Activity: Build a Shared Commitment to Change

Clarify your purpose for embarking on design work

Framing

Competing priorities and the day-to-day realities of schools can push design work to the back burner. To ensure the process gains momentum and stays focused, your design team should:

- Define a clear, compelling reason for change;

- Clarify a shared language for your work together (e.g., what do we mean by equity?); and

- Start to imagine the possibilities for the future of teaching and learning in your district.

Refer to and update this shared commitment and early vision often throughout the process to keep you grounded and motivated.

Ensuring Equity & Resiliency

Equity looks like starting with a recognition that not every student is equally successful in the current system and beginning to imagine a world where that reality is different. It also means evolving your "why" and early hunches as you hear directly from students, families, teachers, and classified staff. This means your design process must explicitly include ongoing opportunities to hear from stakeholders.

Resiliency looks like imagining a more adaptable and flexible model for teaching and learning. Consider what the system might look like if it were better able to withstand natural disasters or pandemics and deliver an excellent education for each student, no matter the circumstances.

Steps to Implementation

Suggested time: 1 hour

1. If your district has a stated vision for teaching and learning, make it available for your team to review in advance. Consider sharing inspirational articles or videos about what the future of education could look like ahead of time (consider jumping ahead to explore innovative schools).

2. Gather your team in a room (in-person or virtual) with access to sticky notes or a digital alternative, such as Google Jamboard; make sure your team has reflected on who is at the table.

3. Have each person answer some or all of the following prompts individually and silently, putting one thought per sticky note. Provide about 15 minutes for thinking and writing:

   a. What changes are needed in our district's model for teaching and learning?

   b. Why are you motivated by and committed to this process now?

   c. Imagine walking into a typical classroom in your district in 2025. What do you hope to see? What do you hope to hear?

   d. Consider a student who does not feel supported in our current system. What would a day in their life or their experience in this new future state look like? What would they feel? How would their experience be different?

4. As a group, read each other's sticky notes. Invite participants to add a "+1," dot, or checkmark to indicate agreement.

5. Take time for group reflection and discussion:

Discussion Question	Notes
What trends and differences do we notice in each other's responses, and what does that mean for potential challenges we are trying to address?	
What key words came up in our responses (e.g., equity, access, engagement, success, etc.), and how might we collectively define those words?	
Given the topics and themes that have come up in this group, what additional stakeholders (students, families, teachers) might it be most important to hear from?	

6. Together, craft a short "why" statement outlining the themes of your discussion and their implications. Try to write the statement in such a way that all stakeholders (e.g., students, families, community members) can understand and be motivated by it by avoiding education-specific terms and framing positively.

Our "Why" Statement: Why We're Making Improvements in Teaching and Learning

7. Next, you will bring the group together to reflect on your district's strengths and challenges; this will help you identify opportunities for improvement.

This activity was inspired by the "Frame Your Design Challenge" and "Extremes and Mainstreams" Method Cards in the [IDEO Field Guide to Human-Centered Design](#).

Cedar Rapids used its existing district vision for teaching and learning as an important anchor for its process to design near-term change.

In describing their ideal future, **Mastery** envisioned confident, independent learners supported with personalized, blended, and culturally responsive teaching and authentic relationships with adults.

In describing their ideal future, **Monterey** envisioned mastery learning across every classroom in the district — one where students are empowered, engaged critical thinkers with mastery of knowledge and skills.

See Appendix: Case Studies for more details

Additional Resources

• Resource/ Supplemental Activity: Co-Designing Schools Toolkit: [Define Your Equity Aspiration](#)

• The Learning Accelerator: Insight: [Step One: Craft a compelling why](#)

• equityXdesign: [Designing for Race Equity: Now Is the Time](#)