

## Learning Environment Evaluation

Aggregated Results  
Spring 2016–Winter 2018



**Engaged and Ready to Succeed:**

# How Active Learning Spaces Impact Teaching and Learning

# Exploring what’s possible in spaces made for active learning

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ABOUT THE DATA

Data presented in this report represent statistically significant findings from thousands of teaching and learning experiences unless otherwise noted.

Over the last two years, Steelcase has partnered with middle schools, high schools and higher education institutions across North America to understand how teaching and learning is evolving – and how smarter, more active environments can help.

Together, with a cohort of over 40 diverse institutions serving thousands of students at all levels, we studied what’s possible and surfaced exciting results.

## About the study

METHODOLOGY

**Measuring perceptions related to engagement and student success.** The Steelcase Learning Environment Evaluation (LEE) is a set of online surveys that gather student and instructor perceptions relative to a number of factors that suggest engagement and student success. Questions seek to detect cognitive, behavioral, emotional and academic engagement and align with the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Questions also seek to gauge behaviors and attitudes linked with student success factors, including mindset, sense of belonging, creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and communication.

**Responding by degree.** LEE surveys present students and instructors with five-point Likert-style rating scales to indicate, for example:

*Level of agreement:*  
strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree

*Frequency:*  
never, rarely (1–2x/month), sometimes (at least 1x/week), often (multiple times/week), always (multiple times/class)

*Level of difficulty:*  
very difficult, difficult, neutral, easy, very easy

*Direct comparison:*  
much worse, sometimes worse, about the same, somewhat better, much better

**Comparing experiences.** To provide a basis for qualitative and quantitative comparison, surveys were administered for both groups after they had used and reflected on their experience in a traditional, row-by-column desk/table classroom and then again in a learning environment designed for active learning, featuring more casual, mobile furniture and learning tools arranged in thoughtful proximities.

SCOPE

Conducted spring 2016 through winter 2018, this study of instructor and student perceptions involved:

44

educational institutions

including 32 schools serving students in grades 6-12 and 12 colleges/universities

6,472

students surveyed

and observed by their instructors

180

instructors surveyed



STUDENT REFLECTION

ON THE ACTIVE LEARNING CLASSROOM

“The physical environment improves my focus and concentration, which in turn allows me to get more work done. Also, I feel more comfortable in class, which improves my learning experience drastically.”

Students reported notable gains in movement, communication, creativity, critical thinking and collaboration. Comparing their time in two types of classrooms, 82% of students reported that the experience in the environment designed for active learning was somewhat or much better than in the traditional classroom.

Key findings: students

Major gains

- In the active learning space, students reported significantly higher levels of:
- Movement through the classroom
  - Communication with peers and instructor
  - Creative activities
  - Critical thinking
  - Collaborative learning

Smaller gains

- Transitioning from traditional to active classroom, students reported gains or similar levels in:
- Mindsets associated with learning
  - Sense of belonging

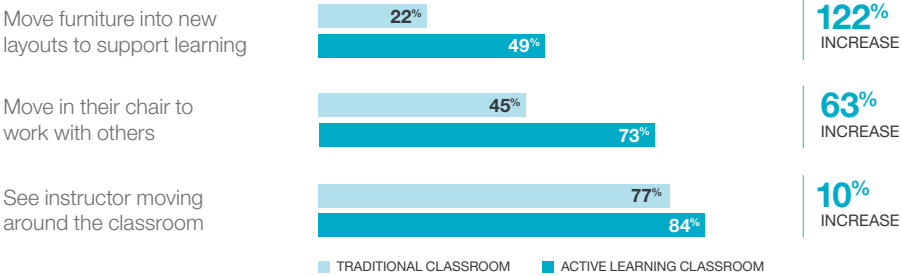
Student survey results

(6,472 students surveyed)

Students perceived new advantages for movement, communication, collaboration and thinking in the active learning spaces they experienced.

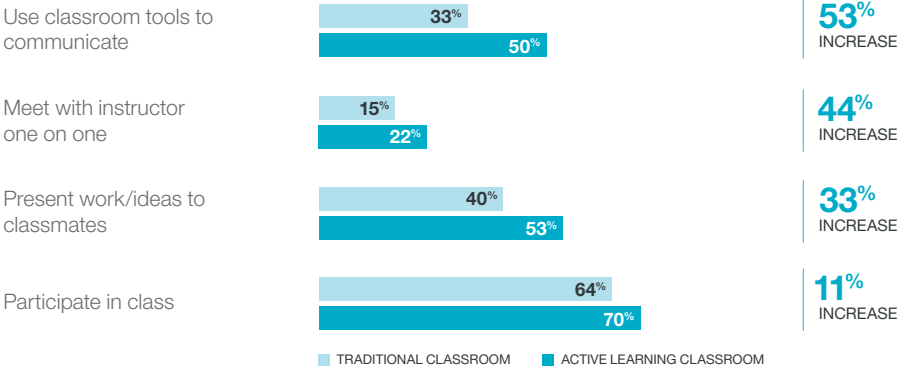
MOVEMENT

Students reported that they often or always:



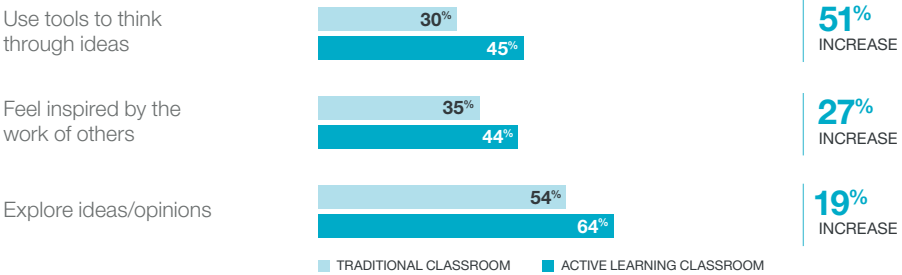
COMMUNICATION

Students reported that they often or always:



CREATIVITY

Students reported that they often or always:





STUDENT REFLECTION

ON THE ACTIVE LEARNING CLASSROOM

“The Steelcase room was great for coming up with new ideas and for working as a team. The environment is more relaxed than a regular classroom and gives us the ability to move around and get creative.”

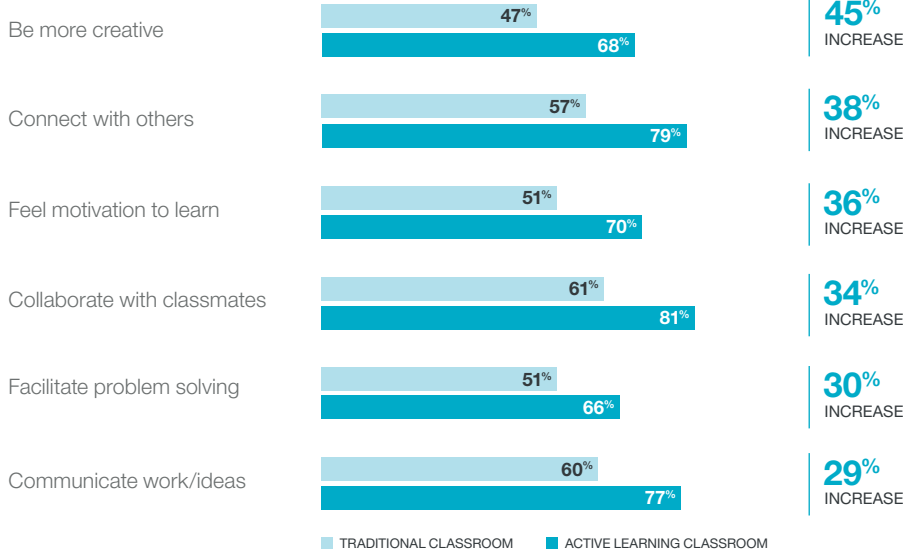


Student survey results

(6,472 students surveyed)

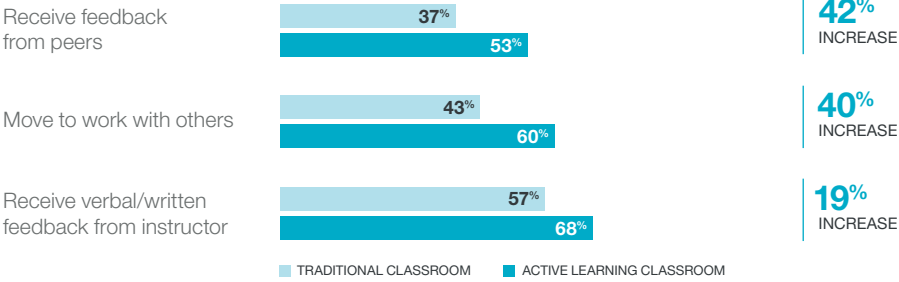
CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

Students agreed or strongly agreed that the classroom helped them:



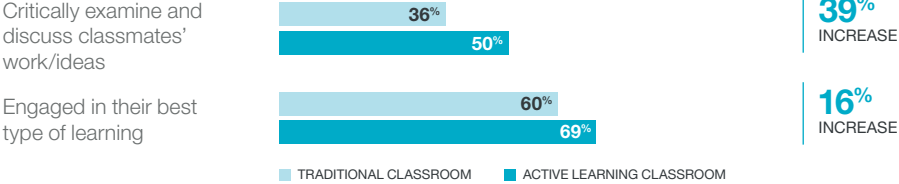
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Students reported that they often or always:



CRITICAL THINKING

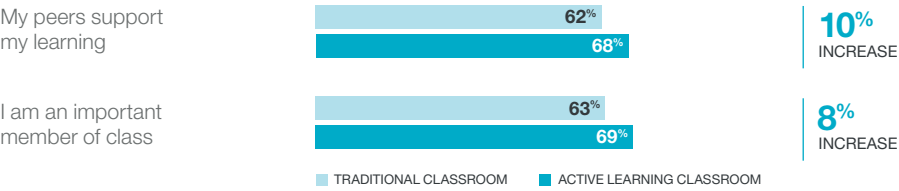
Students reported that they often or always:



Students reported being able to *often or always work independently and focus* – another dimension of critical thinking – almost equally in both types of spaces: 74% in traditional classroom, 75% in active learning classroom.

LEARNER BELONGING

Students agreed or strongly agreed that:



Students reported positively on several dimensions of learner belonging in both types of classrooms. They overwhelmingly agreed or strongly agreed that *my instructor cares about me* (83% in traditional classroom, 84% in active learning classroom) that *my instructor supports my learning* (87% in traditional classroom, 88% in active learning classroom) and that *I have a friend in class* (86% in traditional classroom, 87% in active learning classroom).

LEARNER MINDSET

Students agreed or strongly agreed that they are:



Students showed no change in two more dimensions of learner mindset. In both space types, 68% agreed or strongly agreed that *they would be successful in the future*, and 83% agreed or strongly agreed that *they would achieve a high grade in class*.





INSTRUCTOR REFLECTION

ON THE ACTIVE LEARNING CLASSROOM

“[Students] seem to form community much faster/earlier in the semester. I think the environment enables more one-on-one than in a traditional classroom which I believe impacts a student’s learning.”

Key findings:  
instructors

**Instructors reported that the new space supports the type of teaching and learning that they want in their classroom and noticed improved student behaviors and mindsets.** Instructors also favored the time they spent teaching in an active learning classroom when comparing the experience to that in a traditional classroom.

Major gains

In the active learning space, instructors reported significantly higher levels of the following:

- The furniture and tools support desired teaching/learning and help to better execute their preferred teaching strategies
- Instructor behaviors associated with movement, collaboration, meaningful interactions and relationship development
- Student behaviors associated with content co-creation, movement, engagement in discussions, collaborative work and application of new concepts

Smaller gains

Transitioning from traditional to active classroom, instructors reported smaller gains or similar levels in:

- Instructor behaviors associated with differentiation of instruction, movement to maintain focus and movement to coach and mentor
- Instructor mindsets associated with being innovative, continuous learning, feeling prepared to teach and feeling responsible for coaching and mentoring

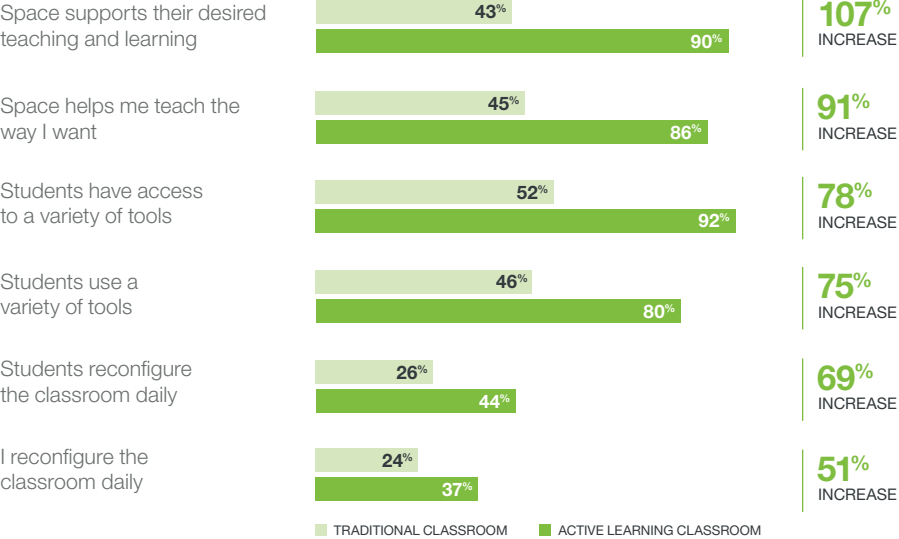
Instructor survey results

(180 instructors surveyed)

Instructors perceived new advantages for supporting desired teaching strategies and observed improvements in behaviors and mindsets.

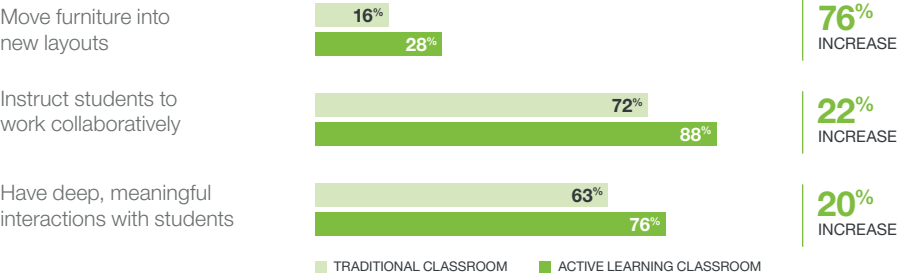
USE OF FURNITURE AND TOOLS

*Instructors agreed or strongly agreed that:*



POSITIVE INSTRUCTOR BEHAVIORS

*Instructors agreed or strongly agreed that they:*



Not statistically significant: In both classroom types, a large proportion of instructors agreed or strongly agreed that they *differentiate instruction based on students’ needs* (72% in traditional classroom, 74% in active learning classroom), *move around while instructing to maintain focus* (81% in traditional classroom, 83% in active learning classroom) and *move around the room to coach and mentor* (84% in traditional classroom, 85% in active learning classroom).



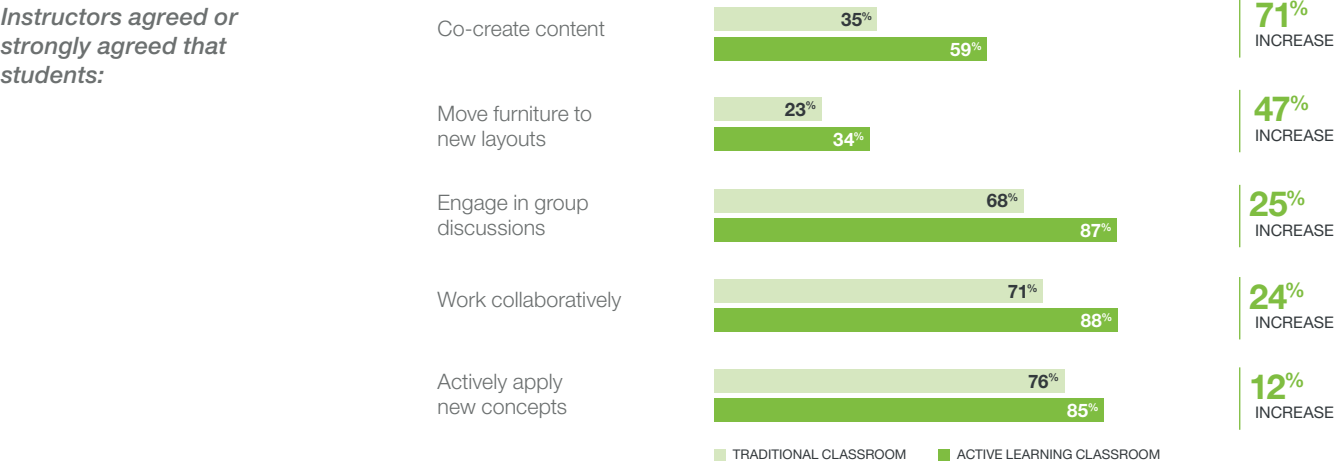
INSTRUCTOR REFLECTION  
ON THE ACTIVE LEARNING CLASSROOM

“The students are a lot more engaged and excited when they come to math class now than they were before the new classroom. Students are participating and wanting to do math rather than just be an observer in the class.”

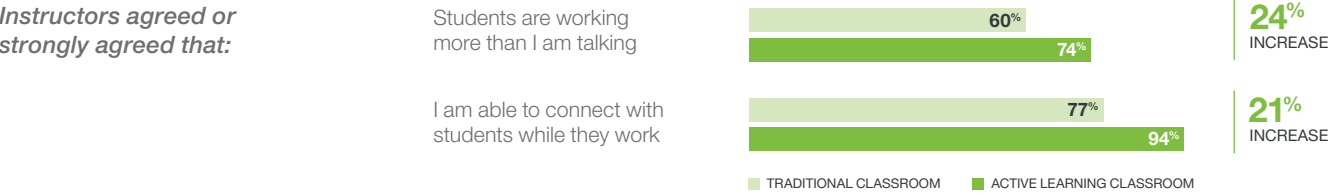


Instructor survey results  
(180 instructors surveyed)

POSITIVE STUDENT BEHAVIORS

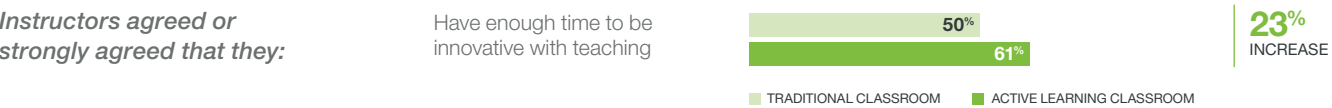


INSTRUCTOR-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP



Not statistically significant: In the active learning classroom, instructors were only slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree that they have *become more student centric in the last two to three months* (59% in traditional classroom, 61% in active learning classroom) and that they have *established strong relationships* (87% in traditional classroom, 91% in active learning classroom).

INSTRUCTOR MINDSET



Not statistically significant: Instructors overwhelmingly reported that they had positive mindsets in both classroom types, agreeing or strongly agreeing that they feel *safe to try new innovative activities* (92% in traditional classroom, 95% in active learning classroom), *believe continuous learning makes them better* (92% in traditional classroom, 94% in active learning classroom), *feel prepared to teach* (84% in traditional classroom, 85% in active learning classroom) and *view their role as coach/mentor to learning* (96% in both classroom types).

Next steps

**Set your goals.**  
Steelcase Education invites educational leaders to use the findings in this report to understand what’s possible when the physical environment is designed to support more active teaching and learning experiences. We invite you to use this information for inspiration and goal setting.

**Customize your evaluation.**  
Results reported here are based on dimensions of teaching and learning studied consistently across dozens of institutions. Our Learning Environment Evaluation (LEE) can be customized to examine additional areas of impact as prioritized by your institution.



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