

TRUE SCHOOL

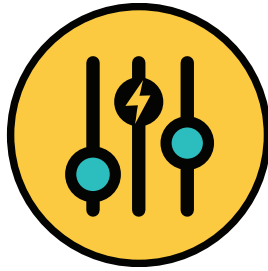
TOOLKIT

VOLUME I

SET VISION + BUILD EMPATHY

**THIS TRUESCHOOL TOOLKIT
BELONGS TO:**

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INTRODUCTION



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

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.

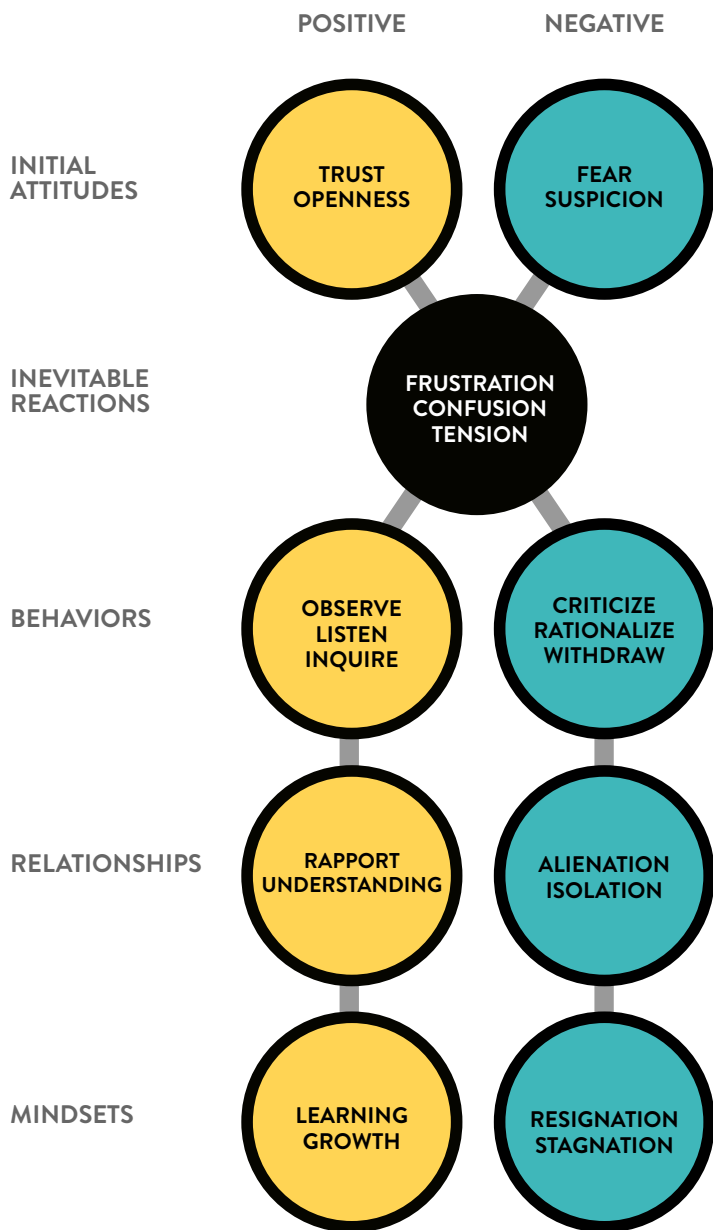
- Team learns from varied ideas or models from the local and national network, applying insights gained to the design of their own innovative model.

- 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

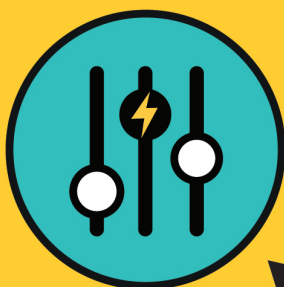
Set a big, bold vision for student success grounded in existing resources available on-site, and the school's identity.



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

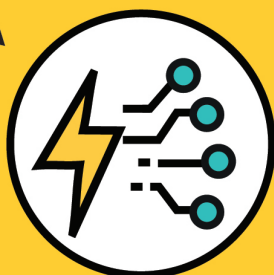
JAN-FEB

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

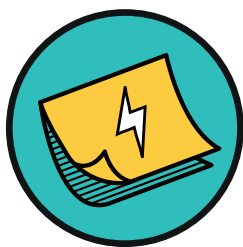
for Thinking, Collaborating, Documenting, and Sharing.

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

PRE-WORK

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

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.⁶ 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



SET VISION



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

SET VISION

1.1 / ENVISION STUDENT SUCCESS

Write a detailed narrative of student success

Get concrete + specific about what student success in your focus area looks like anchored in student outcomes for:

- Academic Growth
- Equity
- Social-Emotional Learning

Think big and bold about what is possible and necessary to move towards this vision.

TIME REQUIRED 20 minutes

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What does student success look like?
- What is possible and necessary for students?

1. **VISUALIZE (5 MIN)** Visualize student actions, outcomes, and beliefs.

Write this vision as a third-person narrative.

- Your innovative solution is **wildly successful**. *How do you know?*
What is happening in classrooms? In the school as a whole? In the hallways?
What are students saying? Doing? Feeling? What are teachers doing?
What stories are getting passed around about this work?
- Did you refer to all 3 areas of student outcomes (academic growth, equity & social-emotional learning)? If not, consider these areas and add to your narrative.

2. **SHARE (5 MIN)** Read your entire narratives aloud with your team. Refrain from commentary for now, but listen and silently note any patterns that emerge as everyone shares.

3. **LIST (5 MIN)** Note patterns that came up as a team, or thought-provoking outliers (responses that came up in one narrative, pushing your team's collective thinking).

4. **SYNTHESIZE (5 MIN)** Merge and narrow your team's list into 5 bullet points. Capture these bullets on your Canvas.

NOTES

TIPS

At this stage, don't consider the "how," or think about the steps necessary to reach your vision. Instead, focus on things going incredibly well, and nail down what this means.

Similarly, write narratives, not goals. We will get there, but focusing on a vision narrative at the outset supports teams in developing **bigger, bolder** innovations.

EXAMPLE

More students are enrolled in Calculus—we have to open two new sections of the class because more students are requesting it. In their class, they are using math vocabulary—I hear multiple students using the word “differential” and explaining the process with each other. The diversity of the classroom represents the diversity of our school. Therefore, a full 40% of students in this Calculus classroom are emergent bilingual students, and they are performing at the same levels as their peers. When students receive challenging problem sets—which is often—they don’t express frustration, but refer to socio-emotional supports to begin to work through the problem. Students habitually use college-level math resources and strategies to work through challenges.

Because of the massive jump in Calculus enrollment and success, college retention and acceptance skyrockets. Underclassmen notice this, and see math instruction as a valuable part of their path to college, positively reinforcing students’ academic identity. Teachers from other subject areas and grade levels are coming to observe and learning from the changes that are taking place—developing school-wide practices to push students to master rigorous content.

ACTION 1.1 REFLECTION

- After completing Action 1.1: Envision Success, what are you thinking now?
- What next steps does this action bring up for you?

DOCUMENT BY

Capturing 5 or more synthesized bullet points on your Canvas, and adding these to your digital portfolio.

NOTES

SET VISION

1.2 / SPARK! MINI DESIGN CHALLENGE

Tackle an everyday challenge and design a new experience by running through a rapid cycle of the entire TrueSchool Design Process

Reimagine and redesign a common, everyday experience for a colleague. Gain insight into the language, purpose, and potential of each of the eight design phases in the TrueSchool Design Process. Engage in the design process as both a designer and a stakeholder.

TIME REQUIRED 45 minutes to 1 hour

MATERIALS Chart paper, sharpies, drawing materials

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How is designing something different than building something?
- What is the purpose of each phase of the design process?
How do the different phases build on each other?
- What is it like to be the designer? To be the stakeholder (aka user)?

MINI DESIGN CHALLENGE

In pairs, design a new DAILY COMMUTE EXPERIENCE / MORNING ROUTINE for your partner. Alternate turns, participating in each step of the design process as both a designer and a stakeholder.

TIPS

We have limited time together and moving fast through this action is a good thing! It gets us out of our heads and into action. It also makes us realize just how quickly we can move from problems to solutions and design something potentially transformational for someone's life. Embrace the constraints, they spark creativity!

Phase 1: Set Vision

Develop a strong vision and team culture for innovation

VISION (5 MIN)

Discuss your vision for the ideal commute experience or morning during the

NOTES

work week. Visualize and share your ideal with your partner. Craft a simple, one-sentence vision statement that captures your partner's ideal.

EXAMPLES: My daily commute brings me joy everyday. Every day, I learn during my commute. My commute brings me a sense of peace and calm.

Phase 2: Build Empathy

Engage Stakeholders and gain insight into their experience

INTERVIEW ROUND 1: FACTS (6 MIN)

Take turns interviewing each other for 3 minutes each about the current commute or morning experience. When you play the designer, ask Who, What, Where, When, Why and How?

INTERVIEW ROUND 2: DIG DEEP (10 MIN)

Now, take turns interviewing each other for 5 minutes, digging deeper. Ask your partner about their needs, wants, desires and interests—aim to deeply understand what your stakeholder wants to get out of this experience and what's currently in conflict with their ideal or missing.

Designers: resist the temptation to jump to solutions for your stakeholders.

Instead, this phase is about inquiry, listening, and understanding the perspective of your stakeholder.

REFLECT (3 MIN)

- What is different about the second interview from the first?
- How often do we have the second conversation, the opportunity to “dig deeper,” in our daily lives? With students?
- What lessons might we learn from this for future fieldwork and engagement of stakeholders throughout the design process?

Phase 3: Define Opportunity

Define a design opportunity and research existing model

DEFINE OPPORTUNITY (4 MIN)

Individually, reflect and write what you learned during the last phase about your stakeholder's experience and perspective.

- What key trends or insights stand out from your interviews?
- What is your user trying to achieve that's not yet fulfilled?
- What is something that you see that maybe he or she doesn't see?
- Where is there a mismatch between what they want and their current reality?

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What are areas for improvement and innovation?

- What are some root cause challenges that must be resolved to move closer to their vision—what stands in the way and presents an important opportunity for problem-solving and reinvention?

EXAMPLE: During my stakeholder interview, I heard David say that he doesn't have enough time to get ready in the morning and, as a result, he feels anxious, rushed and stressed walking into his first meeting. He also said he wants to feel prepared and refreshed when he starts his day. The core growth area is giving himself sufficient time to transition to work, so that he has a few moments to reset rather than feeling rushed.

Phase 4: Prototype

Brainstorm, design, and test prototypes to gather feedback

BRAINSTORM + SKETCH PROTOTYPES (5 MIN)

Individually, brainstorm ideas for innovative models that could solve problems, create an improved experience, and move your partner closer to their vision. Then, sketch 4 quick prototypes of possible commute models. Draft one that is realistic, one that is wild and bold, and 2 additional ideas that are anywhere in between. These ideas may be existing solutions you've heard about or experienced, adapted models, or something totally new you've just developed. Challenge yourself to draw or diagram these new models versus explain in words. Drawing often sparks new, unexpected ideas. No need to be an amazing artist, stick figures are just fine!

SHARE + GATHER FEEDBACK (8 MIN) Share your 4 prototypes with your partner. Aim to show versus tell; enable them to visualize and “experience” the prototype to the greatest degree possible. Resist the urge to over explain or justify. Share your ideas briefly, then aim to spend the majority of the time listening to your partner's feedback in response to each idea. Jot down notes about how you can improve or refine your prototypes.

EXAMPLE: I sketched ideas for how David might reduce stress in the morning and move closer to a peaceful, proactive start to his day. One idea included setting his alarm clock to wake up 30 minutes earlier. By leaving his house at 7:00am versus 7:30am, he avoids the worst of the morning traffic. Arriving to school now about 45 minutes earlier than he normally would, he has 15 minutes to get coffee and get settled into his classroom. Then, he has 30 minutes to check emails and make classroom preparations prior to students arriving. When I shared my sketches with David, he said that this idea really make a lot of sense, but he's wondering how he can hold himself accountable to sticking with it. This feedback made me question: how can I ensure David sticks to this new routine to make his life easier and better? Can I create and build in some sort of incentive? Or maybe loop in others for support?

NOTES

Phase 5: Measure Impact

Test your prototype and get stakeholder feedback; determine methods of measurement

MEASURE (1-2 MIN) Based on your stakeholder's feedback, discuss: how will you know your innovative commute model is working? What indicators would you see or data might you gather? Where would you expect to see improvement and change?

EXAMPLE: *If David's new routine is working, he will arrive feeling rested and refreshed. I asked David to rate and log his stress level on Monday, prior to starting the new routine, on a simple 1-10 scale (10 being the worst). Then, beginning the routine on Tuesday, to log his stress levels every morning through the end of the week. If the new commute routine is working, we should logically see a decline in David's stress ratings. In addition, observably, David will have more time to connect with Whitney, his co-teacher, prior to beginning teaching, which improves their collaboration and co-instruction.*

Phase 6: Pilot

Design a mini-pilot of your innovative model

BIG IDEA (3 MIN) Using your partner's feedback, determine the one Big Idea that you will ask your partner to actually put into practice and pilot! Select and refine one of your 4 prototypes, combine aspects of different ideas, or put forward a completely new, improved idea. Ground your decisions in what you think has the greatest potential of enabling your partner to fulfill their vision.

EXAMPLE: *Based on David's feedback, I added an incentive and accountability partner to make our idea even stronger. I recalled that David loves Starbucks—he shared that stopping at Starbucks is something he does occasionally, to treat himself on his way to work. I added a new idea that, should David stick with his new routine Mon-Thurs, he would add a stop at Starbucks every Friday morning as a sort of reward. I also added that Whitney, might check in with him on a daily basis about whether he's sticking to his new routine until it becomes habit. David mentioned that having more time in the morning would make his work with Whitney better and easier as well, so it may make sense to bring her on as a cheerleader!*

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Phase 7: Lead Change

Capture learning from the pilot & plan for building buy-in

PITCH + BUILD BUY-IN (3 MIN)

- Write a 30-second pitch of your Big Idea, aiming to build buy-in and move your partner to take action and pilot the new routine!

- What are the benefits of this new experience for your partner?

What problems does it solve? What new possibilities does it open up?

- What concerns might they have or what potential barriers to adopting this model might you anticipate? How can you address those?

- What does your partner need to have in place to make this real?

What do you they need to prepare? When do they take action? For how long?

- How will they know it's working? When should they pause to check and see? If it works, is this something they will commit to in the long term?

Phase 8: Learn Forward

Share your innovative model and your learning

SYNTHESIZE (5) Prepare to share out your learnings from each phase:

- **Set Vision:** One sentence vision
- **Build Empathy:** 2 key insights
- **Define Opportunity:** Key opportunity
- **Prototype:** 2 prototypes that resonated most & least (and why)
- **Measure Impact:** Best means of measuring impact
- **Pilot:** "Big Idea" you landed on
- **Lead Change:** 30-second pitch

SHARE (3 MIN each) Form small groups, bringing together 3-5 pairs of designers + stakeholders. One pair at a time, summarize what you each uncovered or created cross the eight stages of the process as the designer. Then, share a reflection about what it was like to be the stakeholder and what it was like to have a designer create a new experience for you.

NOTES

Spark! Reflection

- Review: What are the key phases of the TrueSchool Design Process and what is the core purpose of each?
- Which phase felt very natural and was easy for you? Which phase was more difficult? Why?
- What did you find unexpected or surprising about this process?
- Which phase sparked your thinking and led to the greatest insight or creative thinking? Why?
- Did the experience of being a stakeholder yourself inform or change how you might approach your students, colleagues, parents, community members, or other stakeholders as you lead design work ahead?
- Return to our thinking question: How is designing something different than building something?

ACTION 1.2 REFLECTION

- After completing Action 1.2: Spark! Mini Design Challenge, what are you thinking now?
- What next steps does this action bring up for you?

DOCUMENT BY

Recording insights in this Toolkit, to refer back to later in the school year as you move through the 8 different TrueSchool Design Process phases.

NOTES

SET VISION

1.3 / TEAM NORMS + CULTURE CIRCLE

Establish team culture to create, develop, build, and lead a collective vision.

Over the course of this learning experience, you will likely encounter competing views, priorities, and emotions. Sometimes you will feel 100% on track and inspired. Other times you may feel lost. This array of emotions can be attributed to the unclear, ambiguous process of creating something that's new and innovative. While the ups and downs are normal, a key consideration will be how you handle these moments as a team.

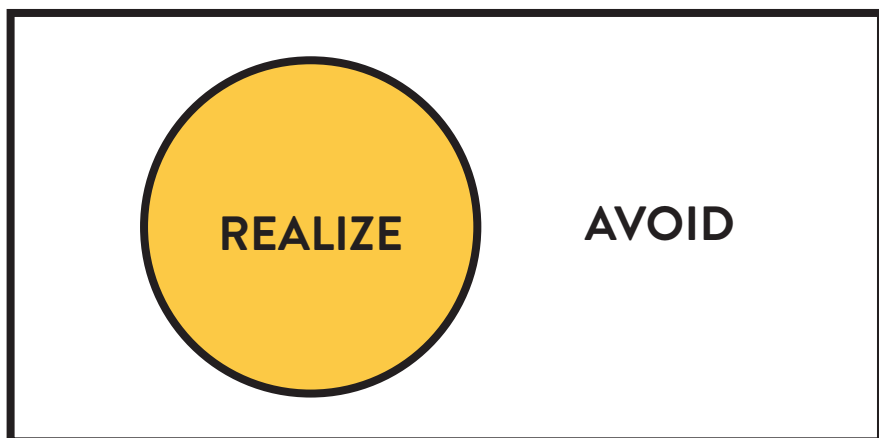
TIME REQUIRED 30 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED Poster or chart paper, post-its, markers

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What do you want in terms of your team culture?
- How will your team members engage with each other?
- What actions or pitfalls do you want to **avoid**?
- What actions or values do you want to **realize**?

1. SET UP (5 MIN) On a poster paper, draw a large circle. The inside of the circle represents team norms you will realize. The outside of the circle represents actions you will avoid. Equip each team member with post-its (it is ideal if each team member can have their own post-it or marker color).



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- 2. BRAINSTORM (10 MIN)** Add ideas one-by-one to either section of the Team Culture Circle. Refer back to Brainstorming Best Practices earlier in this Toolkit.
- 3. GROUP (5 MIN)** Look for patterns in post-its. Group them together visually to trace your team's collective thinking.
- 4. DISCUSS (5 MIN)** How will you, as a team, maintain individual and collective accountability to what you've mapped?
- 5. PROJECT FORWARD (5 MIN)** Imagine a challenging situation that may come up in your team's future, one in which you hope to evoke your norms. Talk through how your team can use the norms to navigate this situation.
- 6. CONFIRM (5 MIN)** Come to consensus on 5 essential norms for your team.
-

ACTION 1.3 REFLECTION

- After completing Action 1.3: Team Norms and Culture Circle, what are you thinking now?
- What next steps does this action bring up for you?

DOCUMENT BY

Sharing your team norms with the entire team and your Coach.

NOTES



BUILD EMPATHY





ACTIONS

- 2.1 PREPARE TO BUILD EMPATHY ☐
- 2.2 INTERVIEW ☐
- 2.3 SHADOW ☐
- 2.4 OBSERVE ☐
- 2.5 ANALYZE STUDENT WORK ☐
- 2.6 DIG DEEPER ☐
- 2.7 EMPATHY MAPS ☐
- 2.8 SHARE STORIES ☐
- 2.9 EMPATHY INSIGHTS ☐

2. BUILD EMPATHY

In this phase you will gain insight into the student and stakeholder experience by building deep empathy and then, synthesizing your findings.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is the student and stakeholder experience?
- What do students and stakeholders value?
What do they aspire to?
- How do student and stakeholder experiences vary, and why?

PHASE OVERVIEW

In the last phase, SET VISION, your team set a bold vision for student success.

In this phase, your team will engage in Fieldwork actions to uncover student and stakeholder experiences and perspectives. You will listen deeply, observe learning environments and routines, walk in stakeholders' shoes, and encounter unexpected insights. Think of this as a phase of true discourse and co-discovery. Let students and stakeholders navigate the conversation towards what they think is most important. Listen and jot down their ideas. Build understanding with them, not for them.

At this point, the data you collect may be more anecdotal. This stage is largely about capturing stories and asking questions that may clarify your direction or lead to a key 'aha' moment. Build Empathy actions ask you to set aside assumptions, to wonder and listen as a beginner would.

We can't emphasize enough how important this stage is for the rest of our work together. What you learn during this stage will inform the rest of this experience. We will continue to come back to the information and skills gained during this stage throughout the rest of the learning experience.

KEY PORTFOLIO MILESTONES

Build Empathy Plan, Empathy Insights

READINGS FROM THE FIELD

- *HOW SPILT COFFEE CREATED A BILLION DOLLAR MOP: THE INVENTION OF THE SWIFFER* BY SHAWN BUSSE
- *POSITIVE DEVIANCE FROM "DESIGN THINKING FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION"* BY TIM BROWN & JOCELYN WYATT
- *POSITIVE DEVIANCE IN ACTION FROM "QUALITY IMPROVEMENT APPROACHES: POSITIVE DEVIANCE"* BY SARAH MCKAY

ANCHOR DESIGN PRACTICES

- Fieldwork Framing
- Open and Honest Questions

FIELDWORK CHECKLIST

Use the below checklist to plan when and how you will tackle Build Empathy actions throughout your Fieldwork phase at your school. These actions are detailed in the upcoming Toolkit pages; this is your cheat-sheet to plan and track your individual progress as you Build Empathy.

2.2 INTERVIEW *Complete prior to Studio II*

FOUNDATIONAL

- ☐ 3 interviews of 30-45 minutes

Time estimate: 1.5-2+ hours

TRANSFORMATIONAL

- ☐ 5 interviews of 30-45 minutes

Time estimate: 2.5-4 hours

2.3 SHADOW *Complete during Fall Semester*

FOUNDATIONAL

- ☐ 1 half-day shadow of a student, including home visit
- ☐ 1 half-day shadow of a parent, colleague or community member

Time estimate: 1 full day

TRANSFORMATIONAL

- ☐ 1 full-day shadow of a student, including home visit
- ☐ 1 full-day shadow of a parent, colleague or community member

Time estimate: 2 full days

2.4 OBSERVE: *Complete before Studio II*

FOUNDATIONAL

- ☐ 2 observations of 30-45 minutes each

Time estimate: 1-2 hours

TRANSFORMATIONAL

- ☐ 5 observations of 30-45 minutes each

Time estimate: 2.5-4 hours

2.5 ANALYZE STUDENT WORK *Complete before Studio II*

FOUNDATIONAL

- ☐ 3 analyses of 15-30 minutes each

Time estimate: 45 minutes

TRANSFORMATIONAL

- ☐ 6 analyses of 15-30 minutes each

Time estimate: 1.5+ hours

2.6 DIG DEEPER Complete during Fall Semester

FOUNDATIONAL

- ☐ 1 additional
Build Empathy Action
Time estimate: 1 hour

TRANSFORMATIONAL

- ☐ 3 additional
Build Empathy Actions
Time estimate: 3 hours
-

2.7 EMPATHY MAPS Complete before Studio II

☐ FOUNDATIONAL

- 2 Empathy Maps
(15 minutes each)
Time estimate: 30 minutes

☐ TRANSFORMATIONAL

- 3+ Empathy Maps
(15 minutes each)
Time estimate: 45+ minutes
-

Set aside time in your School Design Team Meetings to complete reflective and synthesis actions together—2.8 SHARE STORIES and 2.9 SHARE INSIGHTS—before Studio II. Each of these team actions will take 45 minutes to 1 hour of whole-team time.

TOTAL FIELDWORK NEEDED BEFORE THE NEXT STUDIO

☐ FOUNDATIONAL

- Approximately 5 hours
and 1 full day shadow

☐ TRANSFORMATIONAL

- Approximately 10 hours
and 2 full day shadow

**We strongly encourage each individual School Design Team Member to shadow a student for at least a half-day, ideally a full day with a home visit. Over and over again, teams have told us that this is one of the most illuminating and powerful actions of this entire experience. If possible, see if you might be able to get one full professional learning day to make this happen. This is the only action of this entire experience that requires getting a substitute for teachers—it is eye-opening and worth it!*

BUILD EMPATHY

2.1 / PREPARE TO BUILD EMPATHY

Develop a thoughtful, clear plan for building empathy

To get the most out of the Build Empathy Fieldwork, consider what you already know or assume about your vision, stakeholders who can push your thinking, and questions to spark open-ended observation and learning. To outline this plan, your team will complete a modified K-W-L chart.

TIME REQUIRED 45 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED Poster or chart paper, post-its, markers

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What do you know or assume about your vision?
 - What questions do you have?
 - How could you learn more? Which stakeholders, observations or rich data sources could push your thinking?
-

1. SOLO THINKING (8 MIN)

Before sharing your thoughts with your team, fill out an individual version of the chart depicted here. When you share out, omit the “KNOW” section to focus on wonderings, avoid groupthink, or jumping to assumptions or solutions.

2. SHARE + PLAN (20 MIN)

As a team, create a version of this chart on larger chart paper, including only the final three columns (Wonder, Learn, and Assign). Share ideas in the following order, feeling free to add thoughts or suggestions to the ideas others share:

- **WONDERS:** Questions or areas of curiosity?
- **LEARN:** Stakeholders, observations, or rich data sources to push your thinking
- **ASSIGN:** Which team member will take on this Empathy action?

<p>What do you know or assume? (Keep this column to yourself)</p> <p>KNOW</p>	<p>What are your questions or areas of curiosity ?</p> <p>WONDER</p>	<p>What stakeholders, observations, or rich data sources can provide insight? Challenge your assumptions?</p> <p>LEARN</p>	<p>Which team member will take on this learning?</p> <p>ASSIGN</p>	

3. REFLECT (10 MIN)

Is anything missing from your initial plan? Know that you will return to this plan throughout your Build Empathy Fieldwork and will add new ideas that emerge.

TIPS

Stretch your ideas by considering:

- **Positive Variance:** What positive outliers can inform your thinking?
- **Difference:** Consider something at your school that is outside the area you might immediately associate with your vision. Imagine what you could learn from a football coach, an art lesson, or a cafeteria conversation.
- **Community:** Think outside the classroom and outside the walls of your school. Which stakeholders, spaces, or rich data sources in your wider community could inform your thinking?

ACTION 2.1 REFLECTION

- After completing Action 2.1: Prepare to Build Empathy, what are you thinking now?
- What next steps does this action bring up for you?

DOCUMENT BY

Capturing a photo or typed version of your Build Empathy Plan in your Portfolio.

NOTES

BUILD EMPATHY

2.2 / INTERVIEW

Conduct interviews with students and stakeholders to gain empathy and learn from their perspectives

Interviews provide an entry point into the lives of individuals. This is one of the most illuminating Fieldwork actions. Seek to gain authentic learning from students and stakeholder's points of view.

TIME REQUIRED

Foundational: 3 interviews of 30-45 minutes each

Transformational: 5 interviews of 30-45 minutes each

Total time commitment: 1.5-5 hours / team member

MATERIALS NEEDED

Chosen note-taking tools; ideally, audio or video recording (with interviewee permission)

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What do stakeholders wish was better? How and why?
 - What has been their unique experience of the current system?
-

1. INVITE (5 MIN) Prioritize key stakeholders to interview. Consider:

- **Variance** in perspective or in performance
- **Equity goals**
- **Openness and reflectiveness** of potential interviewees

2. GUIDE (15 MIN)

Consider the flow of the conversation you hope to have, and outline the key questions you will ask. Consider beginning with a question that is fun—or one stakeholders will be more comfortable answering. What happens if people are reluctant to answer your questions? How will you respond? Develop alternate questions to have on hand if you find yourself stuck.

NOTES

3. INTERVIEW (30-60 MIN) Schedule a time for each interview. If possible, request permission to audio or video-record the interview so you can return to it later. Aim to be fully present as a listener. During interview, take notes. Immediately after the interview, take at least 5-10 minutes to process the interview and note what stood out, your key insights, and your new questions.

4. FINDINGS (10 MIN) Once you complete an interview, reflect on the following:

- Was this individual representative of their peer group? Why or why not? If not, what separates them?
 - What are they doing that is different from others?
 - What are they doing that's the same?
 - Who might you need to talk to now, to validate your new hunches?
 - What new questions do you need to ask?
-

TIPS

Refer to “Open Honest Questions” as you prepare for your interview.

Provide context for this conversation to your interviewee. Share your topic and the reasons for your interest. Let them know that by participating in this interview, they are helping you build towards a vision—you are building together.

As part of your interview, consider asking the stakeholder to talk you through a regular process they engage in, related to vision. For instance, a student might think-aloud as they read through a text, explaining their steps, questions, and decisions.

ACTION 2.2 REFLECTION

- After completing Action 2.2: Interview, what are you thinking now?
- What next steps does this action bring up for you?

DOCUMENT BY

Recording notes in your Toolkit—you will synthesize these notes into Empathy Insights to share with your team. If you recorded audio or video, clearly label and save files, so you have them organized and ready for later reference.

NOTES

BUILD EMPATHY

2.3 / SHADOW

Go deeper by shadowing a stakeholder's daily routine.

Conduct at least 2 shadows. Pick one student and one community stakeholder (parent, staff, etc) to shadow. You will follow these people, with their permission, through their daily life and routine. Shadowing students and stakeholders generates unique insights into the overall experience of your school, and highlights trends and variance across the different spaces and routines stakeholders move through.

TIME REQUIRED

Foundational: 2 half-day shadows, one of a student (including home visit), one of a community stakeholder

Transformational: 2 or more full-day shadows, one of a student (including home visit), one of a community member.

Total time commitment: 2 half days to 2 full days

MATERIALS NEEDED Chosen note-taking tools

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How do stakeholders navigate their day?
- What are their priorities?
- What are they motivated by?

1. INVITE (5 MIN) List the people you are interested in shadowing. These could be individuals who directly or indirectly experience your area of focus. Talk to your team members about who they are shadowing. Keep in mind:

- **Variance** in perspective or in performance
- **Equity goals**
- **Openness and reflectiveness** of potential interviewees

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2. SELECT (10 MIN) Narrow your list and ask your first choice for permission (in the case of students, determine needs for parent/family permission for home visits).

3. SHADOW (60 MIN—1 full day)

While shadowing, take notes on the person's daily schedule and activity. Notice and empathize with their experience. Consider tracking an indicator or behavior related to your vision (for instance, use of academic language, or positive interactions) over the course of your shadowing. Look out for trends, variance, and surprises. Take notes!

4. FINDINGS (10 MIN)

Review your notes, considering:

- Did any spaces or routines bring out a different side of your stakeholder? Why?
 - When did your stakeholder appear valued, motivated, and successful? How could you tell?
 - When did your stakeholder not appear valued, motivated, or successful? How could you tell? What factors might drive that difference?
 - What assumptions have been confirmed or dispelled?
 - What else—patterns or outliers—came up in your shadowing?
-

TIPS

This is an essential Build Empathy action, so proactively set aside time to conduct your 2 shadows over the course of the Fall semester.

Make clear to the person you are shadowing that the purpose of shadowing is to experience life in their shoes. Explain your goal to develop a new model to improve learning. They are a partner in this goal and likely to be inspired and excited to be involved!

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EXAMPLE

Ms. McNeal's School Design Team identified inconsistent disciplinary procedures as a key school-wide problem. She decides to use a personal professional development day to shadow a student through their entire school day. One of her students, Terrial, is frequently getting into trouble, but redirects when given praise and positive reinforcement. Ms. McNeal meets with Terrial, shares what she would like to do and why. She invites Terrial to ask her questions and shares a bit about her TrueSchool experience. Terrial is really excited to be involved (she loves the attention and sees her ideas matter). Ms. McNeal calls Terrial's parents and receives their permission for a full day shadowing Terrial. She meets Terrial at her house in the morning and talks to her parents. Together, they wait for the bus, eat school breakfast, attend morning classes, eat school lunch in the cafeteria, attend afternoon classes, and return back home on the bus in the afternoon. Along the way, Ms. McNeal asks Terrial to reflect on her choices and behavior—why, in some situations, does she behave appropriately and other times cross the line? As a result of this day, Ms. McNeal generates tremendous insight into inconsistencies and consistencies in management procedures across classrooms. She now feels more confident to design an approach that better meets Terrial's needs and the needs of other students who may be experiencing similar stress.

ACTION 2.3 REFLECTION

- After completing Action 2.3: Shadow, what are you thinking now?
- What next steps does this action bring up for you?

DOCUMENT BY

Recording notes in your Toolkit—you will synthesize these notes into Empathy Insights to share with your team.

NOTES

BUILD EMPATHY

2.4 / OBSERVE

Observe spaces and interactions at your school and in the community

The term “observe” is used differently in education and design. We’re not intending, for example, to observe colleagues to provide feedback on instructional performance. We’re using the term in the broadest, big-picture sense.

In our lives, we often don’t take the time to step back, take a deep breath, and simply observe. For many of us, we’re constantly moving and the minute we stop we become uncomfortable. Challenge yourself to pause, watch what’s happening, and take everything in.

TIME REQUIRED

Foundational: Conduct 2 observations of 30-45 minutes each

Transformational: Conduct 3 observations of 30-45 minutes each

Total time commitment: 1 to 3 hours / team member

MATERIALS NEEDED Chosen note-taking tools

GUIDING QUESTIONS How do space, communities, and routines play a role in the school and shape the behaviors, actions, and attitudes of the people within them?

1. LOCATE (10 MIN) Determine 3 locations and/or times for your observations. Identify where you can actively view interactions related to your vision. You may choose to observe in 3 different locations, or in the same location at 3 different times of day.

2. OBSERVE (15+ MIN)

Record your notes and findings as you observe. Minimize engagement—this might feel uncomfortable, but it will allow you to focus more carefully on the observation itself.

NOTES

3. FINDINGS (10 MIN)

During and after your observations, consider:

- What do you see that is expected?
 - What do you see that is unexpected?
 - What do you see repeatedly? What emerges as a pattern?
 - Pretend you are walking into this environment for the very first time. What would you notice right away?
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TIP

Consider an interaction or indicator related to your vision (especially your vision for equity) to track over your observations. This could be tracking which students volunteer, minutes of reading, or another factor that might vary over the course of your 3 observations.

EXAMPLE

Ms. Bashir's School Design Team is focused on understanding and improving the completion rate and quality of homework among freshmen. She conducts three, 45-minute observations in three different locations: during lunch in the cafeteria, during advisory in her classroom, and after school in the gym. As she anticipated, students do not use time during lunch or advisory to complete homework, using this time to take a break, relax and socialize. Unexpectedly, she observes some students using advisory time to copy homework. In the gym, however, students work independently and complete the assignments. She realizes this is the only environment where students are allowed to wear headphones and listen to music. She records this as a new insight.

ACTION 2.4 REFLECTION

- After completing Action 2.4: Observe, what are you thinking now?
- What next steps does this action bring up for you?

DOCUMENT BY

Recording observation notes in your Toolkit—you will synthesize these notes into Empathy Insights to share with your team.