Flexible Learning Environments Open Unlimited Possibilities

Justin Ingham, a third-grade teacher at Gatewood Elementary, was in his 14th year of teaching when he decided to do something completely different. Inspired by a presentation his colleague gave during workshop week, he became interested in creating a flexible classroom — a fluid space that allowed students to customize their learning environments. It was one week before the first day of school, not exactly the best time to tear apart your entire classroom, but it was now or never. And one thing was clear: if he was going to build this environment, all of the desks in his classroom needed to go.

Ingham’s first flexible classroom was bare bones and made mostly with extra furniture he found in his school’s back hallway. A few months into his experiment, his classroom was chosen as a pilot site to test out flexible furniture. But the change was bigger than removing the desks and replacing them with fun furniture — it’s about the learning that happens when you change the classroom environment.

“This is not about furniture, it’s about the psychology that is behind this,” said Karen Terhaar, director of teaching and learning for Hopkins Public Schools. “When you have a lot of open space, there is a peacefulness to the space that changes how students respond.”

Flexible learning spaces are just one way that Hopkins Public Schools is pushing the engagement of all my kids, and with a flexible classroom, I am getting more quality work from all my kids, and the engagement is much higher,” Ingham said. “I want to increase the engagement of my room to 100 percent, and with a flexible classroom, I am getting more quality work from all my kids, and the engagement is much higher.”

In a flexible classroom, students choose the space that works best for their learning.

Flexible classrooms look and feel different from traditional classrooms. Desks are replaced with a variety of learning spaces that allow students to sit, stand, recline, wiggle, and collaborate. Throughout the day, students can roam freely around the classroom, rotating to the learning space that works best for them. All of this means students have greater ownership over their learning and can participate in it with greater frequency.

“The goal was to give students choice,” Ingham said. “I want to increase the engagement of my room to 100 percent, and with a flexible classroom, I am getting more quality work from all my kids, and the engagement is much higher.”

21st century classrooms
Hopkins teachers began exploring flexible learning spaces a few years ago. The secondary level implemented flexibility differently because students rotate spaces more frequently. Some classes contain a hybrid of flexible seating and traditional desks. North Junior High introduced flexible furniture in its media center and secondary level implemented flexibility differently because students rotate spaces more frequently. Some classes contain a hybrid of flexible seating and traditional desks. North Junior High introduced flexible furniture in its media center and secondary level implemented flexibility differently because students rotate spaces more frequently. Some classes contain a hybrid of flexible seating and traditional desks. North Junior High introduced flexible furniture in its media center and the gifted and talented Autonomous Learning Model (ALM) class used these concepts long before there was language for it.

Tracy Beaverson, now a teacher at Meadowbrook Elementary, was one of the first elementary teachers to pioneer this shift in her classroom. It was an idea she heard about in HopDina, a professional development cohort that serves Hopkins and Edina public schools. Teachers were grappling with how to teach in classrooms that were designed to prepare students for industrial work. Collaboration is now critical in the classroom, and a technology-rich curriculum means that the teacher is no...
Chinese Immersion Expands to Hopkins High School

Eleven years ago, XinXing Academy, the Chinese immersion program at Hopkins Public Schools, enrolled its first students. Two sections of kindergarten embarked on a new journey. Now a robust K-10 immersion program with 430 students, XinXing is reaching another milestone as it grows into high school.

The inaugural high school class has 22 students and is taught by Xin Zhang. She began her career at Hopkins two years ago with XinXing@West. Zhang, who had only taught Mandarin Chinese world language, is embracing the opportunity to provide Hopkins High School students with a full immersion experience.

In the classroom, students are polishing their written and oral abilities; they are also learning important life skills through new curriculum designed for the college level, both speaking and thinking in Chinese.

“While it is challenging, I believe it opens their minds to what it truly means to be a global citizen,” Zhang said.

Academically, students are introduced to the many sides of Chinese culture. For example, Zhang teaches them about communication differences in a large city like Shanghai versus more rural communities.

Each week students are graded on how well they use Chinese in the classroom and their written skills on homework in Google Classroom. Technology is an important part of the XinXing culture and allows students to interact with China from their Minnesota classroom. Zhang relies on videos and online resources to bring practical lessons to her students.

While XinXing has entered the high school, it is still evolving. A grade will continue to be added until the program is incorporated through 12th-grade. K-12 World Language and Immersion Coordinator Molly Wieland credits the pioneer group of curious learners who have learned to be flexible in the face of uncharted “newness.”

“They have demonstrated commitment to making Chinese part of their education throughout high school,” she said. “Having a high level of proficiency in Chinese will set them apart from others as they move into college and the work place.”

Read the full story online by visiting HopkinsSchools.org.

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**XinXing @ HHS Highlights:**

- Students are learning new curriculum designed for the college level, both speaking and thinking in Chinese.
- Coursework is designed to deepen students’ understanding of Chinese culture through topics such as education, government, and social issues.
- Practical life skills such as looking for an apartment, finding a job, and navigating currency are introduced.
- As 10th-graders, students will master 350 new Chinese characters and will practice more formal writing and speaking styles.

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**Flexible Classrooms, continued from cover**

Flexible classrooms no longer the only source of information in the room. The learning environment needs to reflect the learning expectations.

“We are changing our teaching styles, but the room was stagnant,” Beaverson said. “I would move kids around and change desks, but it was not easy, and it was not conducive to the collaborative, creative learning environment I was trying to produce.”

**Ditching the desks**

At the elementary level, when young kids are in one room for most of the day, desks can be problematic. Ingham estimates that at least half of his kids struggled to sit still in the same spot all day. A flexible learning space acknowledges the need to move and allows the student to choose the space they need to stay engaged in their work. It empowers both the students and the teacher.

“Once the idea of an assigned seat is out of the picture, I am allowed to trust my students and engage with them where they are, instead of trying to manage where they should be — it strengthens our relationship,” Ingham said.

Emma Henke, a fourth-grade teacher at Meadowbrook Elementary, shifted her classroom at the start of this school year. She created a variety of collaborative spaces and a number of configurations that allowed students to work independently. Her students give her feedback on what they need, and she adapts her classroom accordingly. She continues to be surprised by the spaces students are drawn to, but she is also impressed by the results she is seeing.

“You have to be reflective and adaptive,” she said. “I really did not think the pillows would be such a hit. The students sit in the most random places, but I have seen their stamina grow, as well as their ability to work with partners and in groups. My students are better able to focus.”

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**What does a flexible classroom look like?**

1. The carpet is the room’s anchor. It’s where students sit at the start of the day.
2. It’s OK for a student to sit like this as long as they are engaged in learning.
3. Students are 100% engaged in reading, while the teacher works 1:1 with another student.
4. Spaces for collaborative learning.
Hopkins third-grade teacher Justin Ingham found his home when he landed his first post-graduate job at Gatewood Elementary. And 15 years later, he’s just as enthusiastic for his students as he was on the first day.

“I have always loved the diversity and culture growing up in Minneapolis, and I knew I wanted to work in a similar environment one day,” he said. “Gatewood was the first teaching position I held after earning my degree, and it felt like home from the start.”

During his career with Hopkins, he has taught both second and third grades. He prides himself on implementing teaching techniques that are “heavily focused in equity, technology, and personalized learning.” Ingham has been instrumental in implementing flexible classrooms at Gatewood, which give students the opportunity to work in an environment that best suits their learning needs.

Julie Kloos, fellow Gatewood teacher and advocate for flexible classrooms, said Ingham’s innovative idea to get rid of desks has encouraged students to work harder. She said his determination to bring learning into the 21st century has been inspiring to the school as a whole, and now their entire team uses flexible seating.

“He has a fresh view of learning and is willing to go out on a limb to try new things,” Kloos said. “Justin is trustworthy. What he says, he really believes in. He sees the positive in everyone and can bring out the best in his students.”

**Background:** Justin grew up in Minneapolis and stayed in the Twin Cities for college. He attended and graduated from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul.

**What do you love most about working at Hopkins Public Schools?** I love Gatewood because I feel like I am part of the supportive Hopkins community. I value the relationships with students and families. And because I also live here, these connections are carried beyond the school. I love seeing students’ reactions when they see me outside of school.

**Proudest moment?** With each school year my proudest moment is when a room full of students eventually comes together as a community. From the first day of school, we focus on building our own little community, which provides support, respect, caring, and honesty among their classmates. By the end of each year, it feels as if a family is moving out of the room and on to the next grade.

**What is your crowning achievement?** Last year I integrated flexible seating into the classroom. Something as simple as offering different seating options can shift how a student learns or dramatically improves their ability to focus.

**Stats:** Bachelor of Arts from the University of St. Thomas • Justin has worked for Hopkins Schools for 15 years, and all of his career has been spent at Gatewood Elementary School. Over the years he has taught both second and third grades. He is also a champion of flexible classrooms.

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**Tonya Christianson: 1995 graduate**

**Stats:** Cook Manager at Eisenhower Elementary School 
- Associate’s degree, Hennepin Technical College

**Fun fact:** Tonya Christianson has been walking the halls of Hopkins Public Schools nearly her entire life. The proud Royal is now making sure students have the fuel necessary to be successful. For the last 13 years, Christianson has been putting her spin on nutritious scratch-made school meals as a school lunch professional.

**Favorite hangout spot during Hopkins High School?** The halls outside of the old gym.

**Favorite music artist of 1995?** The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.

**What Hopkins teacher made a difference?** Mrs. Nelson, the home economics teacher. I took just about every cooking class offered by the home economics department.

**How did Hopkins prepare you?** Hopkins had and still has amazing, supportive teachers who look out for the best interest of their students. Hopkins is a great community. It is great to see it grow and be a part of it.

**HOPKINS UPDATE REFERENDUM 2017**

**Karyn Leibovich: 2000 graduate**

**Stats:** Producer on Sesame Street program "Sesame Workshop" • Bachelor’s degree, University of Maryland, College Park

**Fun facts:** Hopkins grad Karyn Leibovich is part of television history. A primetime TV producer living in New York City, Leibovich is making a name for herself behind the scenes. Her expertise in the field of producing recently won her a Primetime Emmy Award for her work on the special “Once Upon a Sesame Street Christmas.”

**Favorite hangout spot during Hopkins High School?** The Mall.

**Favorite music artist of 2000?** NSYNC, Backstreet Boys, and Dave Matthews Band.

**What Hopkins teacher made a difference?** Mr. Clark always gave us the creative control of the yearbook and was always there for guidance and support. Editing, storytelling, and interviewing are all skills I learned and still use.

**How did Hopkins prepare you?** Some of my greatest memories growing up are at Hopkins Public Schools and with the lifelong friends that I had made.

**Stats:** Bachelor of Arts from the University of St. Thomas • Mike Miller graduated from the University of St. Thomas • Mike Miller is a lifelong learner. He has traveled the world perfecting his Spanish and recently received a grant to study and live in Seville, Spain.

**Favorite hangout spot during Eisenhower High School?** Math resource room. We had “mod flex” scheduling and could be wherever we wanted during non-class time.

**Favorite music artist of 1978?** ZZ Top.

**What Hopkins teacher made a difference?** Probably the one who had the most influence on my life was Pat Lanin, our coach for cross-country running, cross country skiing, and track.

**How did Hopkins prepare you?** Hopkins brought me out of my shell. I learned to do things I had never attempted, with people who would become lifelong friends.

**Stats:** AP Spanish teacher at Spring Lake Park High School • Bachelor’s degree in psychology and Spanish, St. John’s University; Master’s degree, University of St. Thomas

**Farhiya Rashid: 2000 graduate**

Farhiya Rashid is a familiar face at Hopkins Public Schools, especially inside Eisenhower Elementary and XinXing Academy. A mother of kids whose ages range from elementary to high school, Farhiya is as involved as they come. But she loves most to volunteer her time with the Eisenhower Elementary and XinXing Parent-Teacher Organization. In her second year as the PTO’s volunteer coordinator, she ensures all events and activities are staffed and run smoothly. Her passion for helping her community and Hopkins schools is evident in her involvement with her kids and their activities.

“I really love Hopkins Schools and this community,” Farhiya said. “And I asked myself, ‘How can I help?’ And I knew PTO was the best option for me.”

**Stats:** Bachelor of Arts from the University of St. Thomas • Farhiya Rashid is a familiar face at Hopkins Public Schools, especially inside Eisenhower Elementary and XinXing Academy. A mother of kids whose ages range from elementary to high school.

**Fun facts:** It’s fair to say Hopkins grad Mike Miller never really left the classroom. From his days here at Hopkins when Eisenhower High School was still around, to his storied 32-year teaching career, Miller is a lifelong learner. He has traveled the world perfecting his Spanish and recently received a grant to study and live in Seville, Spain.

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October/November Events

Hopkins-Minnetonka Youth Chess Tournament
- Play against other chess players in your grade, eat lunch, and receive a prize!
  - Saturday, October 21, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
  - Visit HopkinsCommunityEd.org to register or call 952-988-4070

Winter Warm Wear Drive – Donate winter outerwear for local children.
  - Donate through the end of October.
    ResourceWest, 1011-1st St. S., Hopkins • ResourceWest.org • 952-933-3860

Young People’s Concert – Kid-friendly entertainment with the Hopkins High School orchestra.
  - Tuesday, October 24, 5:45-7 p.m.
    Hopkins High School, 2400 Lindbergh Drive, Minnetonka

Fall Fiber Festival – Fleece, yarn, finished items, and all kinds of gifts!
  - Saturday, November 4, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
    Eisenhower Community Center Gym, 1001 Highway 7, Hopkins

Warp Speed: Parenting in the Digital Age – Join us to explore the world of kids and technology, and how to navigate the evolving parenting landscape.
  - Monday, November 13, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
    Register at HopkinsCommunityEd.org.

Hopkins High School Fall Musical:
    Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat
  - November 16-18, 7-9 p.m., November 18, 2-4 p.m.
    Hopkins High School Auditorium, 2400 Lindbergh Drive, Minnetonka

XinXing Chinese Immersion Information Fair 2017
- Join us for the XinXing Chinese Immersion Information Fair to learn about the Chinese immersion program at Hopkins Public Schools!
  - Thursday, November 16, 6 p.m.
    1001 Highway 7, Hopkins

Questions? Call 952-988-4300

Cast Your Vote on Nov. 7!

Hopkins School Board Election
- Five candidates are vying for three open seats on the Hopkins School Board. The candidates — Chris LaTondresse, Steve Semler, Fartun Ahmed, Jen Westmoreland Bouchard, and Kevin Bennett — are running for seats currently held by incumbents Betsy Anderson, Warren Goodroad, and Doobie Kurus, none of whom are seeking re-election.

Referendum 2017
- Hopkins Public Schools is conducting a referendum on Tuesday, Nov. 7, with three ballot questions — a bond to update and expand our facilities, a capital projects levy to support technology and curriculum, and an operating levy to maintain Hopkins Public Schools’ programs and services.

See more about the referendum inside or visit HopkinsSchools.org/referendum.

Hopkins High School Homecoming!

Juniors at the Hopkins High School pep fest wore yellow, their class color.

Hopkins pride was at a fever pitch during the week of Oct. 2, as the Royals celebrated homecoming week. Students dressed up for theme days, hosted a rousing pep rally, and crowned new royalty — king Antonio Suarez and queen Shaquanda Young. Under the Friday night lights, the Royals faced off against the Cadets from St. Thomas Academy. Both teams put up a fight, but Hopkins came out on top with an exciting last-minute win, with a final score of 21-19. Homecoming came to a close on Saturday, Oct. 7, at the dance.

Homecoming week also played out on social media. Relive the fun by viewing it on Twitter with the hashtag #RoyalsHC17.
Community to Vote on Three Questions on November 7
Hopkins Public Schools is conducting a referendum on Tuesday, November 7, with three ballot questions — a bond to update and expand our facilities, a capital projects levy to support technology and curriculum, and an operating levy to maintain Hopkins Public Schools' programs and services.

Ballot Question 1
Bond: Build for the Future
Voters will be asked to authorize a $30 million bond to fund renovations and repairs to school sites and facilities. Approximately $6.9 million will be used to refinance our lease levy at a lower interest rate, at a cost savings to our taxpayers.

Ballot Question 2
Capital Projects Levy: Advance the Innovation
Voters will also be asked to repeal the existing 2010 and 2013 capital projects levies, and combine them into one levy. These two levies currently generate $9.4 million annually for curriculum and technology. The District is proposing a slight increase of less than half a percent (.44%), which would generate an additional $500,000 annually.

Ballot Question 3
Operating Levy: Continue the Excellence
Voters will also be asked to repeal the current operating referendum levy and replace it with a new, 10-year levy that keeps the per-student revenue amount the same. This investment will continue to generate $15 million annually. If approved, this would have no additional tax impact on homeowners.

One Low Tax Impact
If all three questions are approved, the tax impact would be $3 per month for a $250,000 home, the average home value in our District.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Property Value</th>
<th>Question 1 Bond</th>
<th>Question 2 Capital Project Levy</th>
<th>Question 3 Operating Levy</th>
<th>Tax Impact for All Three Questions</th>
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Stats about Hopkins Public Schools
- When asked what they like most about Hopkins Public Schools, people said “Good Teachers” and “Quality of Education.”
- 89% of District residents rated the quality of education as Excellent or Good.
- In 2017, Hopkins High School was named one of “America’s Best High Schools That Challenge Their Students to Excellence” by the Washington Post.
- According to Niche.com, Hopkins Public Schools is ranked the sixth Best School District in Minnesota.
- Hopkins Public Schools is endorsed by the Minnesota High Tech Association for its leading efforts with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math).
- For the fourth year in a row, Hopkins High School was named a Silver Medalist School by U.S. News and World Report.
Question 1: Build for the Future
Authorize a $30 million bond to fund renovations and repairs to school sites and facilities.

**Bond Projects:**

**Expansions: 38%**
- Add seven classrooms to Meadowbrook Elementary to meet current enrollment demands.
- Add 5,900 square feet to the high school cafeteria to allow for a single location for students to eat.
- Reconfigure the high school kitchen to eliminate over-crowding in the food service line.

**Refinance: 23%**
- Refinance our $6.9 million lease levy at a lower interest rate, and at a cost savings to our taxpayers.

**Increase Learning Spaces: 20%**
- Junior high learning labs for hands-on STEM activities that meet the requirements of our International Baccalaureate Middle Years program.
- Multi-purpose room at the high school for expanded music opportunities for students.

**Basic Repairs, Upgrades, and Maintenance: 19%**
- Reconfigure the Glen Lake Elementary parking lot to increase safety.
- Improve the athletic fields at West Junior High.
- Upgrade the locker rooms, stadium, and the concession stands at the high school.
- Additional storage for arts, athletics, and activities programs.

How does our bond compare?
The graph below compares the bond amount Hopkins Public Schools is asking for with three of our neighboring school districts.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>School District</th>
<th>Bond Amount</th>
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<td>Hopkins Public Schools</td>
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<td>Wayzata Public Schools</td>
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<td>St. Louis Park Public Schools</td>
<td>$100,900,000</td>
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How much will all of this cost per month?

$2 + $1 + $0 = $3

Assumes a home value of $250,000

HopkinsSchools.org/referendum

Question 2: Advance the Innovation
Combine our 2010 and 2013 capital projects levies into one with a slight increase (.44%).

What is funded by the Capital Projects Levy?
The capital projects levy is a vital resource to the innovation that is happening in our classrooms every day.

Projects supported through this levy allow Hopkins Public Schools to create robust digital learning environments from preschool through high school.

The capital projects levy allows us to:
- Purchase curriculum materials, instructional materials, and textbooks.
- Implement and maintain 1:1 digital device programs.
- Upgrade and replace technology equipment and infrastructure.
- Support teachers with the tools, materials, and expertise required for high-quality teaching.
- Enhance electronic communication systems for families.

Our Community Supports Technology

100 percent of parents surveyed gave Hopkins Public Schools an Excellent or Good rating for its use of technology.

83 percent of parents agreed with the statement “a personal computing device helps students achieve more.”

39 percent of parents said technology in the classroom was absolutely essential.

46 percent said it was very important.

According to a spring 2016 survey

Question 3: Continue the Excellence
Repeal the current operating levy and replace it with a new, 10-year levy that keeps the per-student revenue amount the same. This investment will continue to annually generate $15 million of the District’s $89 million budget, or roughly 17 percent of the general fund.

If passed, the new operating levy will allow Hopkins Public Schools to continue to offer proven student programming and services throughout the District.

General Fund Budget

Information or questions:
Online: HopkinsSchools.org/referendum
Email: Communications@HopkinsSchools.org
Phone: 952-988-4099