# Using Service Design to Understand and Improve Night School

The Situation

Madison Metropolitan School District currently hosts a night school diploma completion program for eligible students ages 16-20. Serving roughly 60 students at 2 evening locations, this program has remained status quo over the last six years. With the growing need to provide more robust school opportunities for youth in Madison, MMSD leadership joined forces with ROCKiT to discover possible areas for growth and improvement within the Night School program so that more youth graduate college, career, and community ready. ROCKiT worked with Night School leadership to identify a team of district leaders and program managers to take on this work during the fall of 2019.
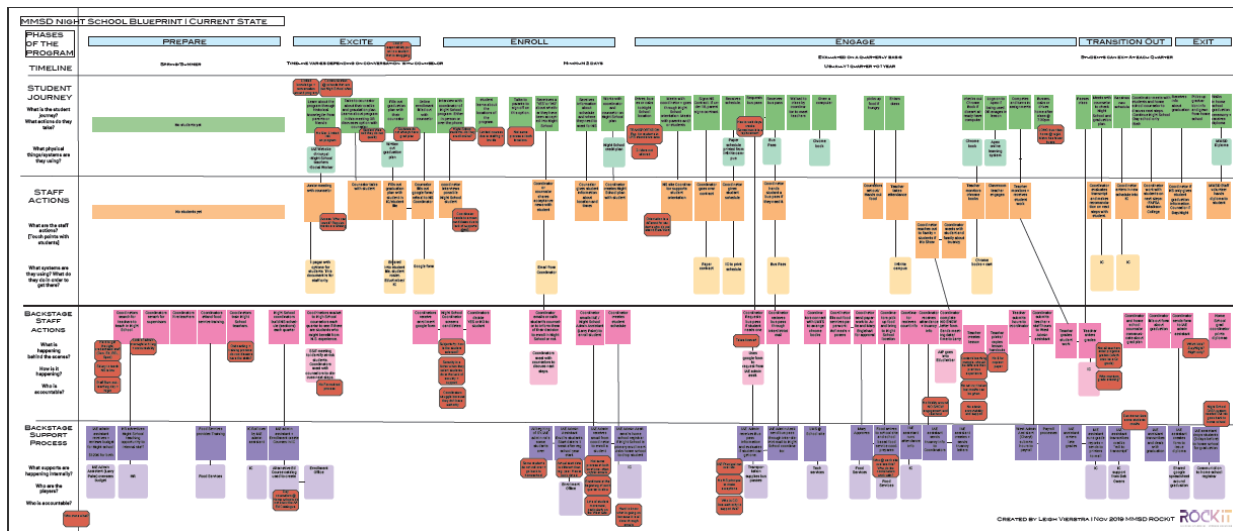

Research to Discovery

Before brainstorming ways to change the Night School program, the team first needed to deeply understand the ecosystem around this program. ROCKiT innovation strategist Leigh Vierstra led participants through a service design technique called *service blueprinting,* where the team mapped out the *front stage actions* (student journey and staff touchpoints that students can visibly see) and *backstage actions* (staff and backstage/central office support that students cannot see) in order to gain a full picture of the student and staff experience within Night School.

To begin this work each team member shared their expertise around Night School in 6 categories: Pre-Work, Excite, Enroll, Engage, Transition Out, and Exit using the following prompts:

- *What is the student journey through Night School? What actions do students take?*
- *What are the physical touch points? What systems or physical things are they using?*
- *What are the staff actions aligned with the student journey?*
- *What programs, systems, physical things are they using in order to get there?*
- *What is happening behind the scenes? How is this happening? Who is accountable?*

- *What backstage or internal supports are happening? Who are the players? Who is accountable?*

After a two hour inventory, the Night School *experts* arrived to share their knowledge and experience. Since service design is all about *the client's* experience through a particular service or experience, and not the team's perception of it, it is important to bring in *experts,* or people who have a *lived* experience in this specific area and can bring to light important information

about their experience. For Night School, ROCKiT brought in experts like program coordinators, the administrative assistant that supports Night School, and students. We gave each expert one hour to help us change, adjust, and fill in our rough blueprint from the morning inventory. While each expert shared, the team took notes and asked questions. As the conversation flowed, the facilitator quickly tracked information on color coded post-its on the wall. Any time the experts expressed a pain or frustration in their experience, the facilitator would capture it on a red post-it and place it on the segment of the journey it aligned to. If participants shared a suggestion to a problem we captured that using a teal post-it to signify any future state possibilities.
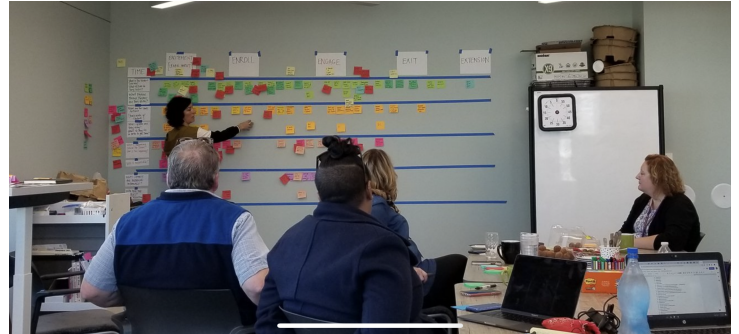
After spending ten hours co-creating the Night School blueprint and its learning and insights, ROCKiT then used the blueprint to fuel more discovery into where innovation could happen.   By zooming in on the pain points across the front and backstage actions, ROCKiT pulled out themes and identified quick wins and possible areas for innovation. ROCKiT then captured these insights and provided the Night School team with suggestions and direction of where they could take this work in order to improve the student experience and drive greater impact for youth in Madison. We identified themes like communication and marketing; consistent systems to recruit, enroll, and engage youth; and accountability.

The Outcome

The Night School team has taken our work together and created a phased plan to address the identified pain points, quick wins, and areas for innovation. The team is currently working with Night School coordinators and the administrative assistant to create coherent and consistent systems around enrollment, engagement, and the transition of students in and out of Night School. They are also developing a stronger branding and marketing campaign so that youth across MMSD know about this opportunity and can use Night School as a proactive approach rather than reactive when they get too far off track.

What It Took:
From the Night School Team:
- **9 participants -** 2 Central Office leaders , 1 program manager, 3 school based experts, 3 night school students
- **10 dedicated hours -** 3, 3 hour working sessions to co-create blueprint and 1, one hour post blueprinting debrief and summary of learnings

From ROCKiT:
- **1 Innovation Strategist** to plan, facilitate, and summarize
- **40 total hours over 5 weeks**