

TRUE SCHOOL  
SCHOOL

# TOOLKIT

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VOLUME I

SET VISION + BUILD EMPATHY



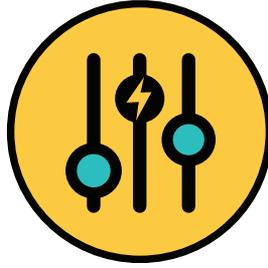
**THIS TRUESCHOOL TOOLKIT  
BELONGS TO:**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION	7
PRE-WORK	25
PHASE I: SET VISION	33
PHASE II: BUILD EMPATHY	85



TRUE SCHOOL  
SCHOOL

# INTRODUCTION

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# DEAR EDUCATORS,

## **It's time to start fresh.**

We believe there's tremendous potential to rethink and reimagine the student experience today. With fewer than 1 in 3 low-income students graduating from college in the United States, we also know there's an urgent need to rethink current education models. Vast disparities exist globally in terms of access to a quality education. This is one of the the most important peace and social justice issue of our lifetimes.

Top-down programs and policies have come and gone with varying degrees of success. Educators seek solutions that reflect the realities of their classrooms and the experiences of their students. By identifying and supporting new educator-led, student-centered solutions, we believe we can transform student outcomes.

## **We don't need to wait for top-down change.**

No policymaker or president is as powerful as a teacher when it comes to directly shaping the student experience. Frontline educators—those working most directly with students in classrooms and schools—are the critical designers of the student experience. We all know how a good teacher can change a student's life.

With your unique knowledge of student needs and community resource, you have the potential to create powerful new solutions and lead change. Together, we can redesign schools from within, from the bottom up and the inside out.



## **Your time, insight, and action are priceless.**

Your role is crucial, demanding, and you don't have time to waste. We value the incredible insight you bring to the table—an invaluable understanding of the culture, resources, and opportunities at your school.

By working together, we believe great things are on the horizon. Your investment and engagement is key to our success. We are going to navigate a process together to enable and generate creative solutions to critical problems. We will support you as you go from idea to impact, but we will not prescribe the solution—you are the experts and the source of the ideas for transformational change in education.

## **The potential is limitless; the opportunity for impact is tremendous.**

We believe the best ideas for the present and future of education will come from you. We're thrilled to have the chance to collaborate with you. Welcome to our global network of innovative educators and “trueschools”—places of limitless potential for people and learning. We can't wait to see the vision you set and the impact you achieve—for your students, for future students, and for the field of education.

Thank you for everything you do.

With gratitude,

**Amy Vreeland**

Founder + Executive Director

# TRUESCHOOL NORMS

Think with big and bold vision, act with focus and urgency

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## 1. A bias towards action and solutions

We see challenges as opportunities to innovate. Rather than talking about problems, we take action to design, test, and implement real solutions. Complaining is draining, but redefining problems as opportunities and taking steps towards solutions is invigorating.

## 2. Trust the process

You are the experts in your school. We are experts in this design process. By working together, great things happen, but it takes time. The process isn't easy and can seem ambiguous and perhaps even chaotic, but it works. Patience and trust are invaluable.

## 3. Listen to learn

A willingness to understand and empathize with the people who experience the problem is the single most important determinant of your success during this experience. Stepping into another's shoes requires active, open-minded listening.

## 4. Be bold and courageous

Like most things in life, but especially in this learning experience, we are limited only by that which we put forward. Dream! Be bold! Set an audacious vision and be relentless!

## 5. Collaborate to conquer, divide to deliver

Lean on your School Design Team—you are one another's most valuable resource. Work smarter, not harder. Divide and conquer actions and deliverables. Be a source of encouragement, accountability, and inspiration for your team.

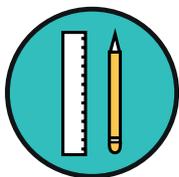
# MEASURING TRUESCHOOL IMPACT

TrueSchool defines our impact in three key areas:



## DEVELOPING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS

TrueSchool develops educators as leaders, innovators, and changemakers who take action and make their big, bold ideas come to life.



## DESIGNING INNOVATIVE SCHOOL MODELS

With TrueSchool's support, educators design, pilot, and scale innovative school models with early evidence of significantly improving equity, academic growth, and social-emotional support.



## CONNECTING POWERFUL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

TrueSchool connects a powerful professional learning community of innovative school teams working across a region, state, and the country.

## MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK

In partnership with schools, we will be measuring impact throughout the year. Schools will set their own specific goals for impact, and define their own plans for measuring this impact. In addition, Coaches and the TrueSchool Team will periodically assess your digital Portfolios, using the TrueSchool Innovation and Impact Rubric (see following pages) to monitor engagement and growth, provide personalized, actionable feedback, and drive progress. The TrueSchool Team will also ask for your feedback regularly, via three surveys (baseline, mid-year, and end-of-year), and interviews.

# TRUESCHOOL INNOVATION & IMPACT RUBRIC

## INCONSISTENT - 1

Team inconsistently engages with the process, several missed opportunities for student impact.

## CONSISTENT - 2

Team consistently engages with the process. The vision for impact is limited in depth and/or breadth.

### HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN PROCESS

Seek insights from and guide decisions with student and stakeholder feedback and perspective.

Team inconsistently seeks student and stakeholder feedback.

Team seeks student and stakeholder feedback as prompted.

### STUDENT IMPACT ORIENTATION

Set broad and deep goals for student impact in 3 key areas: academic growth, equity, and social-emotional learning.

Define indicators and create the measurement tools to monitor progress

- Team sets goals that are vague and/or lack breadth and depth.
- The team's Theory of Change is unclear.

- Team sets, monitors, and makes progress towards student impact in 1 of the 3 key areas.
- The scale of impact is limited in depth and breadth.
- The team's Theory of Change clearly outlines inputs.

### ASSET-BASED APPROACH

Focus on assets and opportunities to develop creative solutions.

Team inconsistently shifts from a focus on problems and deficits to a focus on solutions and existing resources.

- Team consistently re-frames their key challenge as an opportunity for improvement, and works to develop a solution.
- When prompted, team identifies assets available within their school.

### IMPACTFUL - 3

Team drives and navigates the process, applying insights from all phases. Impact is broad in scale OR deep in student impact. The innovation learning model influences other school spaces.

The team's approach to solving problems and designing solutions is centered on student and stakeholder feedback and insight.

- Team sets, monitors, and makes progress towards student impact in 2 of the 3 key areas.
- The scale of this impact is broad OR deep.
- The team's Theory of Change includes clearly defined inputs and outputs that are aligned to measurable indicators.

- Throughout the program, the team frames challenges that arise as opportunities for learning, growth, and the development of creative solutions.
- Team identifies a comprehensive map of assets available within their school and broader community.
- Team returns to this asset map throughout the design process, finding creative ways to use existing resources.

### ENDURING - 4

Team creates the conditions for lasting change and continuous improvement school-wide. The impact is broad in scale AND deep in student impact. This process becomes part of "how we do things" and the systematic approach to solving problems and realizing opportunities for improvement.

School-wide, major decisions are driven by student and stakeholder needs, visions, and feedback.

- School continuously sets, monitors, and makes progress toward student impact in 3 of the 3 key areas.
- The scale of this impact is broad AND deep.
- The team's Theory of Change includes clearly defined inputs and outputs that are aligned to measurable indicators. The team refines their Theory of Change in response to student and stakeholder feedback and impact data.

- School regularly considers available school and community assets in response to new challenges.
- Moving forward, school continuously identifies available assets within their school and community, leveraging these for continuous improvement.

# TRUESCHOOL INNOVATION & IMPACT RUBRIC

## INCONSISTENT - 1

Team inconsistently engages with the process, several missed opportunities for student impact.

## CONSISTENT - 2

Team consistently engages with the process. The vision for impact is limited in depth and/or breadth.

### DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

Demonstrate shared ownership, collective leadership, and cross-school collaboration.

- Team inconsistently adheres to norms.
- Team nominally engages in Fieldwork.

- Team adheres to norms, both in Studios and Fieldwork.
- Fieldwork actions are inequitably shared, leading to less insight and fewer opportunities for productive collaboration.

### ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AND NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

Learn from the work of other schools; share innovative learning model for adaptation and replication.

- Team inconsistently accesses ideas or models from other schools.
- Team publishes an incomplete TrueSchool Blueprint at the conclusion of the program.

- When prompted, team learns from ideas or models from other schools.
- Team publishes a TrueSchool Blueprint at the conclusion of the program, but it is limited in the content necessary to inform replication and adaptation in other schools.

### IMPACTFUL - 3

Team drives and navigates the process, applying insights from all phases. Impact is broad in scale OR deep in student impact. The innovation learning model influences other school spaces.

### ENDURING - 4

Team creates the conditions for lasting change and continuous improvement school-wide. The impact is broad in scale AND deep in student impact. This process becomes part of “how we do things” and the systematic approach to solving problems and realizing opportunities for improvement.

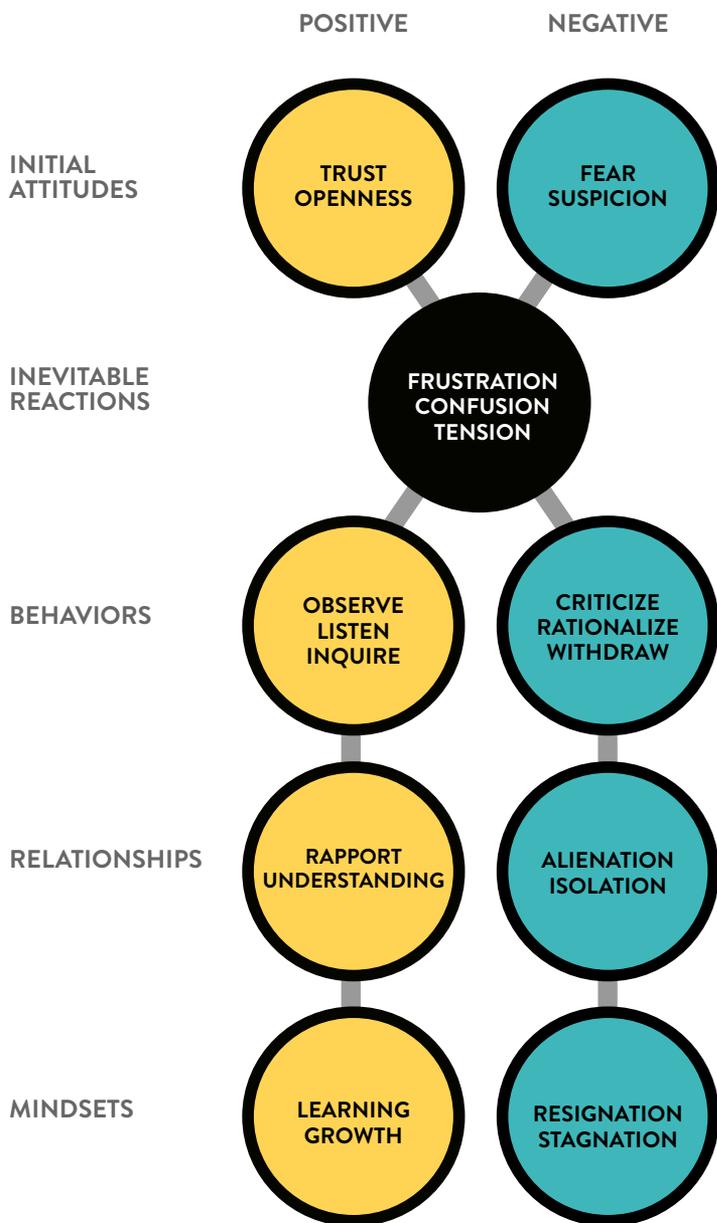
- Team shares ownership of norms in Studios and Fieldwork, promoting authentic collaboration and thought-partnership.
- Team equitably shares ownership of Fieldwork actions, leading to significant insight, and greater opportunities for productive

- School develops an ongoing, systematic, regularly-used structure for teacher leaders to identify new opportunities for improvement and own and lead those efforts.
- School leader embraces distributed leadership as core to how their school operates, tapping into the ideas, skills, and potential of all members of the school team.

- Team learns from varied ideas or models from the local and national network, applying insights gained to the design of their own innovative model.
- Team publishes a TrueSchool Blueprint at the conclusion of the program that contributes meaningful learnings to the community at large and a potentially replicable or adaptable model for other schools.

- School regularly engages in shared learning and collaborative problem-solving with other schools in the local and national network, replicating or adapting their models to improve their own schools.
- School stands out as a model school of innovation for the district, the state, and the country. This school informs and inspires the work of other schools. Elsewhere, educators replicate or adapt their highly effective and innovative models within their own schools.

# INNOVATION JOURNEY



## THE TRUESCHOOL PROGRAM OVERVIEW

We believe the best ideas for the present and future of education come from frontline educators, the critical designers of the student experience.

Through our year-long program, we work with educators in existing schools to lead innovation and change from within, driving improvements in student equity, academic growth, social-emotional supports.

Our program empowers educators to reimagine schools with students at the center, develops educators as leaders who make their big, bold ideas come to life, and connects a powerful professional learning community of innovative school teams working across a region, state, and the country.

A TrueSchool Design Team includes 4-6 members, including the school leader and at least 3 teacher leaders. School teams participate in the program as a cohort of 10-20 diverse schools from across a state or region. Over the course of the program, teams collaboratively progress through eight design phases as they explore student perspectives in order to build, refine, and scale an innovative learning model.

Our program includes four core components: Studios, Coaching Sessions for the School Design Team, Coaching for the School Leader, and support during periods of independent Fieldwork.

- **4 Full-Day, In-Person Studios:** Facilitated, fast-paced, cohort-wide workshops.
- **Monthly Virtual Coaching Sessions with each School Design Team:** Coaches provide thought partnership as teams problem-solve, solution-build, and engage in rapid cycle design to learn and improve fast.
- **Coaching with the School Leader:** Coaches support school leaders in their own development as drivers of school-wide innovation, aligning this work to the school's strategic vision for student success.
- **Fieldwork:** Educators engage community stakeholders, especially students, in interviews, observations and feedback-gathering to identify a core problem and build an effective solution. This empathy work is core to everything we do—stakeholder perspective is essential to designing transformational schools.

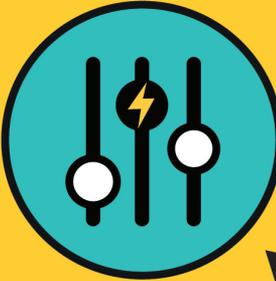
**PHASE 1 | Studio**  
**SET VISION**

**SEPT-OCT**  
Set a **big, bold vision** for student success grounded in existing resources available on-site, and the school's identity.



**PHASE 2 | Fieldwork**  
**BUILD EMPATHY**

**OCT-NOV**  
Explore stakeholder perspective to build understanding of the **current learning experience** by interviewing, shadowing, and observing students, parents, colleagues, and community members.

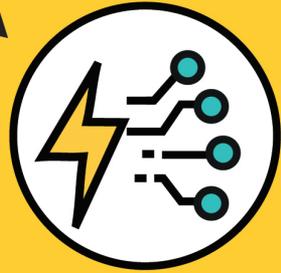


**PHASE 5 | Studio**  
**MEASURE IMPACT**

**JAN-FEB**  
Measure and analyze the impact of the **prototype on student learning**, using a more rigorous approach designed by the team.

**PHASE 6 | Fieldwork**  
**PILOT**

**FEB-MAR**  
Design and launch a **broader, multi-classroom pilot** of the innovative model.



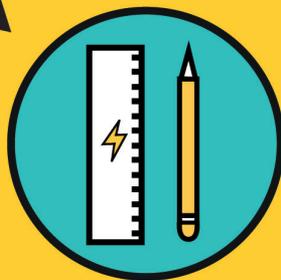
PHASE 3 | Studio  
DEFINE OPPORTUNITY

NOV-DEC  
Define the opportunity for a transformative new model of student learning, rooted in student perspective and inspired by cases of innovative schools that have led powerful change.



PHASE 4 | Fieldwork  
PROTOTYPE

DEC-JAN  
Create and test prototypes of the new model in at least 2 classrooms to gather student and stakeholder feedback for rapid improvement.



PHASE 7 | Studio  
LEAD CHANGE

APR-MAY  
Capture learning from the pilot and plan for building buy-in and distributed leadership for sustainable, scalable change.

PHASE 8 | Fieldwork  
EARN FORWARD

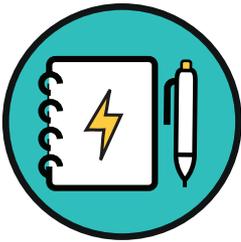
MAY-BEYOND  
Share learning school-wide and beyond; apply the TrueSchool Design Process to new opportunities and contexts.



# KEY DESIGN TOOLS

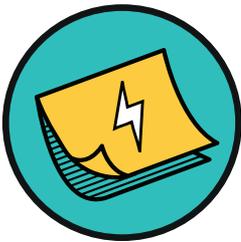
for Thinking, Collaborating, Documenting, and Sharing.

During your School Design Team's year-long process, you will use several TrueSchool tools to prompt your thinking, collaboration, documentation, and sharing. These range from informal and individual tools (your Toolkit) to formal, synthesized documents designed for sharing with the larger community (your TrueSchool Blueprint).



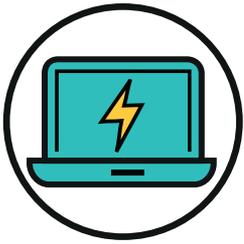
## TOOLKIT: THINKING

TrueSchool Toolkits include overviews, relevant readings, case studies, resources, and action steps for each design phase in sequence. The Toolkit is your individual guide during both Studios and Fieldwork phases. It includes thinking prompts, and pages dedicated to your notes and insights. By the time you complete each phase, your Toolkit will be overflowing with questions and ideas.



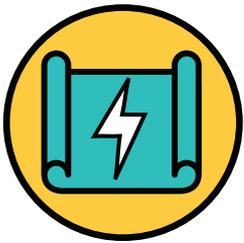
## CANVAS: COLLABORATING

The TrueSchool Canvas is a physical, visual map of your team's design process and key learnings along the way. You will use your Canvas to collaboratively brainstorm and display progress resulting from each phase of the design process. The Canvas is a tool for showcasing the evolution of your ideas, and to see the entire design process at once.



### **PORTFOLIO: DOCUMENTING**

The TrueSchool Portfolio is a digital portfolio where teams document their learnings, student artifacts, design milestones, and reflections. The Portfolio includes written responses as well as photos and video links. The Portfolio is used as a tool for the TrueSchool team to track your progress and determine strengths and opportunities for growth, using the TrueSchool Innovation and Impact Rubric. This is a great tool for documenting your team's decisions and progress, and will prepare you to create a thorough Blueprint to share with wider audiences.



### **BLUEPRINT: SHARING**

The TrueSchool Blueprint is a synthesis of your year, including an overview of your innovative model, your key learnings, and your plan to scale in the year ahead. The Blueprint includes the content and context needed for a school elsewhere to learn from and perhaps even replicate or adapt your innovative approach to improving student learning. This document acts as the capstone to your team's year-long design process, detailing your plan for taking your innovative model school-wide, generating buy-in, and sharing learning with a broader audience.

## KEY TERMS

**ASSETS** Resources with value that can be leveraged for change. Assets at your school might include material resources (e.g. whiteboards, textbooks, computers...), skills found among your faculty members (e.g. website development, creative writing, community organizing, photography...), and physical spaces (e.g. community centers, outdoor spaces, teachers' lounge...).

**COACHES & COACHING** Personalized coaching is incorporated in-person (during Studio) and virtually (during fieldwork). TrueSchool Certified School Design Coaches are experienced educators, who have led school or systems-wide design and change efforts. Specific school needs and opportunities for differentiated, personalized coaching are determined through review of your TrueSchool Portfolio. Coaching sessions emphasize rapid-cycle design: we support teams to take action, learn fast, measure results, and achieve results for students as quickly as possible.

**COHORT** We bring together School Design Teams as a year-long cohort, typically ranging in size from 10 to 20 diverse schools from across a state or region. This results in the powerful exchange of ideas across schools tackling different and similar challenges. Many of your best learnings will come from the other teams in your cohort.

**FIELDWORK** This is work time between Studios to apply learnings and complete design actions, collaboratively as a team or individually. Examples of fieldwork actions include interviewing community members, shadowing a student, or testing a classroom prototype. Teams share their fieldwork findings via the TrueSchool Portfolio.

**HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN / PARTICIPATORY DESIGN** A creative problem-solving process that focuses on building WITH (rather than building FOR) the people we serve. Building empathy and continuously engaging stakeholders is at the core of this approach.

**PILOT** A pilot is a refined version of your prototype, put into action across multiple classrooms. We use pilots to determine the sustainability and scalability of your solution. Pilots may be grade-level-wide, department-wide, or school-wide. A pilot requires considering how the innovative model you have built will be adapted and adopted across many, perhaps all, classrooms.

**PROTOTYPE** Think of prototyping as tangible brainstorming, a way of getting your idea out into the world to gather rapid feedback. Prototype methods include, but are not limited to, storyboards, physical models, and role plays. The key here is that you are showing, not telling. Your user can visualize, feel, experience, or engage with your idea. Prototyping provides the opportunity to quickly build something and get it in front of the people who matter most. A prototype is inherently imperfect—by definition it’s meant to be quick and scrappy! Don’t sweat it or perfect it, build it and put it out there!

**SCHOOL DESIGN TEAM** 4-6 committed educators from each school including the school leader and at least 3 teacher leaders . Every member of the School Design Team commits to attending all Studios, completing fieldwork, and engaging in the full program experience. We intentionally incorporate teams of 4-6 educators to learn, collaboratively build ideas, and support one another.

**INNOVATIVE LEARNING MODEL** We use this term very broadly to describe the thing you are building to create change and improve student learning. This can vary widely and include everything from reconfiguring your school space, implementing a new learning protocol, developing new instructional practices or leadership strategies, adopting a new learning tool or technology, and many many more ideas. Your innovative learning model is tuned specifically to your student and community needs as well as what will take your school to the next level.

**STUDIO** Facilitated, fast-paced, cohort-wide learning experiences for creating, skill-building, and collaborating. Studios also connect a strong professional learning community of forward-thinking leaders in education. Studios provide protected time and space for School Design Teams to take major steps forward in developing their innovative learning model. Each Studio is unique and builds upon the knowledge, skills, and practices of the previous Studio(s).

**STAKEHOLDER / USER** We use the words “stakeholder” and “user” interchangeably. “User” is the term most commonly used in human-centered design, especially when applying the process to develop specific products or services in the private sector. We most frequently use “stakeholders” because this is a term more inclusive of many different groups of people, all of whom have a vested interest in realizing improvements in education (think not only of students, but also parents, community, and colleagues).



TRUE SCHOOL

# PRE-WORK

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## PRE-WORK

Read, reflect & start to gather student & stakeholder feedback in advance of our work together. Begin with purpose.

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### EXCERPT

*“DESIGN THINKING FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION”*

BY TIM BROWN & JOCELYN WYATT, STANFORD SOCIAL INNOVATION REVIEW,  
WINTER 2010

In an area outside Hyderabad, India, between the suburbs and the countryside, a young woman—we’ll call her Shanti—fetches water daily from the always-open local borehole that is about 300 feet from her home. She uses a 3-gallon plastic container that she can easily carry on her head. Shanti and her husband rely on the free water for their drinking and washing, and though they’ve heard that it’s not as safe as water from the Naandi Foundation-run community treatment plant, they still use it. Shanti’s family has been drinking the local water for generations, and although it periodically makes her and her family sick, she has no plans to stop using it.

Shanti has many reasons not to use the water from the Naandi treatment center, but they’re not the reasons one might think. The center is within easy walking distance of her home—roughly a third of a mile. It is also well known and affordable (roughly 10 rupees, or 20 cents, for 5 gallons). Being able to pay the small fee has even become a status symbol for some villagers. Habit isn’t a factor, either. Shanti is forgoing the safer water because of a series of flaws in the overall design of the system.

Although Shanti can walk to the facility, she can’t carry the 5-gallon jerrican that the facility requires her to use. When filled with water, the plastic rectangular container is simply too heavy. The container isn’t designed to be held on the hip or the head, where she likes to carry heavy objects. Shanti’s husband can’t help carry it, either. He works in the city and doesn’t return home until after the water treatment center is closed. The treatment center also requires them to buy a monthly punch card for 5 gallons a day, far more than they need. “Why would I buy more than I need and waste money?” asks Shanti, adding she’d be more likely to purchase the Naandi water if the center allowed her to buy less.

The community treatment center was designed to produce clean and potable water, and it succeeded very well at doing just that. In fact, it works well for

many people living in the community, particularly families with husbands or older sons who own bikes and can visit the treatment plant during working hours. The designers of the center, however, missed the opportunity to design an even better system because they failed to consider the culture and needs of all of the people living in the community.

This missed opportunity, although an obvious omission in hindsight, is all too common. Time and again, initiatives falter because they are not based on the client's or customer's needs and have never been prototyped to solicit feedback. Even when people do go into the field, they may enter with preconceived notions of what the needs and solutions are. This flawed approach remains the norm in both the business and social sectors.

As Shanti's situation shows, social challenges require systemic solutions that are grounded in the client's or customer's needs. This is where many approaches founder, but it is where design thinking—a new approach to creating solutions—excels.

Traditionally, designers focused their attention on improving the look and functionality of products. Classic examples of this type of design work are Apple Computer's iPod and Herman Miller's Aeron chair. In recent years designers have broadened their approach, creating entire systems to deliver products and services.

Design thinking incorporates constituent or consumer insights in depth and rapid prototyping, all aimed at getting beyond the assumptions that block effective solutions. Design thinking—inherently optimistic, constructive, and experiential—addresses the needs of the people who will consume a product or service and the infrastructure that enables it.

Businesses are embracing design thinking because it helps them be more innovative, better differentiate their brands, and bring their products and services to market faster. Nonprofits are beginning to use design thinking as well to develop better solutions to social problems. Design thinking crosses the traditional boundaries between public, for-profit, and nonprofit sectors. By working closely with the clients and consumers, design thinking allows high-impact solutions to bubble up from below rather than being imposed from the top..

One program that might have benefited from design thinking is mosquito net

distribution in Africa. The nets are well designed and when used are effective at reducing the incidence of malaria. The World Health Organization praised the nets, crediting them with significant drops in malaria deaths in children under age 5: a 51 percent decline in Ethiopia, 34 percent decline in Ghana, and 66 percent decline in Rwanda.<sup>6</sup> The way that the mosquito nets have been distributed, however, has had unintended consequences. In northern Ghana, for instance, nets are provided free to pregnant women and mothers with children under age 5. These women can readily pick up free nets from local public hospitals. For everyone else, however, the nets are difficult to obtain. When we asked a well-educated Ghanaian named Albert, who had recently contracted malaria, whether he slept under a mosquito net, he told us no—there was no place in the city of Tamale to purchase one. Because so many people can obtain free nets, it is not profitable for shop owners to sell them. But hospitals are not equipped to sell additional nets, either.

As Albert's experience shows, it's critical that the people designing a program consider not only form and function, but distribution channels as well. One could say that the free nets were never intended for people like Albert—that he was simply out of the scope of the project. But that would be missing a huge opportunity. Without considering the whole system, the nets cannot be widely distributed, which makes the eradication of malaria impossible...

As an approach, design thinking taps into capacities we all have but that are overlooked by more conventional problem-solving practices. Not only does it focus on creating products and services that are human centered, but the process itself is also deeply human. Design thinking relies on our ability to be intuitive, to recognize patterns, to construct ideas that have emotional meaning as well as being functional, and to express ourselves in media other than words or symbols. Nobody wants to run an organization on feeling, intuition, and inspiration, but an over-reliance on the rational and the analytical can be just as risky. Design thinking, the integrated approach at the core of the design process, provides a third way...

The design thinking process is best thought of as a system of overlapping spaces rather than a sequence of orderly steps. There are three spaces to keep in mind: inspiration, ideation, and implementation. Think of inspiration as the problem or opportunity that motivates the search for solutions; ideation as the process of generating, developing, and testing ideas; and implementation as the path that leads from the project stage into people's lives.

**REFLECT** *How is design thinking unique? In your perspective, how does design thinking differ from typical approaches to problem-solving or solution-building?*

## FIELDWORK

As noted in your pre-reading, a central feature of design thinking is a focus on “users” or the people we serve. Being curious and gathering user perspective is core to design thinking, which is why this process is also called “human-centered design.”

We believe the application of design thinking to education presents powerful potential. Over the last 5 years, we’ve seen that deeply understanding student and stakeholder perspective and gathering their feedback has become part of the foundation and culture of many outstanding schools. It’s become core to how they do things.

We think this approach to building empathy with students, parents, community members, and colleagues is essential and transformational.

Part 2 of your Pre-Work is “Fieldwork.” Throughout the TrueSchool Design Process you will engage in structured Fieldwork actions as individuals and as a team. This is the critical “get of the classroom and building” time, applying and translating your learning from our Studios to the real world. Fieldwork is what makes this work tangible and impactful. This is your very first set of Fieldwork actions.

Put on the hat of a journalist or anthropologist who is out working in the field. Observe and learn from your stakeholders with a “beginner’s mindset,” as if you had just stepped into the field of education for the first time. Strive to put your preconceived notions, assumptions, and solution ideas aside. Aim to be purely present and curious, seeking to deeply understand the world from the other person’s perspective.

### FIELDWORK DIRECTIONS:

Complete 3 interviews of at least 20 minutes each:

- 1) Interview 1 student
- 2) Interview 1 teacher
- 3) Interview 1 parent or community member

Who you choose is up to you! You might consider interviewing a former student who you stay in touch with, a teacher/colleague who you don’t know particularly well, or a parent who has been volunteering at your school. You

might intentionally choose individuals who are experiencing challenges or those who are “positive deviants” (outliers in the positive sense). One key piece of advice: don’t get caught up in overthinking who to select: it’s more important to make the interviews happen. We know your time is precious and limited. Think about how you might integrate Fieldwork into your normal schedule. If you’re already meeting with a parent or colleague, can you add some time at the end of the meeting for interview questions? Will you see a student after school anyway and can ask them questions then?

Interviews may be completed in person, via video conferencing/skype, or on the phone. Whenever possible, we recommend interviewing in person. As you interview, take detailed field notes. You will want to reference your notes to answer your Fieldwork Questions (Part 3 below).

Exact interview questions are up to you. Generally speaking, we want to better understand what the individuals we serve want from the school experience and how they think it may be improved to better meet their needs, interests, and aspirations.

### **EXAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:**

- What does the world’s best school look like to you?  
What does it look like / sound like / feel like?
- How do you define an “excellent” education?
- What are we doing that’s working really well and we should keep doing?
- What is a problem that we need to solve at our school?  
How do you think we might solve it?
- In what ways do we need to improve? Why?
- Are there things that we’ve been doing that we should stop doing?
- What ideas do you have for how we could make the school or student experience even better? What’s something new that we should start doing?
- What would you do in my shoes?
- What advice do you have for me?
- What question should I be asking you that I’m not asking you?

## NOTES





TRUE SCHOOL

# SET VISION

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## ACTIONS

- I.1 ENVISION STUDENT SUCCESS
- I.2 SPARK! MINI DESIGN CHALLENGE
- I.3 TEAM NORMS + CULTURE CIRCLE
- I.4 SET EXPECTATIONS
- I.5 TEAM IDENTITY
- I.6 ASSET MAP
- I.7 BUILD A RUBRIC

# 1. SET VISION

*Set a big, bold vision for student success*

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What does it mean for students to be successful in your focus area?
- What goals do you have for students' academic growth, equity and social-emotional learning?
- Why are you the school team to tackle this issue and become a model school for others locally, regionally and nationally?

## PHASE OVERVIEW

In our first phase, you will build a strong foundation in the TrueSchool Design Process from start to finish. You will interact with key learnings from the fields of human-centered design, social entrepreneurship, asset-based development and improvement science.

Your team will draft, refine, and detail a vision for student success and growth. You will build team and school culture to support innovation.

## KEY PORTFOLIO MILESTONES

Team Vision, Asset Map & Rubric

## READINGS FROM THE FIELD

- *LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS & BUILDING VISION, FROM THE FIFTH DISCIPLINE* BY PETER SENGE
- *THE POWER OF ASSET-BASED APPROACHES* BY DONNIE MACLURCAN
- *THREE PERSPECTIVES ON GOAL-SETTING*

## ANCHOR DESIGN PRACTICES

- Beginner's Mindset
- Brainstorming