



Sprucing Up Staff Break Rooms in Schools

Kaiser Permanente Thriving Schools has developed this easy-to-use resource to help schools upgrade and makeover staff break rooms to maximize health and wellness in the workplace.

Why are break rooms essential to school wellness?

- A break room provides the space to relax and regroup during the school day. School break rooms can create environments that promote physical, mental & emotional well-being.
- The break room is an ideal place for socializing and building community, and often encourages informal brainstorming and problem solving.
- A warm, welcoming break room is a way to show hardworking school staff that they are valued and appreciated, which boosts morale and job satisfaction.
- Healthy & fulfilled school staff are able to perform at their best and have fewer sick days, which directly benefits students.

Who can lead a staff break room makeover?

Staff break room makeovers can be successfully championed by a variety of individuals and teams:

- Principals and school administrators
- Teachers and school staff
- Parents and community members
- Faith-based groups and non-profits

"More teachers are now using the lounge to enjoy lunch and take a break. The remodel has provided our staff with a relaxing atmosphere that is conducive to building relationships and sharing ideas, which in turn promotes student achievement."

- Dr. Pamela Simpkins, Principal, Mount Vernon Woods Elementary School, Fairfax, Virginia

Work together:

- Whatever your connection to the school, it's important that you gain the proper approval before you begin the makeover. Connect with the school principal to discuss the appropriate course of action.
- Other key parties to engage throughout planning and implementation of the project include teachers and school staff, facilities and maintenance staff, and labor union representation.

Important initial steps:

1. Obtain approval for your project from the school principal and/or school administrators. If your school does not have a designated break room, try to get creative with unused space that could be repurposed into a wellness room.
2. Seek input from staff and administrators about what they would most like to see in their break room. This will help create a truly useful space that can meet everyone's needs.
3. Identify a point person to act as the break room champion for this project. They will communicate with key individuals and groups to keep the project organized and moving forward.
4. Every school is unique and has its own set of needs. Begin by assessing what items the break room already has and identify any items that need to be replaced. This information will help you determine your priorities and allocate resources appropriately.
5. Based on staff interests and the break room assessment, map out your next steps and course of action for the staff room makeover. It is important to begin working with the school facilities and maintenance staff, as well as school administrators, early in the planning phase of the project.

Organizing your space:

Listed below, you'll find ideas for making the most of the staff break room space, along with a list of potential items to include. We know that space and funds can be limited, so many of these ideas are low or no cost. Even a few small changes, such as a fresh coat of paint and some wellness posters can make a big difference! We encourage you to try to incorporate some elements from each category, in order to create a holistic break room that is functional.

FUNCTION

- Keep office equipment (printers, fax machines, paper cutters, etc.) in a separate room from the lounge area, to maintain the purpose and feel of the room as a relaxing space.
- If necessary, utilize a storage cabinet to keep papers and supplies organized.
- Arrange tables and chairs in a way that encourages communal eating and interaction.
- Refresh outdated or worn cabinetry by sanding and painting or staining the surfaces and replacing the hardware.

- ✓ Couch, Armchairs
- ✓ Table, lamps
- ✓ Paint
- ✓ Bookshelf

HEALTHY EATING & ACTIVE LIVING

- Have a "Vegetable of the Month" healthy potluck for teachers and staff.
- Hang a bulletin board to display upcoming staff wellness offerings and healthy opportunities in the community (5k race, cooking class, farmers market, etc.).
- Take photographs of teachers & staff "thriving" and hang around the break room to give the room a personal feeling, inspire ownership of the space and encourage healthy living.
- Put up posters showing instructions for basic exercises / how to use the equipment.
- Have a PE teacher or someone on your staff who has experience with yoga or weight training teach an informal class for teachers and staff to kick off the new space.
- Collect donated wellness books and workout DVDs and store in the staff room bookshelf.

- ✓ Water dispenser
- ✓ Yoga ball
- ✓ Yoga mat
- ✓ Free weights
- ✓ Resistance bands

RELAXATION / AMBIANCE

- Enlist parents and community partners to help design / paint murals on the walls.
- Provide comfortable seating beyond the dining chairs.
- Consider an iPod dock, stereo, or sound machine to create a welcoming environment.
- Switch from overhead fluorescent lighting to softer light from table and floor lamps..
- Consider adding a small room divider to separate the "active" parts of the room from areas that foster conversation or quiet relaxation.

- ✓ Plants
- ✓ Music machine
- ✓ Fan

Potential sources for products:

- Office supply or home goods stores: Some companies may offer discounts for schools. Consider utilizing any vendor relationships that already exist within your school or district or partnering with local businesses.
- Donations from the community: Individuals, community organizations, and small businesses may have just what you need.
- Local discount or second-hand stores
- Teachers and staff may want to contribute items of their own, such as plants and pictures, to make the space more personal and create a sense of ownership.