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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Step into STEAM*, Grade K-5 by Sarah B. Bush and Kristin L. Cook. Whether you will be building your STEAM physical space in your regular classroom setting, have an already-defined STEAM lab in your school, or are conceptualizing other ideas for STEAM physical spaces, the following excerpt looks at “What a STEAM Classroom Atmosphere Looks Like and Doesn’t Look Like.”

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## What a STEAM Classroom Atmosphere Looks Like and Doesn't Look Like

Whether you will be building your STEAM physical space in your regular classroom setting, have an already-defined STEAM lab in your school, or are conceptualizing other ideas for STEAM physical spaces, consider the following elements in the development of your space:

| Looks Like  | Doesn't Look Like  |
|---|--|
| Students working in collaborative groups, as a whole class, or independently  | Students seated in rows always working individually  |
| Teacher(s) being the guide for student knowledge development and sharing of ideas   | Teacher(s) as keeper of knowledge  |
| Students refining their ideas through research, building, creating, testing, and retesting  | Students being told what works and what doesn't work   |
| Students exploring multiple paths to develop solutions to the problem   | Students being told what steps to take   |
| Students being celebrated for taking risks, trying out new ideas, and persevering even when they reach failure points   | A focus on being correct and/or finding a workable solution the fastest  |
| Students feeling safe and comfortable sharing their ideas and allowing their peers and teachers to challenge and critique their work  | Students feel uncomfortable and fearing being incorrect or not good enough   |
| Teacher(s) scaffolding learning and providing support as needed to meet the needs of each and every learner   | Teacher(s) using a one-size-fits-all approach  |
| Teacher(s) planning and implementing inquiries, posing questions, and designing assessments in ways that are low floor, high ceiling so that each and every student is a contributing member of the classroom community | Teacher(s) planning and implementing inquiries in ways that are not accessible to each and every student                   |
| Students working with a variety of different partners or groups that are strategically selected   | Student partners and groups are not intentional or well planned  |
| Students demonstrating their understanding in authentic ways  | Students demonstrating their understanding in ways that are disconnected from the context of the inquiry                   |
| Students being actively engaged   | Students being passive learners  |
| Teacher(s) posing inquiries that are interesting and meaningful to students and often addressing authentic problems in the school, community, or world  | Teacher(s) posing inquiries in ways that are disconnected from students and are not authentic                              |
| Students finishing an inquiry with a feeling of empowerment and that they did something to improve the world; students invested and attached to the work  | Students finishing an inquiry and not feeling an attachment to it or feel their work has real meaning or made a difference |
| Students accessing resources (digital and text) to research questions as they arise   | Students seeking answers to questions that always have to pass through the teacher   |