

BUILDING LEARNING LABS AND INNOVATIVE LEARNING SPACES

Practical guidelines for school leaders and teachers

Case study FRANCE

L'espace Tip-e, Condé-en-Brie school, Aisne



This case study complements the European Schoolnet's publication **"Building learning labs and innovative learning spaces - Practical guidelines for school leaders and teachers" (2019)**. Find the full report and other case studies here: fcl.eun.org/guidelines

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Background and Inspiration

The primary school of Condé-en-Brie is publicly funded and serves 150 students aged 7 to 11 divided into six classes. The school is located in a village of 700 inhabitants in the countryside between Paris and Reims. It is one of a group of schools in nine rural communes with a population that includes disadvantaged families. The school's learning lab project started in June 2017 and at the beginning of 2019 they received funding for restoration work on the room and furniture and to purchase iPads.



The Tip-e learning lab

Christophe Chignardet, the school director, says that his original inspiration came when he was taking part in EUN's [iTEC](http://itec.eun.org)¹ (Innovative Technologies for an Engaging Classroom) project during the years 2010 to 2014.

iTEC piloted future classroom scenarios and educational tools and resources in over 2,500 classrooms across 20 European countries, with the goal of providing a sustainable model for fundamentally redesigning teaching and learning. Christophe was later a founder member of the Future Classroom Lab (FCL) network in France.

As a result of participation in this project, Christophe developed new pedagogical practices and realised that learning spaces need to change. He shared his experiences, including his experience of the FCL network, with his team at his school, who agreed to start their own learning lab project. Knowing that he could rely on a stable group willing to work as a team to achieve their goal was inspiring as well as enabling. Surprisingly, Christophe had never visited the FCL in Brussels until an informal visit in April 2019 and none of his colleagues have visited Brussels, although, of course, they had learned a great deal about it and its aims.

¹ <http://itec.eun.org/web/guest/home>

Planning

The school did not rush to build their own learning lab; Christophe waited until his team felt the need to embark on this project.

Obtaining funding

When the school team were ready to start preparation for the FCL, it was necessary to obtain funding, so the school approached the school union (which groups together 9 local areas).

They needed to develop a well-defined and fully costed proposal to present to the union and then to wait for this to be approved. Christophe notes that "the support of the FCL network proved essential at this stage."

Research and visits

The school's FCL team benefited from learning about the different experiences and approaches of members of the French FCL network. Christophe was also inspired by, and learned from, a visit to the FCLab.fi learning lab in the teacher training school in Oulu, Finland.²

Drivers and Aims

The school had been concerned about a decline in student engagement in schoolwork, a lack of student autonomy and little willingness on their part to solve problems. There was also little investment by students, parents and elected officials in the life of the school. From these concerns emerged a desire to change pedagogical practices, and experiments were conducted in the classrooms. However, it became clear that a different space, dedicated to new approaches to learning was also needed. Therefore, the school team, drawing on the experience of their director and the French Future Classroom Lab Lead Ambassador, decided to embark on converting a former computer room into an FCL, which they decided to call Tip-e, an acronym for Transformation-Innovation-Pedagogy-Space.

The FCL was designed to best meet the need to develop the 21st century skills of:

- Collaboration
- Building knowledge
- Self-regulation
- Real-life problem solving and innovation
- Use of ICT to learn
- Communication.

² <https://fclab.fi/home-en/>

Stakeholders' involvement in the planning process

There was a delay of two years before the school received approval for funding from the local authorities and Christophe recalls that during this time "the teachers rolled up their sleeves and invested some of their time outside of their normal working hours" to start preparation for the FCL including clearing a space, finding and recycling furnishings and looking for very economical solutions.

Planning for the school's FCL was informed by the students' wishes and then by the teachers' goals.

However, Christophe has observed "*this utopian part has been confronted with financial reality*" and the outcome addresses these wishes and goals as far as is possible within the funding available. The project was supported by the district education authority and by the Inspector of Education.

Sharing the vision, plans and progress with stakeholders

The team followed a collective design process, taking into account ideas and experience of learning labs and other innovative learning spaces already developed in Europe.

The output from this process was a 3D representation of the space which was then used for presentations within the school and to external stakeholders and potential sponsors.

Teachers planning work areas in the FCL



Implementation

Christophe, as the director of the school, led the process of setting up the future classroom and he convinced teachers to support the idea by showing them the benefits of the new approach on students in his own classroom. Resistance from teachers to the changes proposed was not a major problem. Some teachers needed time to change their practices, but all of them joined the project with more or less involvement.

There was no resistance to the project from IT or administrative staff and the fact that Christophe is an ambassador of the FCL network gave the district financial decision-makers the confidence to support it.

Training for teachers

To date there has been no formal training arranged for teachers. The teachers involved in setting up Tip-e have learned on the job and shared ideas and good practice.

Alteration of the physical space and learning zones

The example of the FCL in Brussels, with its six learning zones, was the starting point when the school's FCL was being designed. They have implemented all these learning zones and the pedagogical practices put in place were inspired by the 21st Century Skills agenda. The lighting in the classroom was renovated as part of the transformation into an FCL, a small kitchen was installed and rolling furniture was purchased. Much of the set-up work has been done by the teachers themselves, including painting the room.

Impact on space design in other school areas

The practices tested in the future classroom have now spread to all classes in the school as the FCL made the need to change the teaching and learning spaces obvious. All classes have been modified to meet the requirement for students to learn new skills. However, although the layout of these classrooms and the teaching practices within them are the result of experiments in the Tip-e future classroom, each teacher has developed a unique solution informed by their own teaching and the needs of their students. Also, these are not fixed but still evolving regularly as teachers make new discoveries.



More flexible use of other classrooms

Piloting

The school did not pilot the future classroom with a small group; the whole team was involved from the start and the FCL is now open to all the school's teachers.

Summary of the set-up steps

Christophe has summarised the steps the school took as:

- Presentation of students' needs and my new practices
- Involvement of students and teachers in the project.
- Ideal project of students and teachers developed
- Confrontation between the ideal and the constraints of real life
- Presentation of a realistic project
- Implementation with existing equipment
- Start of use
- Various additional investments and modifications

Start-up phase lessons learned

Christophe says: *"We must dare to try even if it seems impossible at first due to cost, new ideas and changes to teaching practices. From the first positive feedback, everyone follows"*.

Using the learning lab

The future classroom is available to all teachers and this was an important element of the original plan.

The way the classroom has been used by teachers and students has changed over time. New practices are tested regularly and then adopted or not in other classrooms depending on how effective and practical teachers believe them to be. The approach of groups of students working on projects together was introduced gradually as this was something many teachers were not used to.



Students working in the Tip-e future classroom

The technology

The technology currently available in the future classroom includes tablets, notebooks, interactive projectors, chromakey (green screen technology) and viewers. All technologies are available to students to use according to their needs.

Timetabling

There is a weekly schedule set up for the classroom and groups of students have access to it three times a week.

Impact

The benefits of the learning lab

Christophe believes that creating and using the future classroom has *"strengthened the collective work of the school"* and that *"there has been greater integration of new technologies and a tendency towards more empathy in the student-teacher relationship."* He also notes that *"students have made progress in their engagement with school work,"* which was the school's initial goal.

Changes in pedagogy and spaces

The experimentations carried out in the Tip-e space are spreading in the classes, teaching practices are changing, new skills are being used and spaces are being modified.



Research

The school is not currently conducting or collaborating to carry out impact research. However, Christophe's role as a local FCL Ambassador means he may be involved in relevant research.

Unexpected results or consequences

Perceived positive results have included

- Improved engagement with students' families
- Improved student engagement with learning
- Strengthening collaborative learning.

A negative result in setting up the FCL has been lack of time to work on other school priorities.

The future

Plans for further development of the future classroom include:

- Improved acoustics
- Improved use of colour
- Continued experimentation with different pedagogical practices
- Sharing experiences with other teachers and schools.

Desired additional support

Funding for time to continue sharing this experience would be very helpful because all of the action taken to-date comes out of working time.

Three key pieces of advice for other schools

Christophe encourages other schools to carry out their own research and then have the courage to take a leap of faith. He says:

- *"Discover"*
- *"Dare"*
- *"Launch out, you will find solutions to the constraints"*

Information about the publication

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