

# California school tries out flexible seating with IKEA furniture

By Los Angeles Times, adapted by Newsela staff on 02.22.18

Word Count **621**

Level **650L**



Image 1. Amanda Garrett works on a project while lying on a mat during a fourth-grade class at Anderson Elementary School. Photo by: Scott Smeltzer/Los Angeles Times/TNS.

You won't find boring old desks and chairs in Alexandria Gladstone-Lamas' fourth-grade classroom. Instead, there's a rainbow of comfy seats.

There are high and low tables to sit at. Two couches have been placed on opposite ends of the room. Bean bags and rocking chairs are scattered on the carpet. There are squishy buoys, like the foam floats you find on boats. There are padded blankets to lie on, too. It's all colorful furniture from IKEA, a popular furniture store.

Students can choose where they'd like to start their day. They rotate seats after recess and lunch. A few students have asked their teacher for assigned seats. They say it helps them focus better. If they change their mind, though, they can move whenever they want to.

## Google-Inspired Seating Arrangements

Anderson Elementary School is in Newport Beach, California. That's about half an hour from Disneyland. At the beginning of the year, Gladstone-Lamas explained the new seating arrangements to her fourth-graders. She told them she was taking a "big risk."

Gladstone-Lamas got the idea from the Google company. Google's offices don't have rows of desks and chairs, either. The company doesn't care if workers need to take a break. They're allowed to laze around on couches. All that matters to Google is that they get their work done. Gladstone-Lamas wanted to run her classroom the same way.

In class, 9-year-old Emily Engel sat on a buoy. She used a laptop to work on a reading report.

"This is better than sitting in a plastic chair. It's uncomfortable and hard. I think every classroom should do this," Emily said.

Some of the other students were spread out on a blanket. Others sat on a couch. Some weren't sitting down at all. One group stood on springy rubber domes called balance trainers. They did their work at a high table, rather than a desk.

Grayson Seery, who is also 9 years old, sat in a gray rolling chair. He worked on a Valentine's Day project at a table low to the floor. He was with two other students.

"I don't miss sitting at a regular desk," Grayson said. "This is amazing. I like working at this giant table. I have never seen a class do this before."



## Now Students Never Want To Leave

Gladstone-Lamas said she's noticed a change since she brought in the new seats. Her students are more interested in class and they behave more calmly. When she was still using desks, Gladstone-Lamas said students were always trying to get out of class. They would run off to the bathroom just to get a break. She said she could go through a whole sign-out sheet in three days. Now, the kids "never want to leave the classroom."



There is a cubby organizer near the back of the classroom. There, students can pick up their exams and homework papers.

Gladstone-Lamas decided to try the new seating after she started using a yoga ball instead of a desk chair at her own desk. After that, she let students bring their own yoga balls to sit on. Soon, though, it became hard to move around the room.

### Teachers Decide What's Best

Shannon Bray is the principal at Andersen. She said Gladstone-Lamas is the first teacher to try out new seating at Anderson. Other classrooms offer some seating like hers, but the school won't make them get more. It's up to the teachers to decide for themselves.

"It's a big undertaking for teachers to move desks and chairs," Bray said. "Kids need to be comfortable to learn."

**I can determine the meaning of a general academic word by using context clues and background knowledge.**

ES	P	I	N
Students can determine the meaning of a general word in an informational text using context clues and background knowledge. They can also identify the strategy used to determine the word.	Students can determine the meaning of a general word in an informational text using context clues and background knowledge.	Students can determine the meaning of a general word in an information text, but cannot use context clues and background knowledge.	Students cannot identify the meaning of a general word by using context clues.

Word	Context Clue	Predicted Meaning	Strategy
Balance Trainers			
Buoy			
Laze			
Offer			
Cubby			