

RETHINKING THE WEST HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULE

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Background & Our Design Challenge

WHAT IT TOOK:

From the West Design Team:

7 participants- 2 principals, 2 learning coordinators, 2 teachers, 1 central office staff

30 dedicated hours- Over 7 working sessions

From Mission Control:

6 participants- 2 MMSD Senior Leaders, 2 MMSD Central Office Leaders, MTI president, an American Family Insurance's Institute for Corporate & Social Impact representative

2.5 hours- 3 meetings with design team

From ROCKit:

1 Innovation Strategist- to plan, facilitate, and guide the team through the process

80 hours- over 4 months

Most teachers at Madison West High School currently do not have common planning time with their colleagues. Due to the number of students, rooms, class periods, and courses offered at West, it had become an arduous task to find common time during the school day for teachers to plan, prepare, and support each other in the courses that they teach. As a way to support teachers and students, a design team comprised of West staff, Central Office staff and a ROCKit innovation coach launched a design mission in November of 2019 in order to find a desirable, feasible, and viable solution so that teachers at West can work and plan together to improve student outcomes across the school.

The Design Challenge:

REDESIGN the West schedule for students and staff, while considering West families and community members, in a world where teachers are fatigued, our schedule blocks opportunities for effective collaboration, and access and outcomes for our students are inequitable. WE AIM to create a school day structure that provides equitable access for students, reduces staff fatigue, and opens up opportunities for collaboration and improved instruction.

Empathy Inspiration to Insight Generation

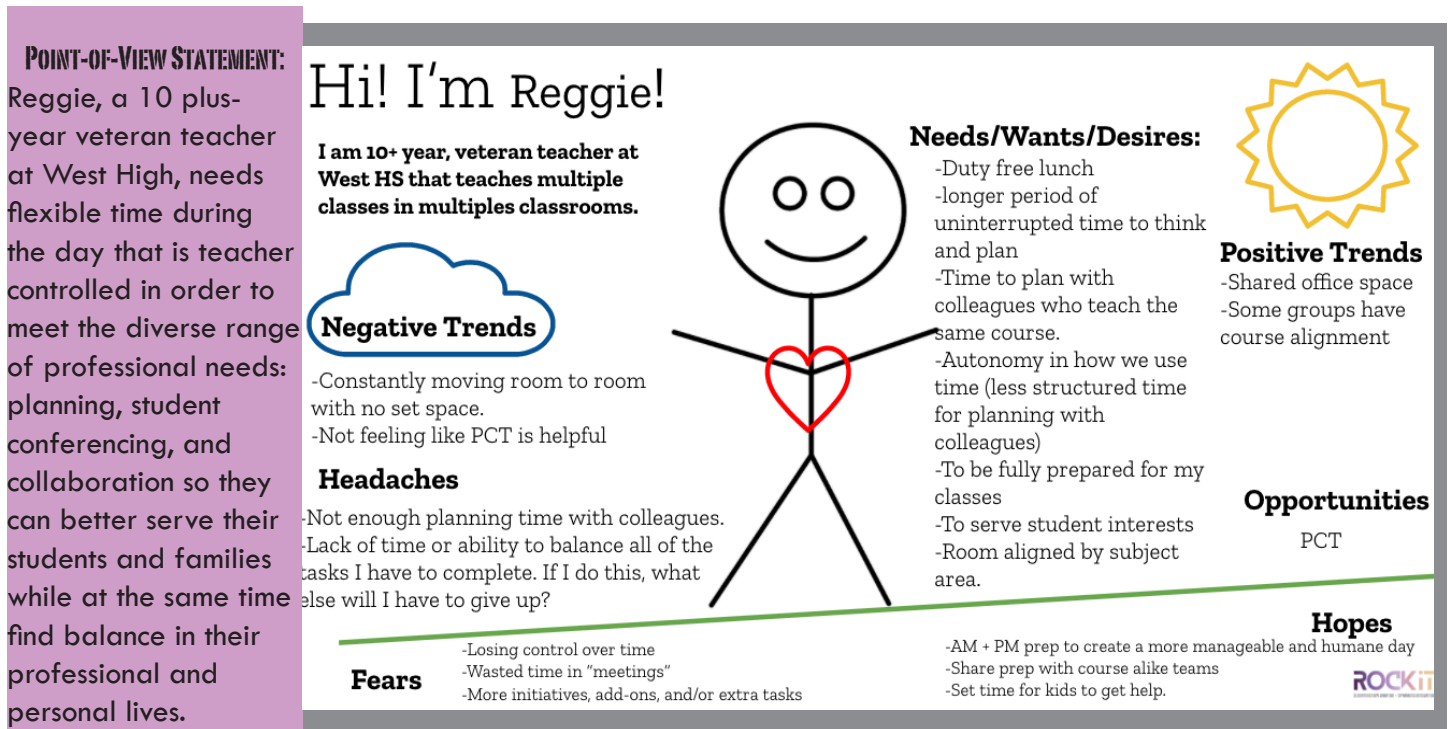
To start their design challenge off, the team needed to first gain empathy around the staff and student experience at West High School. In order to gain valuable insights and push on their own assumptions the design team conducted 24 empathy interviews with staff from a variety of positions and years of experience.

Based on the data collected from the empathy interviews, the team learned many important insights for example staff want to authentically plan with colleagues who teach the same courses, need to walk out of their planning time prepared (lessons created, handouts copied) to teach their classes, and desire uninterrupted, non-dictated time to think and work both individually and with colleagues. Using the client persona canvas the team then created a point-of-view statement in order to focus and drive ideation.



Ideation

Using the point-of-view statement as a guide, the team then ideated ways to solve for West High School staff needs, wants, and desires. From a long list of ideas that included satellite campuses and hiring graders, the team converged their brainstorm down to two ideas to explore and flush out deeper: flexible staff scheduling and a 2-lunches schedule.



Build, Measure, Learn (Prototyping)

In order to gain valuable feedback on the desirability, feasibility, and viability of each of these solutions, the design team presented each idea to the West staff during a professional development day. Staff were asked to give feedback to each of the options in a survey. Although only a small number of staff responded, the overwhelming response favored flexible staff scheduling and clearly expressed not wanting two lunches, citing inequity as their number one reason for being against it.

The team then met with their Mission Control team, a group of stakeholders from MMSD and MTI and the American Family Institute, to update them on their learnings and to get feedback on where they should explore next. The team was given the go-ahead to further explore a flexible schedule (the 0-9 schedule) that would allow teacher teams to shift their daily schedule an hour forward or an hour later four days a week. Leadership supported this proposal because it had zero budget implications for the district, kept equity at the center, and would not impact the students daily schedule.

In January the team met to build out their prototype based on learnings around desirability, feasibility, and viability. Starting small, the team built a 10th grade course team common planning prototype for the 2020-21 SY. They also developed a Planning Time Guidance and Expectations document to help clarify "what teacher collaboration time" means. The definitions and expectations were developed based on evidence from the empathy interviews conducted with staff and designed to illustrate how staff voice was being leveraged in these key design decisions.

