The traditional learning model that requires students to sit still and listen is being flipped on its head. Students are transitioning from passive pupils who watch teachers demonstrate information into active participants who take learning into their own hands. Technological innovations, the shifting requirements of the world of work and research on the learning environment are all culminating into a new, active frontier in education.

A New Creative Age

Before the internet, teachers and professors studied for years to develop an expertise-level of information to pass on to younger generations. Now, with enough time and determination, we can learn almost anything by Googling. This democratic spread of information leveled the learning playing field. Anyone, anywhere with an internet connection can pursue their interests and learn new skills.
Our global network also makes work more interconnected and complex than ever. Competitors can disrupt industries from the other side of the world, and startups can take down giants with innovative business models. With new challenges come new demands. Employers are looking to hire talent with 21st-century skills — such as adaptability, communication, creativity, innovation — to solve the unique problems organizations face today. These skills require a new education, one that nurtures the learner as a holistic person versus mastery of various subjects.

**Technology Flips Learning**

In addition to the internet, video recording technologies have become more widespread and easier to use than ever. Combined, internet access and video capabilities created a new pedagogy — flipped learning. Instead of listening to lectures in class and practicing at home, students watch lectures pre-recorded by professors at home and practice methods with hands-on, collaborative activities in class.
This method, like universal internet access, makes learning more equitable. No matter their home environment or duties outside the classroom, all students receive the same assistance from teachers when actively learning the material. If they have a question or are struggling, it’s instantly addressed, which not only encourages students and provides a safe environment to apply themselves but removes the frustration many experience when trying to learn new material on their own.

**Flipped Learning is Active Learning**

Free, widespread information and the creative rise in work substantially shifted the role of the educator and the student. Instead of gatekeepers of information, teachers are looked to for guidance and coaching. Students are now responsible for being active seekers of knowledge versus passive absorbers. To fulfill these new roles and invert the learning model, traditional classrooms need a transformation. Rows of fixed desks aren’t conducive to student active learning. Teachers and learners need active learning environments that enable fluid movement, provide space to display and discuss ideas and facilitate group work.
Studies show that when students learn in a flipped classroom, their performance and engagement increases. Additionally, the emphasis on collaboration fosters more interaction between students and with their teachers. Groupwork in school primes students for the workforce where many projects are completed by cross-disciplinary teams. It also helps them evolve communication and problem-solving skills.

**An Active Rise**

The active learning trend is growing worldwide. According to a survey done by SOPHIA Learning, in 2012, the number of teachers who had implemented flipped learning was 48 percent, compared to 78 percent only two years later. Steelcase Education has collaborated with many universities and high schools to create active learning environments throughout the United States and Europe, such as the Institut International de Lancy in Geneva, Switzerland, Texas A&M University and the University of Applied Sciences (UAS) in Munich, Germany. All of these classrooms share one element in common — mobility.
Dr. Klaus Kreulich, vice president of UAS, says the best thing about the new active learning classrooms is flexibility. “To have flexibility in a classroom, which gives the teacher the chance to act more as a coach than as a teacher is a big thing from my perspective. That means that students work together, talk together. They are activated. They leave their role as listeners and change to active people.”

One way to achieve increased flexibility is with mobile furniture. Coming soon, PolyVision will launch a new mobile whiteboard. The two-sided, a3 CeramicSteel board enables an on-the-go, collaborative surface, allowing students and teachers to customize the classroom setup on-demand. Multiple Mobile boards side-by-side create a display for large brainstorming sessions while individual boards define smaller breakout groups.
Make Learning Active

To see an increase in student engagement, performance and readiness for the workforce, education must evolve. Educators around the globe are adopting active learning and flipped learning pedagogies to update education to 21st-century standards. With the integration of technology and mobility, students can learn in engaging ways and develop the skills they need for the future.