Why 5 Questions?

Many educators are eager and excited to start makerspaces in their schools, but feel overwhelmed with information and unsure of where to start. By asking yourself these five questions as you plan, you can better figure out what your next steps will be. Fill out the answers to these questions - work on it by yourself, or form a Makerspace Planning Committee with students, teachers and other stakeholders and work through them as a group. Either way, this will help you to form a better foundation on which to build your makerspace.

1. **What are the goals of my Makerspace?**

Are you focused on getting students to exercise their creativity? To learn about electronics hands-on? To design and prototype their own creations? To practice engineering skills? While a Makerspace can do all of those things, some people want to focus on one domain more than another. Some are focused on providing exposure to technologies that students would never see otherwise. Some are more interested in creative expression through crafts and DIY. Both are valid.

*What are my goals in creating this makerspace?*

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2. What resources does my school already have that I can use?

The needs of a 1:1 school or a school where every single student has some type of device are going to be different from a school that doesn’t have functional wi-fi. Your library might already have an iPad cart. Your school might already have a robotics team or woodshop. Your science department might have bins of K’nex that they bought years ago that are just sitting around. These need to be considered as you put together your Makerspace proposal. Make sure to ask around and talk to teachers, parents and even custodial staff. There could be a mine of makerspace resources in a storage room you don’t know about.

What resources do I already have?
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3. How much physical space do I have available?

While the dream would be to have a dedicated room, most schools don’t have this much space. My Makerspace started on a couple of library tables and grew to take over one corner of the library and a storage room. Consider how much room you have for supplies and where you’ll store them when not in use. There’s no sense in getting a ton of stuff if there’s nowhere to put it. Many schools are putting together Makerspace carts that can be put away when not in use. Maker carts are easy to DIY, or you could invest in something like the Copernicus STEM Maker Station.

How much space do I have (and how much space could I make)’? Do I need a mobile option?
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4. How will teachers and students use the makerspace?

Will it be a mobile Makerspace that travels to individual classrooms? Will classes come to the space specifically to use it? Is it geared towards students who have a little free time? Or will there be a Maker Club? All of these need to be considered when figuring out what you will get. If it’s a drop-in-when-you-have-free-time Makerspace, LEGOs and LittleBits will be easier for students to use than a bunch of Arduino’s and soldering irons. If there will be a specific, regular group with dedicated storage, more in-depth projects can work better.

How will our space be used by students and teachers?

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5. Where will I get the supplies and/or how will I fund them?

There’s so many different ways to outfit your Makerspace. You’re likely to have more success trying to get a few things at a time than writing a $10,000 grant. Focus on smaller grants, DonorsChoose projects, bookfair profits, etc. Also, see what you can get donated. Many stores are willing to donate broken electronics for a tech-take-apart station. Parents may have LEGOs sitting around their house that they’d be happy to give to the school.

How will I fund and source supplies?

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Original Post Content at:
http://renovatedlearning.com/2014/03/26/5-questions-to-ask-yourself-when-planning-a-makerspace/
When I first wrote the five questions post two months after starting our makerspace in our library, I had no idea what an amazing, dynamic space it would become for our students. Over the last three years, I’ve spent a lot of time building up and growing our makerspace program. I’ve also visited other schools and spoken to teachers, librarians and other educators who are creating makerspaces in their schools.

Now that you’ve worked through the Five Questions and started thinking deeply about what you want your makerspace to be, I want to offer some more advice and words of encouragement.

Don’t wait til you’re ready

It can be tempting to want to plan every last detail of your makerspace. To have a perfect storage plan. To have all the standards you want to correlate to written out.

DON’T DO THAT.

Your students need a makerspace NOW, not in five months once you’ve figured everything out. Start small and build from there. That picture is literally from the first hour of our makerspace. I just put out a few bins of K’nex in the middle of our library and waited to see what would happen. Take baby steps. Start where you’re at. Let your students help to guide you. It’ll be amazing :)

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Be prepared to advocate for your space

Hopefully, your teachers, parents and administrators will think that what you’re doing is super awesome and will support you 100%. But the unfortunate reality is that someone will probably push back. Some might even declare that your space is a waste of time and money and that the students are just “goofing off” in your space. Arm yourself with research on makerspaces and how they can benefit students (see my Defining Makerspaces post for ideas). Be prepared to explain the amazing learning that happens through play, why classrooms and libraries don’t need to be quiet, and why the mess is okay (see my Advocating for Makerspaces in Libraries post on AASL Knowledge Quest).

Remember: It’s all about the kids

You might have to fight for funds. You might have to defend your reasoning for creating the space. You might spend hours cleaning up after an excited group of students finishes a cardboard challenge. Remember - it’s ultimately all about the kids. It will probably take a lot of work and time to get your makerspace where you want it to be. But it will totally be worth it in the end :)

More Resources to Get You Started:

• Posts on Starting a Makerspace on Renovated Learning
• Makerspace Resources on RenovatedLearning
  • [http://renovatedlearning.com/makerspace-resources/](http://renovatedlearning.com/makerspace-resources/)
• My Makerspace Ideas + Inspiration Pinterest Page (be sure to check out my other Pinterest pages as well)
  • [http://tinyurl.com/makerpinterestideas](http://tinyurl.com/makerpinterestideas)