

**Facilities Redesign**  
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This facilities redesign is for the K. W. Barrett school library in Arlington, Virginia. The library serves approximately 513 students, the school staff, and the school community at large. The focus will be on the redesign of the library to better serve the needs of students with neurodiversity needs through a combined makerspace and meditation space. The proposed redesign will support the library's mission to "foster a love of reading, develop information literacy skills, cultivate collaboration and discussion, and promote lifelong learning." Also, the vision statement for Arlington Public School libraries commits school librarians and library staff to "help all learners achieve educational and personal success" and for "[s]chool librarians [to] curate high-quality, diverse information resources and literature in a variety of formats and provide inquiry-rich learning experiences in all content areas, all while fostering critical thinking skills, innovation, and creativity in our students.

The Barrett library is an open space with a high 20 foot ceiling, bright fluorescent lighting, open shelves for browsing and a storytime space with a colorful carpet. Students can move freely in the spaces but can become easily overwhelmed with the bright lights, carryover of loud sounds, and lack of spaces to read a book or have a quiet conversation.

There is a bright and colorful art installation of animals along the upper left side of the library, and doors to classroom spaces on the back wall and right handed walls. The book shelving is in the left side and back area of the library, with a display area and storytime area on the right side. The checkout and information desk is at the front of the library as you enter. There is signage throughout the library identifying parts of the collection. Diversity in the collection is highlighted

with signage on the top of bookshelves. There is currently not a space or materials storage for collaboration or project-based work outside of the carpeted area for storytelling.

The area of consideration for redesign is currently in the back right corner of the library from the entrance. This space currently has some book shelving and an open space for reading with tables and chairs. The goal is to create a collaborative work space in the area that is accessible to neurodiverse students and staff. The new space will be a flexible use area as a makerspace and meditation zone, and will include better sound management for library users with sensory sensitivity. The space will also include a listening station for e-books and music. Storage is built into the portable makerspace workspace, and exhibits of student work will be done through photos at the library entrance.

## **Part 2**

### **Justification**

If the goal of the libraries in Arlington Public Schools is to reach all students, the Barrett Library has an opportunity to alter the spaces for library patrons who are neurodiverse. Students and staff who identify as neurodiverse can include children and adults with symptoms of ADHD, autism spectrum, and anxiety or depression. The changing paradigm within special education is

to move away from a mindset focused on disability and challenges and moving toward an assessment in special education for strengths, talents, abilities, and interests in students (Armstrong, 2017). For example, while some students with ADHD may struggle to listen and sit still in a storytime, they may function well with listening to an e-book, participating in a meditation session, or taking part in a makerspace activity.

On the website, A Novel Mind, that discusses the needs of students with neurodiversity, Meghan Ashburn wrote a blog post about her son's experience in the school library, and the challenges he experiences:

“My child is mostly non-speaking, and uses an AAC (Augmentative/Alternative Communication) device to communicate. He has sensory differences that go mostly unacknowledged, and movement differences that are often chastised. He's in a continuous heightened state of alert due to trauma and communication differences. Add to that, a new environment, a different set of rules, and the pressure of sitting still and being quiet, and library time seems like a recipe for disaster” (Ashburn, 2020).

In light of his challenges, she encourages librarians to include AAC in their storytime sessions, and to allow students with unique strengths to be empowered with choices in book selection and alternate times to explore the library during quieter times.

In a September 9, 2020 online article in *The Atlantic Monthly* magazine, Tracy Murray shares in an interview about the experience of teaching students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in a mixed group classroom. Shifting from forcing the children to conform to

standards-based expectations, and moving towards an instructional approach that encourages student independence and that builds on their strengths and interests. For example, Murray brought a students' love of dinosaurs into a math lesson and also adjusted a writing assignment. The student was empowered and had a longer focus time. Murray explains the focus of the inclusive program:

“We tell the parents we love everything about their children. We’re not trying to change them or fix them in any way. We’re just trying to help them be the most successful that they can be” (Rizga, 2020).

Thomas Armstrong continues on the theme of emphasizing strengths over problems to solve in students who face unique challenges. In the online article for ASCD, Armstrong writes about viewing children not as vessels to be filled but as brain forests to grow.

“A brain-forest metaphor, on the other hand, allows us to speak to students about the beauty of diversity, about how nutrients grow plants in the brain forest, and about the resilience of the brain forest to regrow itself even after suffering substantial damage” (Thompson, 2017).

To move towards a more inclusive environment for students who are neurodiverse, we propose a multipurpose space in the library. The space can be used as either a makerstation or for meditation using the suggested portable materials. In addition, listening stations can also be

available for listening to e-books and music, using flexible seating options and weighted lap pads. Acoustic panels are suggested to reduce the ambient noise in the redesigned space.

### **Action**

September 2022: identify and confirm items to purchase

October 2022: purchase items

January 2023: prototype programming with small groups

February 2023: review feedback from prototyping

March 2023 to June 2023: run programming with larger rotating groups

In terms of staffing, the librarian will identify, confirm and purchase all items to purchase with the principal and library staff. Library staff will work with the building maintenance staff to assemble and move furniture to create the new space. Library staff will prototype, run and evaluate all programming.

### **Budget**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Vendor</b>	<b>Website</b>
Makerspace cart	\$3000		<a href="https://www.thelibrarystore.com/product/cn93-04415/makerspace-workstation">https://www.thelibrarystore.com/product/cn93-04415/makerspace-workstation</a>
Makerspace materials (Lego, art supplies, wire/PVC/wood)	\$740	Michaels Arts and Crafts Home Depot Target	
Storage cabinet	\$600	Library Store	<a href="https://www.thelibrarystore.com/product/91-10572/storage-and-file-cabinets">https://www.thelibrarystore.com/product/91-10572/storage-and-file-cabinets</a>

Acoustic panels	\$650	Alphasorb	<a href="https://acousticalsolutions.com/product/alphasorb-acoustic-panel-room-kit/?attribute_pa_size=medium&amp;attribute_pa_color=medium-grey&amp;utm_source=google&amp;utm_medium=cpc&amp;utm_campaign=SmartShopping-Acoustic%20Panels-Google&amp;utm_content=Fabric%20Wrapped%20Panels&amp;utm_term=&amp;gclid=CjwKCAiAs92MBhAXEiwAXTi2578zDulVgerlzmFmoH_79HSeQ2Ulyh4gUaPgr4KvGp63qri d576e0BoCT9sQAvD_BwE">https://acousticalsolutions.com/product/alphasorb-acoustic-panel-room-kit/?attribute_pa_size=medium&amp;attribute_pa_color=medium-grey&amp;utm_source=google&amp;utm_medium=cpc&amp;utm_campaign=SmartShopping-Acoustic Panels - Google&amp;utm_content=Fabric%20Wrapped%20Panels&amp;utm_term=&amp;gclid=CjwKCAiAs92MBhAXEiwAXTi2578zDulVgerlzmFmoH_79HSeQ2Ulyh4gUaPgr4KvGp63qri d576e0BoCT9sQAvD_BwE</a>
Flexible seating	\$70 x 6 = \$420	Lakeshore Learning	<a href="https://www.lakeshorelearning.com/products/classroom-furniture/chairs-seating/flex-space-premium-floor-seats/p/LK364/">https://www.lakeshorelearning.com/products/classroom-furniture/chairs-seating/flex-space-premium-floor-seats/p/LK364/</a>
Weighted lap pads	\$54.95 Canadian/\$40 US x 6 = \$240	Manimo	<a href="https://manimo.ca/en/">https://manimo.ca/en/</a>
Headphones	\$25 x 6 = \$150	The Library Store	<a href="https://www.thelibrarystore.com/product/80-19119/headphones-abd">https://www.thelibrarystore.com/product/80-19119/headphones-abd</a>
Yoga mats	\$20 x 6 = \$120	Target	<a href="https://www.target.com">www.target.com</a>

Total cost: \$5920

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