

ACTIVE LEARNING CENTER GRANT PROPOSAL

Please use this Microsoft[®] Word template to apply for the grant. Note that you will need a copy of the *Steelcase Education Proposal Guide* as you complete this form.

Register and submit your completed proposal electronically at Steelcase.com/ActiveLearningCenter.

Submission deadline is Friday, February 27, 2015. Thank you for your interest in active learning.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION: Troy Athens High School

Grade 6 – 12

College/University

PRIMARY CONTACT: Lara J. Dixon

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Please tell us how you heard about this grant opportunity?

Steelcase Employee Steelcase Dealership

Colleague Professional Association

Online Media

Other _____

Classroom description

Describe the classroom you will designate for the Steelcase Education Active Learning Center:

Number of students 32 Grade level 9-12

Room length 33'9" Room width 40'5" Room height 8'

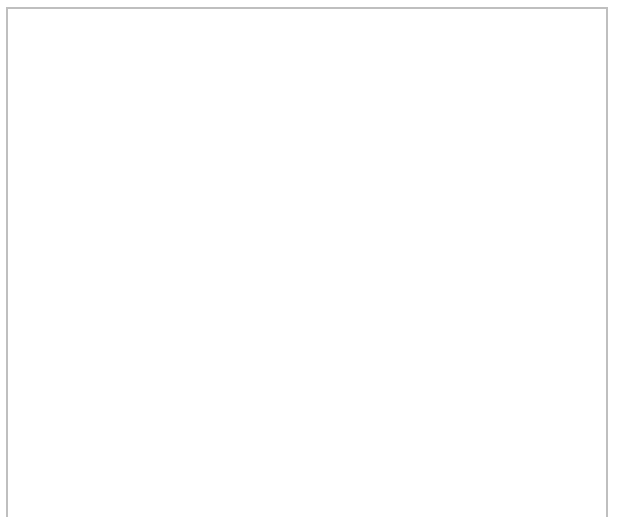
Conf Room length 19' Conf Room width 13' Conf Room height 8'

Indicate which classroom application is most appropriate to support your educational needs. (See the three classroom descriptions on page 10 – 12 of the *Proposal Guide*.)

Node Verb Blended

Insert photos of the current classroom space in the boxes below.

Please include a maximum of four photographs, and note that this document's file size must not exceed 10 MB (megabytes).



Classroom description (continued)

In the space below, indicate how your educational institution will renovate the existing space, if required, to accommodate the Steelcase Education Active Learning Center.

Note: the classroom is expected to have updated floor covering, paint, lighting, etc. as part of the renovation.

Our classroom is designed on the blended model in order to utilize a variety of classroom modes and learning styles. The existing 1600+ square foot space is currently being renovated from a computer drawing laboratory into a multipurpose large group instruction classroom with an attached conference room. The project has a completion date of May 2015.

The Active Learning Center (ALC) will serve not only as a space for existing classes to expand their learning opportunities but also as an impetus for the creation of exciting new courses and collaborations. Constructivist, innovative classes will utilize the classroom during the day:

- Innovation Learning
- Team-taught constructivist math that incorporates contemporary focuses on technology, engineering, and application of concepts.
- Leadership
- Team-taught Humanities. For example, the space would be ideal for creative writing and theater classes to work together. Social studies and English classes could explore their overlapping areas through creative problem-solving activities.
- Nontraditional cross-curricular classes that explore the discursive nature of learning and thinking in the twenty-first century. For example, the new classroom would be an excellent space for economics and English students to create new approaches to blending their disciplines.

A blended learning configuration would allow for students to work collaboratively in teams, small groups, and large groups. Technology and huddle boards would enhance learner's ability to brainstorm, make their thinking visible, explore, capture and create.

In the afternoon and evening, the ALC will be used for extended learning opportunities for students, parents and staff. The goal is to inspire our learning community to see first-hand 21st century learning techniques, methods and benefits.

Since we are in the process of remodeling, we will be flexible with design or layout standards and hope to have a space that is dynamic and suitable for the blended classroom model.

The technology set-up for the room will include a central SMART TV, but will largely be arranged to facilitate students to bring their own device (BYOD) by including charging stations and connections to in-class monitors. Mediascapes would be ideal.

Educational philosophy

In the space below, describe the following:

- Desired pedagogy you want to achieve
- Credentials of the staff member(s) who will be responsible for the Active Learning Center Grant two-year program
- How the instructors using this classroom will be selected

Maximum of 500 words

We want to create an environment that encourages students to take risks, an environment where there is no ceiling to critical thought. The concept of “embracing failure” is the impetus behind our educational philosophy for this grant. We want to create a space where failure no longer means disappointed students, rejection from colleges, and a general feeling of not being good enough. We want to see failure every day because it means that things are happening, that ideas are being exchanged, built upon, and improved. A classroom that embraces failure is also embracing innovation, creativity, and problem-solving, all skills that contribute to the work performed in the space created by this grant.

Our district goal is to ensure that all students graduate “college and career ready.” This is not possible without educating students as 21st century learners, preparing them for an evolving world. This involves shifting the mindset of students from the traditional expectation of “give and take/sit and get learning” to which they are accustomed to a mindset that is skill and performance-based. It is imperative to foster an active learning environment so that students develop skills like independence, creativity, innovation, and problem-solving, which will allow them to succeed in a changing world.

We want this to be a space for everyone in the school. Teachers will receive initial training on best-practices for use in an active learning center, developing a spirit of collaboration and innovation. We envision professional development meetings with staff members, a time to share techniques and lessons developed for their classes. It is imperative that staff model the work they will expect to see from their students—collaboration, a willingness to try new things, and the rewarding experience of breaking down perceived barriers and charting different paths.

Adam Burns, one of the teachers committed to leading the implementation of this grant, helped to develop a course called *Innovation Learning*, which emphasizes many of the desired skills outlined above. Students in this course are freed from the bounds of traditional learning. After a semester of learning to be more independent, motivated, and innovative, collaborating with their classmates on a series of small projects and problems, and developing a framework, timeline, and plan of execution for an independent project of their own design, students spend the second semester immersed in their project. Using this Innovation Learning course as a paradigm, we would like to expand our students’ opportunities to develop their own creative initiatives in other courses. The new ALC room would be a focal point of our school’s transition to more hands-on, student-centered creativity.

Mr. Burns will be responsible for leading and training the staff who will be using the room. The core principles of *Innovation Learning* will be their guide. The freedom to learn differently, to pursue goals both independently and collaboratively, and to be in an environment that facilitates such pursuits will form the basis of the new ALC room.

Expected impact

Describe the ways you believe the Active Learning Center can impact teaching and learning and support your desired pedagogy. Why? (See page 5 of the *Proposal Guide* for a detailed description of the elements of an impact study.)

Maximum 500 words

The biggest shift we see from a course like Innovation Learning, and any course that emphasizes 21st century skills, is a shift from a teacher-centered to a student-centered classroom.

The space the course was taught in was conducive to active learning—moveable, adaptable furniture, separate conference spaces—and rarely was the teacher the focal point of the day. The students appreciated this and the positive impact it had on their work. After receiving the feedback from the students, the space of the classroom was maximized to their advantage—furniture was rearranged to create new conference spaces and new furniture was secured to eliminate all standard student desks in the room.

The impact that something as simple and banal as furniture can have on learning and teaching is immense. It's a great motivator, both for the students who are thrilled to benefit from something new and different to me, the teacher, who sees many new possibilities in the classroom thanks to moving beyond traditional design.

Other teachers that use the new ALC will surely see the benefit of an active learning center model and will likely see the new space influence their teaching in all classes. Mr. Burns changed the way he taught his other courses due to the experience in Innovation Learning—the excitement, motivation, and creativity that a class using such a space creates is awesome and has to be replicated. We are confident that other teachers, especially initially, will see this and use it to inform their teaching in all classes.

Once they have grown used to the ALC room and the different avenues of learning it unlocks, we expect that several new classes will be created to maximize the room.

In the ALC room, nontraditional, exciting collaborations can take shape. For instance, our AP English Language courses can use the open-ended space to create syntheses with AP Economics students. AP Human Geography could join ranks with our world languages department to explore ideas. Photography and art classes could use the interactive features of the classroom to broaden their perspectives. Our athletic teams could collaborate with science classes to examine technical aspects of their sports. Health and physical education classes could explore fields like nutrition science.

Even the most traditional subjects could benefit from a revised approach to student-centered learning: A class on Shakespeare may use the space to meet in small groups and work their way through difficult passages and use the larger space as an interactive stage for in-class performances, to really get the most out of the collaboration and performance that a study of Shakespeare demands. Similarly, a social studies course targeting how visuals inspire and create our memory of certain events may have students move throughout the room examining documents, artifacts, and other visuals, debating and presenting their findings as they search for meaning. We can see math courses, geology courses, foreign language courses, really, anything is possible.

Measuring impact

Describe how you will measure the impact/success of the Active Learning Center for students and for teachers.

Maximum 300 words

There are a few quantitative measures we will use to measure the impact of the room: how often is the room in use? How many different teachers (and subjects) are using the space? What innovations are made to the room once it is in use and teachers have experience with best-practices?

The biggest impacts, though, are more abstract: increases in student innovation and creativity, a larger emphasis on collaboration, and, in line with our philosophy, a school-wide embrace of our new definition of failure.

In order to measure this, we will have students (especially those in the Innovation Learning class, but all students, as necessary and practical) create electronic portfolios charting their progress through a given task or project. This will help us measure impact on an individual level.

At a broader level, we are looking for a philosophy change, one that shifts into the student-centered, failure is okay mindset described earlier. We will know that this is happening if we start to see an increase in new classes (or any change in curricular design within existing classes) that seeks to maximize the opportunities presented by this grant.

We are seeking to prepare students for the 21st century, a century that is nearly 20% complete. Our district and building vision indicates that all students will be career- or college-ready upon graduation. The ALC room as the center of innovative learning can serve as a stepping stone into the real world. Our students will move into fields or study and workplaces that operate in a much less linear fashion than the traditional classroom. We look forward to hearing positive feedback from future alumni about the impact that innovative learning has had on their success.

Disseminating insights and learnings

Describe how your educational institution will share your results (see page 5 of the *Proposal Guide* for description) with internal (educational entity) and external audiences throughout the two-year grant period.

Maximum 300 words

Sharing our results with frequent updates is an important cornerstone of our grant as it will require us to get the word out about the impact the ALC room is having. We are going to need to get people on board and inspired by the possibilities of the room.

We are committed at the building and district level to ongoing, focused professional development workshops and sessions on active learning centers and 21st century learning. We will keep a variety of artifacts that will be available for internal and external audiences to explore—new lesson plans and guides for using the ALC room, electronic portfolios with exemplar assignments and projects, site visits and observations; we're open to it all.

We want this to be a place of collaboration, not just within our building but with the community. Project-based and constructivist learning necessitates that students interact with the greater community to develop and revise initiatives. The ALC room will serve as a focal point for that collaboration. Students, faculty, and community members will have a professional, contemporary space in which they can share ideas on an even plane. Students and community members will be colleagues and collaborators in this space.

On a more concrete, day to day level, we want to get the word out via social media about what is happening in the ALC room, how it's being used, who is in there, so that our community can be informed and excited about what is happening.

In keeping with our philosophy, we want to make failure a feature of the space by having a "Fail Board", where students and staff can (physically or electronically) post stories or photos of their failures and how they rebounded and proceeded from those failures.

Project timeline

Provide a timeline indicating the chronological order in which the required activities of the grant will be undertaken, including the lead person responsible for each activity. (Activities include: post-occupancy evaluation, measuring impact, disseminating insights/learnings, writing an annual plan each year.)

One page maximum

The timeline is set up to allow for growth, reflection, and refinement. Our end goal is that the ALC room will be a part of the day for both students and teachers as often as possible—if not daily, then at least weekly. The timeline is set up for frequent reflection and collaboration, as well as scaled growth through the introduction of new lessons and, ultimately, new courses.

May 2015 – August 2015 – ALC room is completed and grant award is applied to furnish the space – Lara Dixon

August 2015 - Staff is trained in best-practices for large group instruction room/blended classroom space – Adam Burns

September 2015 – June 2016 – The space is used by classes throughout the school year, adapting lessons or creating new lessons to maximize the blended learning space. – Athens staff

September 2015 – June 2016 (monthly) – Collaborative meetings are held to share insights, learnings, and best practices. –Athens staff

January 2016 – A mid-year showcase sharing exemplar projects, lessons, and learning experiences (failures) is held. Findings from the meeting will contribute to the impact measurement. – Adam Burns, Athens staff

January 2016 – June 2016 – New courses are designed to be held in or largely use the ALC space. Emphasis will be placed on student-driven learning in these courses. – Bill Turner, Athens staff

June 2016 – A year-end showcase sharing exemplar projects, lessons, and learning experiences (failures) is held. Findings from the meeting will contribute to the impact measurement. – Adam Burns, Athens staff

June 2016 – An initial post-occupancy evaluation and impact measurement is completed, offering insights and tips on how to proceed in using the space the following year. –Adam Burns, Athens staff

July 2016 – August 2016 – An annual plan for the ALC room will be written, reflecting on the first year and offering advice for the second. –Adam Burns, Athens staff

August 2016 – District-wide professional development sessions are offered to teach or collaborate with teachers across the district. –Adam Burns, Athens staff

September 2016 – June 2017 – Use of the space continues as in the first year, still emphasizing new ideas and best-practices. –Athens staff

September 2016 – June 2017 (monthly) – Collaborative meetings continue throughout the year. –Athens staff

January 2017 – A mid-year showcase takes place, this time emphasizing the new courses in addition to exemplar projects and lessons – Adam Burns, Athens staff

June 2017 – The final evaluation is completed – Adam Burns, Athens staff

Commitments of grant recipient

(confirmed in three-party agreement)

We have reviewed, understand and agree to all the commitments of a grant recipient as described in the Active Learning Center Grant Proposal Guide.

Name of school representative: Lara J. Dixon, Ed.D.

Title: Principal Troy Athens High School

Date: February 11, 2015