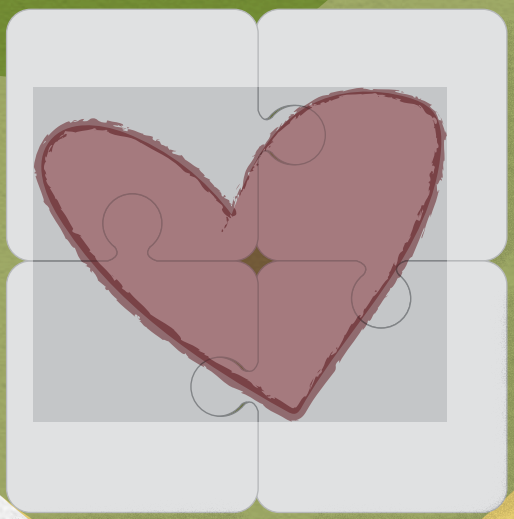
STEP 3:

CREATE



OUTPUTS OR OUTCOMES

- Create opportunities for voices at the margin to be included in the design process
- 2-3 prototypes designed with the marginalized group at the center
- Clear communication of the what (decision trade offs), how (process used), and why (your reason for selecting the system for redesign)

By now you have a rich understanding of the root causes of your identified challenge and have been intentional about including marginalized voices in the conversation. The stakeholders that you have brought to the table around your challenge have given you some ideas and indicated what success would look like for them.

As you delve into **creating solutions and prototypes** for your challenge, first consider how you might continue to design ***with*** your users rather than ***for*** them. In some cases, you might even have them as a member of your central design team. However, we recognize there are many constraints that make this challenging. One way around this is to build in intentional **cycles and space for feedback and reflection** from these stakeholders around the solutions that you create.

GENERATE A DIVERSE SET OF IDEAS

Create a school design team, ideally people who have also engaged in the process from the start, to generate a set of ideas to solve for your challenge using the knowledge gained through **Connect** and **Include**. We recommend using a brainstorming design protocol to ensure that you are inviting ideas from all team members, regardless of the power that they may hold in that space. As your team generates ideas, encourage members to brainstorm based on impact or magnitude of change.

Ideas can be
- **Small tweaks within necessary next steps of guidance**
- **Big shifts limited within locus of control**
- **Aspirational changes outside of direct control but within influence**

AN EXAMPLE CHALLENGE:
How might we create a virtual master schedule to ensure success in engaging students with highest failure rates?

SMALL TWEAKS	• Taking the current master schedule and making small tweaks by translating many of the same processes from in-person to synchronous virtual learning • Provide students with highest failure rates with additional synchronous check-ins with teachers and staff members
BIG SHIFTS	• Taking the current master schedule and making shifts in creating both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities within the master schedule • Provide students with the highest failure rates options to engage in pace, path, place and point of contact. Consider offering students a choice about which teachers they connect with in virtual class or office hours and when. For example, an 8th grade student can sign up for or join the office hour with their math teacher from 6th grade
ASPIRATIONAL CHANGES	• Master schedules are created to alter the pace, path, place, and point of contact based on individual student needs to match learning styles with learning venues.

ITERATE THROUGH PROTOTYPES AND TESTING

From those ideas, choose your highest leverage solutions (we recommend choosing 2-3) for which to create prototypes aligned with your prioritization from Connect and test in a small way. When choosing which ideas to prototype and test, consider how they will work to redesign your challenge. We recommend using these guiding design principles (created by the EquityxDesign Collaborative[1]) and aligned questions to help you look at your prototypes with an equity lens:

- **Design at the margins:** Whom does this prototype serve? Whose needs are unaccounted for? Does this prototype create inclusion and belonging for marginalized stakeholders?
- **Make the invisible visible:** What assumptions might we be making as designers? Are we still upholding underlying systems of inequity?
- **Speak to the future:** Does this prototype promote new, equitable ideas or simply restate existing systems that were never designed to serve all students?

PITFALL	AVOID BY
SELECTING ONE PATH WITHOUT CONSIDERING MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS	• Prototype development with the goal of leaving with three options • Announce to stakeholders that they will evaluate three options to provide feedback
ONLY INCLUDING OR ELEVATING THE "USUALS"	• Establish dates for stakeholder feedback • Generate a list of stakeholders at the margins across a variety of identifiers (race, socioeconomic, English as a second language, etc.) • Acknowledge that you might feel discomfort engaging voices or perspectives that are not traditionally heard
LETTING THE LOUDEST VOICES LEAD	• Name the power and privilege that exists within the space and call on everyone to work towards equity of voice • Communicate who was involved in the decision-making process and their roles • Have all members confirm the final decisions using an objection/no-objection protocol
LOSING YOUR "WHY" ALONG THE WAY	• Keep the problem statement at the top of all produced documents and/or conversations • Be intentional about reflecting on how the solution upholds your values

TESTING YOUR PROTOTYPE

A key function of a prototype is to establish proof of concept – will this thing work the way we want it to? Therefore, prior to putting your prototype into action, establish a clear theory of action you want to test: **"IF...THEN..."** Coupled with the hypothesis, be sure to explicitly name what success will look like and what data needs to be collected throughout the testing process to support the hypothesis. Though your prototype was designed for users at the margins, we recommend testing with both users at the margins and those in the general population.

OUR EXAMPLE CHALLENGE:
How might we create a virtual master schedule to ensure success in engaging students with highest failure rates?

EXAMPLE THEORY OF ACTION

If we add in more synchronous check-in time with choice in pace, path, and point of contact for students with highest failure rates, then we will see increased engagement and higher academic success for those marginalized students.

Design teams can use the following protocol prior to testing:

- **We believe that (insert your theory of action)** _____
- **To verify that, we will (actions)** _____
- **And measure** _____
- **We are right if** _____

CLOSING THE EMPATHY LOOP: COLLECT AND PROCESS FEEDBACK

Finally, we recommend scheduling time to reflect on the implementation of the prototype, analyze the collected learning, and iterate on your design. In addition to data you collected during the testing of the prototype, be sure to solicit feedback from the users who participated in the testing as well as the stakeholders you identified in Include. Use this touchpoint to also close the empathy loop by returning to the different stakeholder groups from **Connect** and **Include** to ensure the prototype represents their needs. The feedback should be used to iterate on your prototype and conduct additional tests as needed.

A simple protocol you might use to debrief your test is an **After Action Review**:

- **We believed that (insert your theory of action)** _____
- **We observed** _____
- **From that we learned (what worked? What didn't work? why?)** _____

_____

A NOTE ABOUT SCALABILITY:

If you are using this paper to design for a challenge presented by COVID-19 for the fall, it may be the case that you've already designed a prototype and tested it at scale (Note that typically prototyping and testing initially occurs with small groups). If this is the case, it is imperative that you plan for more frequent cycles of feedback and reflection to make **responsive pivots** along the way, especially within the first few months. If this is not the case, your next step would be to determine how to scale your prototype idea(s).

REFLECTION POINT

As you enter and exit the testing stage, make sure to reflect individually and as a team to ensure you are elevating voices, diversifying perspectives, and meeting true needs.

1. ***Have we solicited feedback from the stakeholders from Connect and Include?***
2. ***Have we used the After Action Review to gather learnings to better inform progress against our theory of action?***
3. ***Have we created a safe space for marginalized stakeholders to give adjusting feedback?***
4. ***What potential bias may upholding the inequity of the old system?***

EDUCATION ELEMENT'S REFLECTION APPLIED TO PERSONALIZED LEARNING

An integral part of our methodology is reflecting and iterating through learning walks. Classroom visits and reflection sessions are used to serve as an After Action Review to learn what worked and what didn't work. However, we have not prioritized gathering data during learning walks explicitly around the students at the margin within the school. As our partners launch Personalized Learning within their schools, focusing on how we measure progress around marginalized students is one way for our work to evolve with an equity lens.

SHARING INFORMATION: HARNESS THE FLOW AND LET INFORMATION GO

Once you finalized your design for rollout at the decided scale (continuing with small pilots, larger testing groups, or whole school), it will be important to be transparent and clear about why you are making changes and how the design was created. Based on our New School Rules, transparency requires the sharing of information, but information sharing alone does not mean transparency has been achieved. In communicating the process, prototypes and feedback, it is imperative that:

- **Information is shared before the expiration date (while it's still relevant)**
- **Information is shared to bring allies along and promote engagement**
- **Information is shared through diversified message, models, and tools**

Share **when** and **how** you plan to continue to collect feedback and pivot as needed, especially during the first month of implementation. When organizations fail to be transparent about their **why**, people will naturally fill in the gaps with their own assumptions, leading to cultural pitfalls such as rumors and broken trust. Beyond communicating the **why** and the **how**, it is also important to communicate the **what** from the design experience. Pieces of the what can include what were learnings along the way, what were key decisions that were made as a result of Connect and Include, as well as what changes were made based on stakeholder feedback. Sharing and communicating these aspects of change allows for the greater community to understand the decision trade-offs made by the design team as a result of the entire process.

REFLECTION POINT

Is my communication transparent and accessible?

1. Have I communicated important information three times in three different ways?

2. Are my communications accessible to all members of my school community (e.g. translated into multiple languages, variety of mediums and modes)?

3. Is there an accessible way for members of my school community to communicate feedback to the school?

4. Is communication transparent in sharing the why, how, and why from different perspectives?

CONCLUSION

We hope that this paper has given you the tools to begin to dismantle the systems of inequity within your school. This will be the start of a longer journey, and we encourage you to use these resources in a cyclical manner to chip away at these long-standing systems. Closely examining and redesigning policies and systems within your locus of control is an initial step. There will also be the hard work of shifting the spoken and unspoken beliefs and mindsets of the adults in your building beyond your leadership team and working to create shifts in the macro systems in which your school lives. However, all the deep work in which you engage will have an immeasurable lasting impact on the lives of your students. We are also engaging in this work as a company, and believe that it's our moral imperative to share our learnings with your districts moving forward.

Please connect with us as you are doing this work, so we can learn together to unpack best practices. Together we can achieve educational equity for all our students.

FOOTNOTE

[1]Hill, C., Molitor, M., & Ortiz, C. (2016). Equity x design: A Practice for Transformation. Retrieved February 26, 2020, from https://drive.google.com/drive/search?q=equity%20by%20design

[2] Many parts of this paper connects how leaders will need to utilize proven leadership modalities to lead through an equitable redesign. You can find more information on Education Element's leadership competencies here.

[3]Garcia, E., & Weiss, E. (n.d.). Education inequalities at the school starting gate: Gaps, trends, and strategies to address them. Retrieved July 02, 2020, from https://www.epi.org/publication/education-inequalities-at-the-school-starting-gate/

[4] Domina, T., Penner, A., & Penner, E. (2017). Categorical Inequality: Schools As Sorting Machines. Annual review of sociology, 43, 311–330. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-060116-053354

[5] O'Day, J., & Smith, M. (1970, January 01). Quality and Equality in American Education: Systemic Problems, Systemic Solutions. Retrieved July 02, 2020, from https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-25991-8_9

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We thank the entire Education Elements team for their tireless work this Spring and Summer, providing districts with guidance and support for return planning. This approach would not be possible without our team's commitment to examining our own practices, to self-learning, and to changing how we support our clients around reopening this Fall. If you are interested in finding out more about our services and ways we partner with leaders, please contact us at info@edelements.com.

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