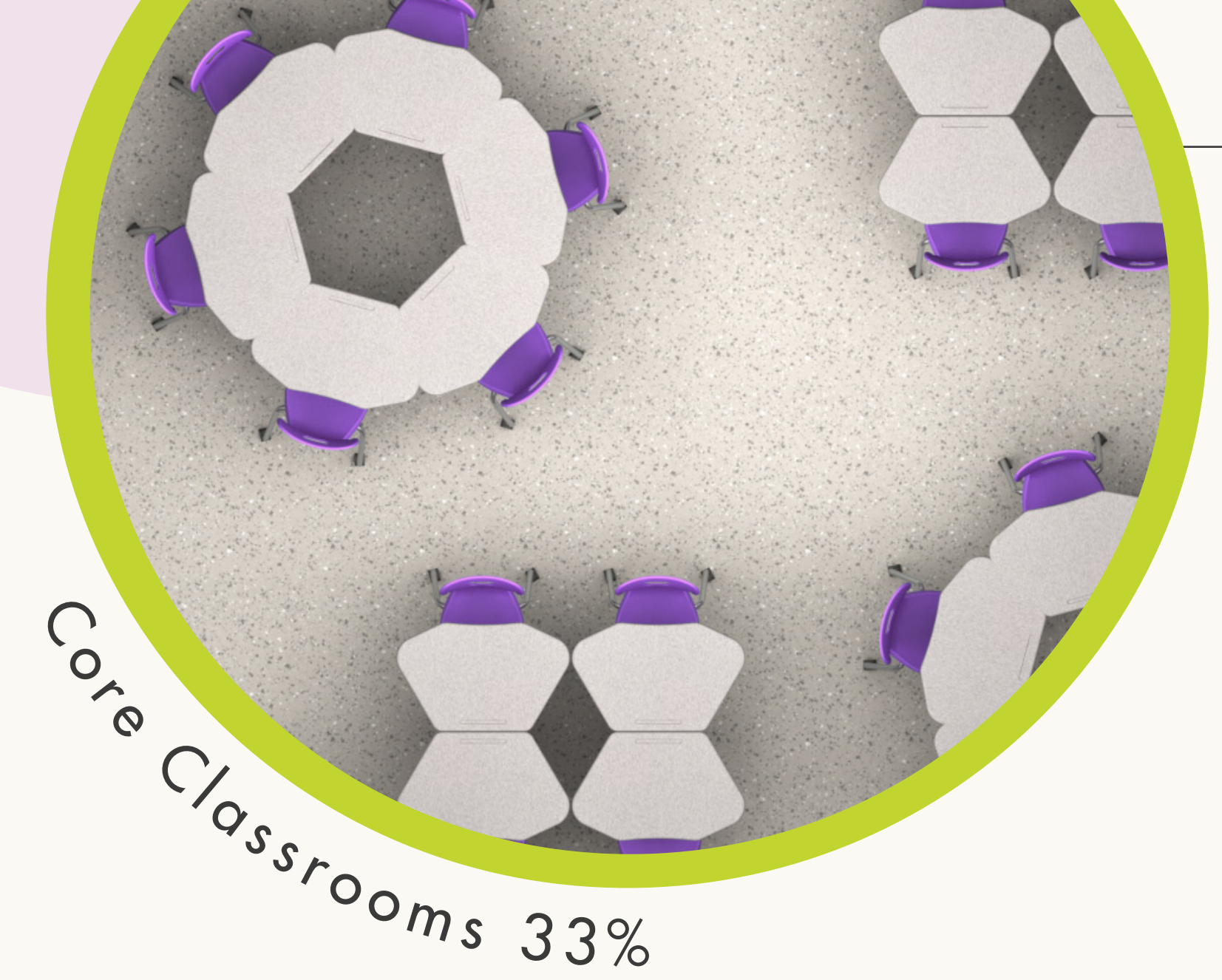
The makerspace is becoming “a very kinetic area of our school,” with students “kneeling, standing, sitting, lying down, all working together and moving around efficiently. The flexibility and mobility of all the furniture allows the space to evolve into the needs of the project.”

— Guy Frye, Media Specialist
Mercer Elementary School, Cincinnati, Ohio

Students and teachers “love” their new furniture “for art projects, for science projects, for any kind of collaborative work they’re doing in the classroom.”

— Pat Dorsey, Purchasing Manager
Stratford School, Northern and Southern California

Schools and districts are planning to invest in flexible learning spaces*



Calming Spaces 40%



The Top 10**

Calming spaces	40%
STEM rooms	33%
Core classrooms	33%
Inclusive learning spaces	31%
Career and technical education	28%
Outdoor spaces	26%
Special education	25%
Makerspaces	24%
Common Areas	22%
Outdoor Education	20%

*Percentage of school and district leaders who say these are top learning space investment priorities over the next five years

**Out of 20 options presented

Educators are taking action to promote learning everywhere

Teachers and administrators strongly believe in the efficacy of providing a variety of education spaces that support both students' and teachers' needs.

TREND 3

Educators prefer deconstructed classrooms and flexible learning spaces

In allowing for different styles and approaches to teaching and learning in a single space, flexible learning spaces also invite exploration and discovery.

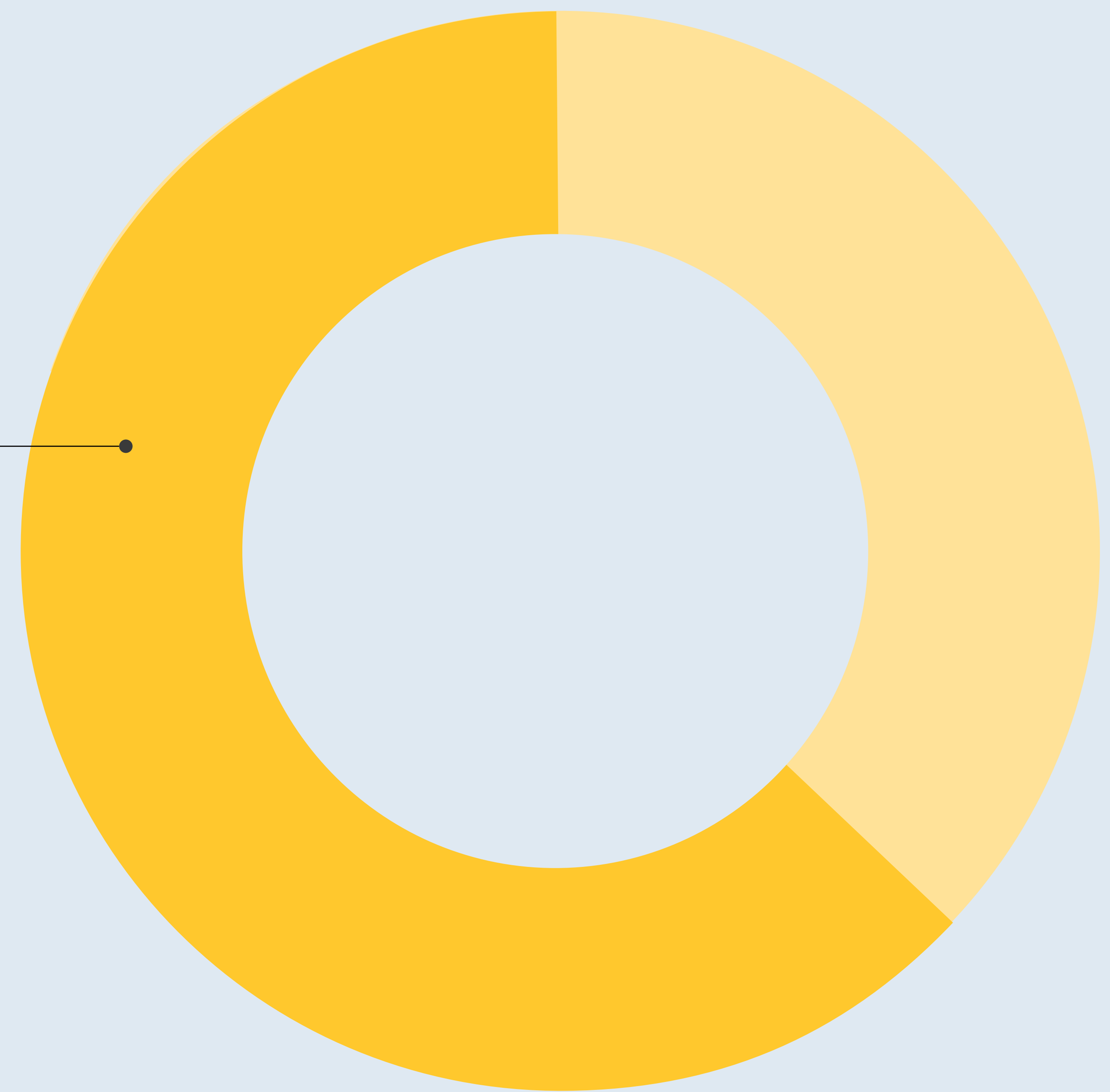
— Columbia Center for Teaching and Learning

Flexible learning spaces—spaces that allow for a range of teaching methods and classroom configurations—encourage adaptable pedagogies and approaches to teaching and learning.

— Columbia Center for Teaching and Learning

63%

of teachers with flexible learning spaces say they are better and more effective teachers.



Five key benefits of flexible learning spaces that can enhance learning recovery



Supportive classroom environments

Supportive classroom environments aid concentration by giving students comfort to learn at their own pace and style.



Tutoring areas

Individual or small group tutoring areas can eliminate embarrassment by allowing students to receive extra help while physically remaining with their peers.



Extended learning time and places

Extended learning time and places give schools the flexibility to achieve learning recovery year-round.



Emotional and social support

Emotional and social support improves student mental health by reducing stress, fostering improved attendance.



Equity and inclusion

Equity and inclusion create a sense of familiarity and calm, enhancing student engagement.

Which features of flexible learning spaces matter most to administrators?



Adequate Storage 57%



Spaces to collaborate 76%



Transformable Spaces 76%



Technology Integration 63%

The Top 10**

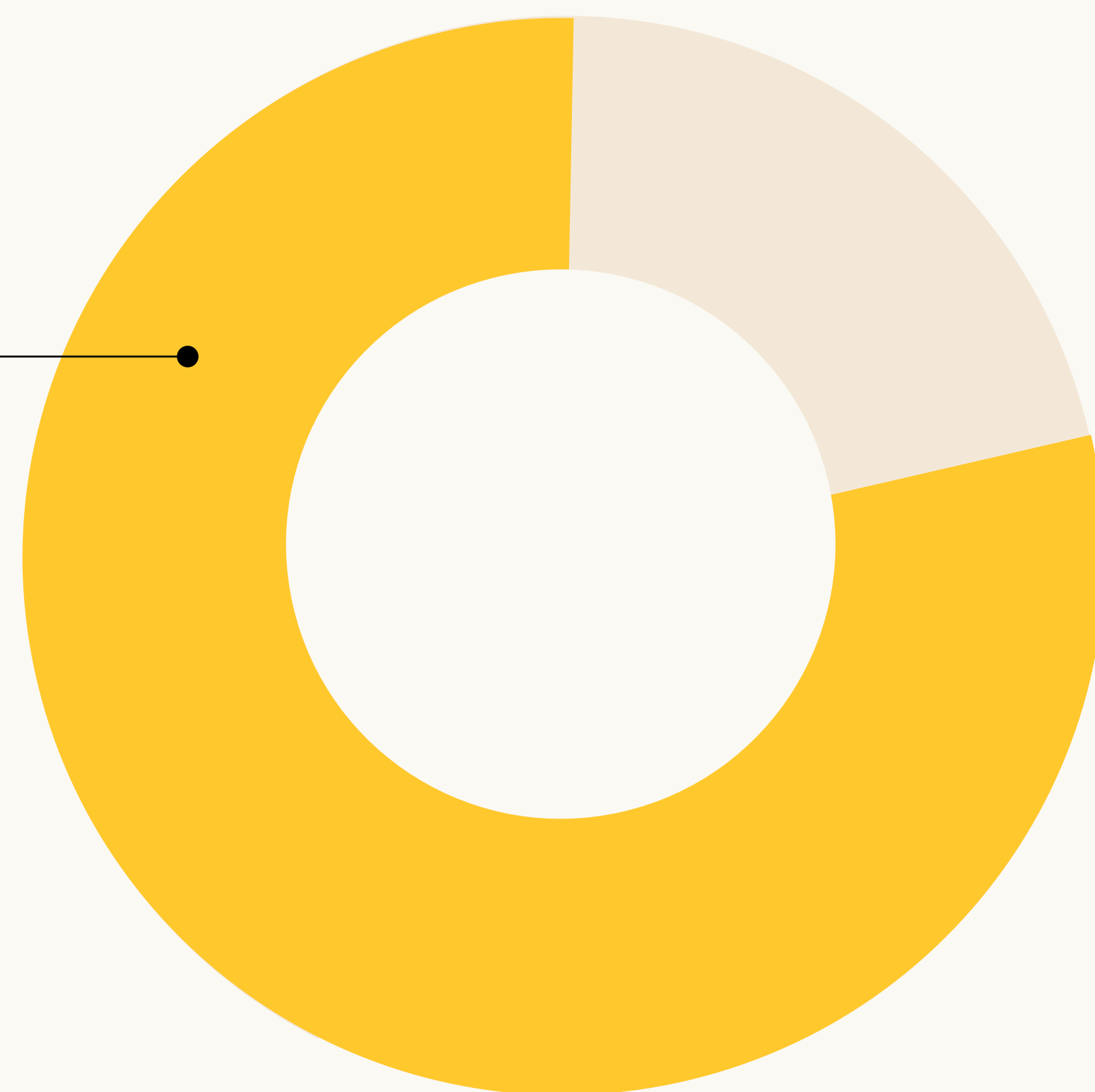
Spaces that can be quickly transformed for group work or other activities	76%
Spaces to collaborate with students	76%
Technology integration for audio and visual learning	63%
Adequate storage	57%
Adjustable height desks and tables	56%
Chairs that support physical movement and fidgeting	56%
Whiteboard surfaces on tables and desks	52%
Demonstration spaces	51%
Inclusivity for mental and physical differences	39%

**Out of 12 options presented

Administrators strongly support flexible learning spaces

79%

of administrators with flexible learning spaces say the spaces make teaching a positive experience for teachers



Administrators with flexible learning spaces are:

91%

more likely than those without flexible spaces to say their furniture supports teachers' job satisfaction

74%

more likely to say their furniture supports teachers' mental wellness

Flexible learning spaces can support teachers and students.

Administrators believe their teachers are better and more effective when traditional classrooms are re-imagined.

Financial resources are available, yet untapped

Roughly 35% of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III funding remains to be spent, amounting to more than \$44 billion.

Under current ESSER III guidelines, funds must be obligated by September 30, 2024, and disbursed by January 28, 2025. In Fall 2023, the U.S. Department of Education announced that states and districts can apply for 14-month extensions to spend funds.

Nearly 2,500 districts have more than 40% of funding left to be spent (as of March 5, 2024).



In Gary, Indiana, Gary Community School Corp. received nearly \$5 million to spend on furniture in elementary schools and about \$3 million for middle and high school furniture.

— Chicago Tribune

Flexible furniture allows students to use furniture that can adapt to changing health conditions or future needs.

— Rib Lake School District, Rib Lake, Wisconsin

Examples of school modernization include ensuring that furniture and school spaces facilitate teaching and learning.

—Center for American Progress

About the survey

School Outfitters commissioned the EdWeek Research Center, an independent, nonprofit and nonpartisan research organization, to learn about the impact that furniture has on teaching and learning as it occurs in today's flexible learning spaces, compared to traditional classrooms.

EdWeek Research Center administered an online survey from January 24 through February 22, 2024. A total of 942 educators responded, including 590 teachers and 352 school and district leaders who identified themselves as influencing school furniture purchases. The content contained in this eBook does not reflect endorsements of School Outfitters by Editorial Projects in Education or EdWeek publications.

Primary Teaching Space
Flexible learning space 40%
Traditional learning space 60%

Age
Gen Z (1997-2012) 2%
Gen Y/Millennial (1981-1996) 20%
Gen X (1965-1980) 61%
Boomer (1946-1964) 17%

Location*
Northeast 17%
Midwest 30%
South 32%
West 21%

Experience in education
20+ years 59%
10-20 years 30%
5-10 years 7%
2-5 years 4%
Less than 2 years 1%

*Percentages are for all respondents (teachers and administrators)

About School Outfitters

School Outfitters is on a mission to help students, teachers and administrators Experience Positive wherever learning takes place. The company's belief in people—that everyone deserves a chance to be themselves, to be seen, heard, and to realize their potential—translates into a relentless quest to do better and be better. As a result, School Outfitters' innovation in creating flexible learning spaces has won the repeat business of 97% of America's top 1,000 school districts.

Founded in 1998 and voted as a Cincinnati Top Workplace for 12 consecutive years, School Outfitters is 100% employee owned and operated. The company offers a broad range of flexible furnishings, collaborative arrangements and technology integrations, delivered through more than 150 product lines, including exclusive distribution of Learniture, Norwood, Sprogs and Egghead. To join the more than 30,000 customers that have chosen School Outfitters to Experience Positive, visit www.schooloutfitters.com.

We want to hear your voice!

Thank you for engaging with our research on educational environments. We invite you to continue the conversation by sharing your insights on learning spaces to

ExperiencePositive@schooloutfitters.com

and by following School Outfitters' LinkedIn page, where you can connect with like-minded peers and gain access to new educational content.