

backboard



Learning by Design's 2013 grand prize winner Trillium Creek Primary School features purpose-driven design. For more information visit <http://learningbydesign.biz>.



Designing for technology

MOST OF THE SCHOOLS WE ARE BUILDING today will outlive their architects and designers. So how can we best build a school for future generations?

Short of finding a crystal ball, architect Troy W. Miller says the answer is to design schools and spaces that are adaptable.

"Technology must be widely available to allow spaces to morph from hour to hour. Elements as seemingly mundane as power outlets, telecommunications cable pathways, and seating flexibility can make all the difference in a teacher's ability to connect with just one more student," Miller

writes. "For example, computer lab seating at the secondary level could be reconfigured from rows to pods to allow for student collaboration."

Miller's article, "Designing for New Educational Technology," is available online at www.asbj.com/HomePageCategory/Online-Features/ReadingsReports. Our new online-only Green Strides column, with a plethora of free resources and information, can be found there, as well.

Read our rich collection of facilities and design articles at www.asbj.com/TopicsArchive/FacilitiesandSchoolDesign. online-only.

ALSO ONLINE FOR THIS ISSUE:

- Doug Eadie's Governance column has moved online to www.asbj.com/HomePageCategory/Online-Features/ReadingsReports. In his latest column, Eadie outlines how school board-savvy superintendents can help board members own their governing processes.
- A Wisconsin school district, in partnership with the local police department and municipal court, put together a plan to reduce truancy for the hardest-to-reach students. Read how they did it at www.asbj.com/HomePageCategory/Online-Features/ReadingsReports.
- Keep up with the latest education reports and research at www.asbj.com/MainMenuCategory/Supplements/EVS.



Q&A

with teacher and *Freedom Writers* author Erin Gruwell



ERIN GRUWELL HAS AN INCREDIBLE story to tell. As a novice English teacher in a California high school, she was assigned the “worst” students—troubled, unmotivated, headed for failure.

How Gruwell was able to transform the lives of her students is the stuff of books and movies—indeed, she and her students published their story in the book, *The Freedom Writers Diary*. In 2007, the book was made into a movie, “Freedom Writers,” starring Hilary Swank.

Gruwell talked recently to ASBJ Editor-in-Chief Kathleen Vail on her role as a General Session speaker at NSBA’s annual conference in New Orleans in April.

What role did your school board play in what you were able to achieve with your students?

At first I was a maverick—doing things on

the outside. When I went to my supervisor, our school was in transition. The demographics had changed. He was antagonistic to the kids in my class. When I was turned down for books, I took other jobs to pay for them. When I formed a relationship with my superintendent and school board members, it changed things. Board members asked, “Why are you buying books when we have them in the warehouse? These were tangible things that I didn’t know I had access to. With 150 kids, I couldn’t do it by myself. Folks who had power said, “Let us help you.” That was amazing.

How did you view school leaders when you started teaching?

A school board helps run the school system—I didn’t know that when I was learning to be a teacher. My kids weren’t the kids who got access to museums; their

families could not afford it. I would sit down with my school board members, and they would help me get from point A to point B. I couldn’t do half of what I do without their support, making me not afraid of the power structure.

What happened when you approached your board?

The greatest risk yields the greatest rewards. I was low in the food chain. I wasn’t a chair, or dean, or administrator. Why would someone listen to an ordinary teacher? My students had the worst test scores in the district. They had been incarcerated, been in rehab. It would have been easy to marginalize my students. I had to paint a picture. I have to humanize them. The board became human to me as well. That was an incredible revelation. It was exciting when they showed up at events and field trips. The students felt that someone in power cared about them. Marginalized kids go through life feeling like they have a bull’s-eye on their chest. For people in power to look on them as humans was a revelation.

What would you like school leaders to know?

I encourage board members to seek out those kids, to show up in classrooms. I want to encourage these people who do have power to understand what that power can yield. They can go into classrooms, mentor kids, be a role model, and make a difference.



ONLINE EXTRA

For an in-depth interview with Gruwell, go to www.asbj.com.