

Active Learning Center Grant Launches Sixth Cycle

Steelcase Education seeks to partner with educators to create effective, rewarding and inspiring active learning environments.

Old norms are giving way to a deeper, broader and more individualized perspective on what student success is and how to achieve it. Many teachers and administrators are rethinking their teaching methods, curricula, support services and technologies, all with the aim of developing a more relevant and strategic approach. The [Active Learning Center Grant](#) from [Steelcase Education](#) is launching its sixth cycle to identify educators at the leading edge of active learning pedagogies. Steelcase Education seeks to partner with educators to create the most effective, rewarding and inspiring active learning environments to meet the evolving needs of students and teachers.

Following a desire to work with educators to share research about what works and what doesn't and how active learning spaces can help, Steelcase Education has already awarded 68 classrooms through the [ALC Grant](#). Craig Wilson, Steelcase Education director of market development, leads the ALC Grant program. Once again, he and his team are looking for up to 10 new schools to add to the ALC Grant community.

As Steelcase Education launches this latest grant cycle, we asked Craig to answer a few questions.

Steelcase 360: Why is it important to Steelcase Education to offer the Active Learning Center Grant?

Craig: The Active Learning Center Grant is about three things. We want to partner with educators who are implementing new pedagogies and technologies to help them discover space as a tool to advance active learning. We also want to work with educators to learn from one another. Each institution that receives a grant does research on the impact of their new classroom. We combine those findings along with the work done by our Steelcase Education researchers to create a rich knowledge bank available for educators everywhere. Finally, we want to connect a community of educators passionate about the future of education to inspire and help one another which is why we've held two Active Learning Symposiums here in Michigan (Read: [Active Learning Symposium Inspires Educators](#)).

ACTIVE LEARNING CENTER GRANT

Browse resources and learn more about Steelcase Education's Active Learning Center Grant.

Steelcase 360: What do we know about active learning that suggests the environment can help?

Craig: What we're hearing from educators over and over again is that it isn't enough to have the pedagogy, technology or space. You need all three — a holistic approach to active learning. We know if you combine the right space with inspiring teachers and effectively deployed technologies, the environment can help drive better results. Learning spaces can help students think better by supporting the natural capacity and constraints of the brain. Environments can also help students be healthier by supporting active behaviors. And, spaces can help students feel better by providing a strong sense of belonging, optimism and community which, more often than not, leads to engagement. Engagement then leads to student success in school and beyond.

Yet, many classrooms are not designed to support active learning. At Steelcase Education, we invest in research and design to create spaces built to support the way teachers can best teach and students can best learn. During the time of year our team gets to review the ALC Grant submissions, there's a palpable excitement in the air. We love working with and understanding how educators are inspiring students. And, we take selecting the recipients very seriously.

Steelcase 360: What does it mean for recipients who receive the Active Learning Center Grant?

Craig: We wanted to be sure this grant was built to support a partnership between the ALC recipients and Steelcase Education. Teachers and administrators not only have the opportunity to receive an active learning classroom worth up to \$132,000, but we also provide them with training on education strategies, access to research learnings and connections with other grant recipients, in addition to marketing opportunities through Steelcase Education.

Steelcase 360: What results have other grant recipients seen?

Craig: We've seen powerful results. Once the classroom is installed, schools measure what happens in the way that means most to them. Schools report seeing improved test scores, better engagement and positive collaboration amongst students.

Julie Marshall, a seventh grade teacher at Saluda Trail Middle School in Rock Hill, South Carolina says the Active Learning Center classroom brought new life to her school, engaged students and made them excited about learning. Today, the school boasts some of the highest student engagement levels and has positively impacted test scores.

Elbert Yeh, Forest Hills Northern High School science teacher and department chair, credits the grant to helping his classroom achieve more student discussion, new ways for students to learn and improved lesson planning for teachers.

In addition to the middle and high school levels, we've seen results at the university level as well. The University of Arizona shared with us their ALC Grant transformation. Their partnership with Steelcase Education helped them introduce collaboration learning spaces throughout their campus and change the culture of teaching at the university. Teachers are engaging and have fun in their new classrooms and students are participating more as they learn.

These are just a few examples. We've been so energized by what we've seen and we can't wait to see what happens for the next round of grant recipients.

Steelcase 360: What advice would you give a school as they fill out an application?

Craig: I would tell an educator or administrator who is considering applying to go for it. We ask school leaders to think about and describe their goals and how a Steelcase Education Active Learning Center may be able to help. We're looking for schools who know what they are trying to achieve and are willing to partner with us to measure those results.

We also want to encourage educators who have applied before, but have yet to receive the grant, to apply again. A few of our recipients were second time applicants. In fact, one school told us when they didn't get the grant the first time around, it was the best thing that could have happened. They spent time before the second ALC Grant cycle to research active learning and how it could impact their students and teachers.

Steelcase 360: How does a school get started?

Craig: We encourage interested educators to get started right away. We receive hundreds of applicants each year and we personally review every submission. To help support educators who want to write a successful grant, we've created a series of resources including a one-page document with helpful deadlines and requirements listed. Free help is available with a webinar planned for December 9, 3pm ET. Sign up for Smart Strategies for an Active Learning Center Grant.

Applications are accepted from December 2, 2019 and until February 3, 2020.

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Rebecca, an Emmy-winning journalist, reports on global research impacting the places where people work, learn and heal. Over her career, Rebecca spent 17 years covering local and national news events on television and a variety of digital platforms. She directed a digital news group in Kansas City for three years before becoming news director in Grand Rapids, Michigan for more than five years. Prior to Steelcase, Rebecca worked with one of the four largest media groups in the United States to coordinate news coverage among 48 newsrooms from the east to west coast.

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