Reading Kingdoms:
Reading Room Conceptual Designs

P.S. 33 Timothy Dwight School, Bronx, N.Y. —Richard H. Lewis Architects

Community Partner: Reading Kingdoms
Academic Partner: Community Partnership Design Center
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Community Partnerships Center

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Introduction & Methodology

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Who is Reading Kingdoms?

Due to a growing concern for the struggling school systems in Rhode Island, Eric Lopez, Tatia Lopez, and Robert Green developed the idea of a place where children can come and learn to read outside of school. With their various backgrounds in the field of education, they understand the value of reading as a component to success in an education system. They plan to use a foreclosed house in the area near struggling elementary schools to provide a homelike environment for children that is easily accessible after school. A variety of reading settings will be provided, including independent reading or caregiver provided reading areas. The team of workers is multilingual and multicultural to support the community’s needs.

(http://www.readingkingdoms.org/about-us/)
Project Statement

This project packet demonstrates several best practices of reading room designs for Reading Kingdoms. The research encompasses best practices from similar organizations or projects with similar motives. The project produces interior collages/montages for an idealized undetermined space. RWU Architecture students look at how to create a space that will provide a comfortable reading area with reading pods, lofts and comfortable furniture that will stimulate reading and learning. The team studied ideas presented by Reading Kingdoms, which are:

1. A comfortable reading area with reading pods, lofts and comfortable furniture that will stimulate reading.

2. The overall space will be divided into areas where students can have a caregiver read to them.

3. One of the areas will include computer stations and open tables for homework.

4. A kitchen to reflect “a home” where students can get snacks and drinks.

5. A small office to be located at the entrance for check in and out.

Project Methodology

Initially this project was intended to be a design proposal exercise featuring a drawing set comprised of plans, sections, renderings and other drawings. Reading Kingdoms would have used this drawing set as a means to raise funds and complete the project. Through meeting with the client, the students on the project learned that a definitive space was not determined for Reading Kingdoms, thus drawings could not be completed. Students reconsidered the deliverables for the project, which became a best practices proposal providing options on design ideas and products from precedent projects. This report will be useful to Reading Kingdoms to understand what similar organizations have done, and which products might be useful for their purposes.
List of Program & Product Options

• Beanbag corner for reading
• Couches and chairs for reading (chairs w wheels, stable chairs, cushioned/ non-cushioned)
• Backpack and belonging storage (cubbies and hooks)
• Book shelving
• Tables for homework and snacks
• Kitchen area (refrigerator, microwave, counter space, sink, cabinetry, pantry for large item storage)
• Carpeting, tile floor
• Corkboards, projector screen
• Games for after children finish work
• Computers
Robinhood Foundation Architects

The Robinhood Foundation and New York City Department of Education partnered to create the L!brary Initiative, which aimed to improve the libraries in NYC public schools. Several architects and designers created designs to spark the love of reading for children. Various architects that worked on this initiative are listed below.


L!BRARY

L!brary Initiative

“The L!brary Initiative, a partnership of the Robin Hood Foundation and the New York City Department of Education, with support from the Mayor, corporate donors, and a team of architects, seeks to reverse these patterns of low literacy skills and underachievement by working with community school districts and public elementary schools to design, build, equip, and staff new elementary school libraries. Working with schools in high poverty neighborhoods that have low academic achievement, the partners are committed to fundamentally transforming school libraries into vital resources for the whole school community—students, teachers, and parents—that will impact and contribute to improved student performance.”

- (https://www.robinhood.org/initiatives/library)
The shelving around the perimeter allows for an open space which utilizes movable furniture. The movable furniture can be rearranged for various sizes of groups to read together. The transaction counter is at a height suitable for children.

P.S. 106 Edward Everett Hale – Brooklyn, N.Y.

Stadium style seating allows a place for reading activity or performances. Quotes from favorite books cover the walls. Large open spaces allow for various interactions among students and teachers. Movable seating can be rearranged for various group sizes and activities.

(http://www.rockwellgroup.com/projects/the-library-initiative)
Computer tables, a reception counter with a bench and a curtained off performance area all offer variety of space use in one room. The reception counter is at a height which is accessible for children to pull up a chair and work with an adult staff member. The computer stations can be used individually or collaboratively with moveable stools. A freestanding curtain system floats in the center of the room to create a performance area.

(http://www.tsao-mckown.com/project/ps-19/)
These fun seating bubbles without back support help children stay focused during story time. The various colors of the bubble seating create a fun learning environment for children to choose their individual spot. Carpet for comfy reading and wood for durable workspace are the flooring solutions in this project. Furniture on wheels can easily be moved throughout the hardwood floor.

(http://www.mparchitectsnyc.com/work/institutional/ps1-bergen-school-library/)
P.S. 46 Edgar Allen Poe – Bronx, N.Y.

A collection of several tables can be used for both study time and snack time. The playfully shifted bookshelves create large and small openings that can be used to semi-divide the space, provide seating and/or entrance openings.

(http://www.1100architect.com/projects/robin-hood-library-initiative/)
A variety of seating styles in one area including a couch, bench, table and chairs provides opportunity for different interactions. Seating embedded in the shelving creates a comfy nook for reading. Low coffee tables are at a height for children to sit on the ground while working.

(http://twbta.com/work/robinhood-foundation-library-initiative)
Design Inspiration Images
Computer Stations

This computer station at St. Louis public library provides semi private sections while still allowing communication with the child at neighboring station. The comfy colorful chairs are inviting and provide individuality for each station.

Computer Stations (Continued)

This computer station at Queens Creek Public Library features a more graphic divider, which can be fun for children, though potentially distracting from schoolwork. The chairs with wheels allow for easy movement and adjustment of the chair. Chairs with wheels tend to work best on tile flooring, rather than carpet.

Workspace Dividers

This divider can be arranged in several different ways as viewed in the above link. The dividers are playful in their color variety and ability to be moved on wheels. The punched wholes ensure safety of visibility into and out from the enclosure.

(http://demcointeriors.co.uk/duston-school-library)
Backpack Storage

Considering many of the children will come to this program directly from school, it is important to have storage for all of their belongings including backpacks, lunch bags, coats etc. This solution is fun and unique and might fit well with the concept of Reading Kingdoms in a way to bring the feel of the outdoors in.

(http://www.whatihavelearnedteaching.com/five-cooperative-learning-activities-to-do-on-the-first-day-of-school/)
Seating

Flying carpet seating can be installed along walls and provide a large variety of seating combinations for children.

(http://www.area-architecture.com/blog/)
Seating (Continued)

This unit provides both seating and book storage, which can be beneficial in small spaces to maximize use of furniture pieces. The vinyl seating cushions can easily be cleaned from spills or messes. This unit is currently available for $656.95 at thelibrarystore.com.

(http://www.thelibrarystore.com/category/childrens_furniture)
Several beanbag chairs can be grouped in a carpeted area for comfortable seating. This unit is currently available for $19.99 at target.com.

Flooring

Johnsonite Vinyl Enhanced Tile is durable and used in education and healthcare facilities. The material can withstand heavy foot traffic and many heavy-duty cleaning products. This product is available for approximately $3.50 per square foot.

(http://www.johnsonite.com/FlooringProducts/VCT/ColorEssenceTileVET/tabid/1369/Default.aspx)
Alternate Links

The below link will connect to Wayfair school section, where furniture can be purchased for discounted prices.


A projector with HDMI connection capability to a laptop or computer might be useful for presentations, or videos, especially when paired with a low glare whiteboard such as the products in the links below.


- https://www.schooloutfitters.com/catalog/product_family_info/cPath/CAT384_CAT1579/pfam_id/PFAM2284?envmkt=Img1