

DESIGNING THE BEST KIDS' FURNITURE

Kohburg is using European thought to transform early childhood classrooms.

By Laura Rote





▲ Kohburg came to the U.S. when the company's owner saw that the States needed more choices in early classroom furniture.

It's not uncommon to walk into a preschool and be overwhelmed by color—giant blocks of primary blue, red, or yellow, often accompanied by distracting shapes and patterns at every turn. While the status quo was certainly vibrant, the founder of **Kohburg** set out to transform classrooms with furniture centered around calm, natural, and healthy design.

Using real wood and elegant design elements, Kohburg delivers environmentally friendly furniture options that aren't distracting. "It allows the child to focus on just one thing," says **Isabel Orellana**, general manager at Kohburg. "Something natural needed to be put in the classroom, something neutral." She says Kohburg takes a cue from the Reggio Emilia approach to preschool and primary education, in which classrooms are student-centered and emphasize experiential learning while creating a calm environment.

About 10 years ago, the Germany-based company brought its clean, clever design from the small town of Coburg in Bavaria to

the U.S. The city of Coburg itself is known for innovative, modern architecture and furniture design dating all the way back to the 1050s.

MODERN MAKEOVER

In 2016, Kohburg outfitted **University of Southern California's** new children's center—12 beautiful, clean classrooms with new shelves, tables, chairs, cubbies, and more. The company had first worked with the USC team in 2009, when the university had a much smaller center and just a couple of classrooms. USC loved the results but quickly outgrew the space and, several years ago, began remodeling a new building. "They were really excited about working with Kohburg again because we were local. We were able to go in there and do the layouts from the ground up," Orellana says.

The USC team keeps returning to Kohburg not just because they're conveniently located, though. They keep going back to them because they love the design. "We have several centers, and we

use Kohburg shelves and furniture because we are very satisfied with the results," says **Zafira Firdosy**, director at USC Children's Center. "We continue to work with Kohburg because the service is good and the quality is excellent." She says the finished product is always attractive, and teachers look forward to walking into a classroom full of nice, new furniture.

Finished projects excite Orellana, too. "It's so rewarding to see the students and teachers and owners of a center, when they see what their school looks like with new furniture."

IN DEMAND

Kohburg's most popular products are its tables, chairs, and literacy corner. The latter is also popular in small daycares or in the home. "People can put a little corner in their house," Orellana says. "It's a really cute area where a child can go pick up a book and sit on the floor or the couch."

Kohburg gets orders from all over the world but ships mainly across Europe and the U.S. For far-flung projects, the company can send a team to help projects come to life.

Kohburg also racks up a number of

certifications that prove its commitment to sustainability. The company is Greenguard Gold certified, uses FSC-certified lumber, and is CARB (California Air Resources Board) certified to meet high standards that ensure reduced formaldehyde emissions. "That's really important," Orellana says, noting the products are safe both for children and the environment. "We're excited that we are able to provide quality materials backed up by great licenses."

Kohburg uses Australian Pine Fiberboard (APF) material, man-made from 100% recyclable wood fibers that are often the byproduct of trim waste from plywood manufacturing processes. Orellana says it's one of the greenest materials available in today's market. Plus, all of Kohburg's finishes are water-based, glues are organic, and any stainless steel used is 304 stainless steel—something mainly seen in the medical field.

"Even with all of the qualifications we have, we still manage to keep our prices very affordable," Orellana says. "You're not only getting great furniture; you're getting great quality backed up by all these reports." **gb&d**

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When they walk back in the classroom and see all the brand-new furniture—that to me is as exciting as it can get.”



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