

The ROCKiT MicroSchool Design Day

On Thursday, November 21, 2019, the MMSD ROCKiT innovation team had the honor of hosting a mini Design Day with some of the beautiful young ladies from the West High MicroSchool. MMSD's Office of Youth Re-Engagement defines MicroSchools as smaller, student-centered, culturally and linguistically responsive educational environments that are co-created with students to guarantee that innovation, personalized learning and family engagement remains the priority. MicroSchools are intended to be flexible and keep an emphasis on the social, emotional and academic growth of each individual student.

The ROCKiT team hoped to expose MMSD youth to an exciting, new type of learning, since youth voice is at the core of our vision and a focal point of all ROCKiT offerings. We also worked to build on the capacity of the brand new Microschool staff around innovation, journey mapping, team building and elevating youth voice. We were able to see students positively and effectively engage with ROCKiT tools, resources and activities. The focused empathy work also had great impact on student to student and student to staff relationships.



The scholars started their day touring the American Family DreamBank and gaining tools towards identifying and accomplishing their dreams before heading to the American Family Institute for Corporate and Social Impact to get into some fun and insightful innovation. The session started with introductions and background knowledge about what ROCKiT is and does, as well as the basics of Human-Centered and Liberatory Design. That's when the fun REALLY began! Of course, we had to get the students STOKED for innovation and comfortable making mistakes and failing forward, so we started with the activity "1, 2, Fail" from the Stanford d.School. The group LOVED it and it really began to break the ice with the youth.

A great part of the day was spent with the scholars community mapping in pairs and designing a solution for the most inconvenient portion of their partner's community. Whether it be the hassle of transferring multiple buses to visit a dear friend, immense distance from beloved family members, or a lack of adequate food access near their living space. On the map, students documented where they list, attend school, buy food, work, hang out and the people they care about live and how far each of those places were as well as how they got there.

We ended the morning with a community building, reflection activity of Story Stitch cards from the Green Card Voices non-profit organization. During the story stitch, the West Microschool scholars and staff had the chance to choose prompt cards that interested them and tell a story or



reaction to it. We only shared what we were comfortable with and the discussions ranged from topics on school, friendships, family and feeling misunderstood. The conversation was VERY POWERFUL. It got a lot deeper than we anticipated and lasted a lot longer than we'd expected, but the staff and students alike enjoyed learning where they shared a common thread in stitching their stories and where they could be a community of support to each other for the remainder of the year.

After lunch the pairs reconvened to identify, brainstorm

and build prototypes to fulfill their partner's needs. One scholar created a special dip that made fruits and vegetables taste like favorite unhealthy foods while maintaining its nutritional value for her partner who loved grabbing snacks at the local gas station but wanted to incorporate healthier options. Another scholar prototyped a device that had all of her partners favorite healthy foods at her fingertips and caused a drone to drop it right at her doorstep within minutes for a counterpart who's greatest pain point was how far decent food was from her home. There were also a ton of ideas for how to connect with distant family members and visit faraway lands.



The students seemed to really enjoy their experience. We closed out the process by asking them to share 1) one thing they enjoyed 2) one thing they were proud of and 3) something that was difficult, challenging or pushed them beyond their comfort zone. Many said it was fun and that they were glad they got to speak candidly with people who could relate, both in the story stitching and the community mapping.

**Everything I was
awesome!, it was a fun
and interesting day!**

-Microschool Student

From this experience, ROCKiT was able to try some of the components of our Human-Centered, Liberatory Design approaches with students. These experiences are important to providing useful information and resources to teachers (during Space Camps and Training Flights) who want to not only use innovative practices to design for their students but also want to teach their students how to intentionally design for equity as well. Working with these scholars was important because a

huge part of the way ROCKiT innovation and empathy works is with the intentionality and insistence of including and maintaining student voice and participation. They've been part of design teams and ROCKiT Launcher workshops and equipping them with the skills necessary to not only support the innovative work, but to be able to take it to Student Senate, Student Council, BSU, MSU, GSA, NHS, and other clubs and organizations.

