

Toki Student Leadership Design Mission

Katie Mae Imhoff-Bebeau, May 2021

Background

As schools launched into a semester of decisions, planning and action around re-opening amidst the COVID pandemic, ROCKit worked alongside an amazing team of people to reimagine the student leadership experience at Toki Middle School. Dana Serwe (Toki PBIS/MTSS), collaborated with Katie Mae Imhoff-Bebeau (ROCKit Innovation Strategist) to scope this challenge. Through the scoping process, Dana and Katie Mae outlined the challenge by working through various questions, informal data, and current situations in order to identify key stakeholders, develop starting goals, set up a timeline, and propose the challenge statement. Considering which skills and perspectives were essential to this challenge during the scoping, a team made up of eight people including students, teachers, student service staff, and community members were identified and invited to the team. Upon launching the challenge, the team focused on 8th grade students of color.

Even with the pressures of re-opening, the team recognized the importance of the mindset and commitment to “do school differently” and launched into the seven step Liberatory Design process, utilizing tools and elements adapted from Design Thinking and Lean Start Up to develop and test a solution to this challenge.

The Design Challenge

We aim to redesign the classroom experience for 8th grade students of color at Toki MS; while considering Toki staff. In a world where white supremacy culture continues to oppress our students of color, we aim to create an experience where the natural talents and skills of our 8th grade students of color are amplified, celebrated and centered so that students of color feel there are opportunities to engage in a school experience that is liberating and just. We need to test assumptions that all students want to be leaders and to have their strengths shared and used within the classroom.

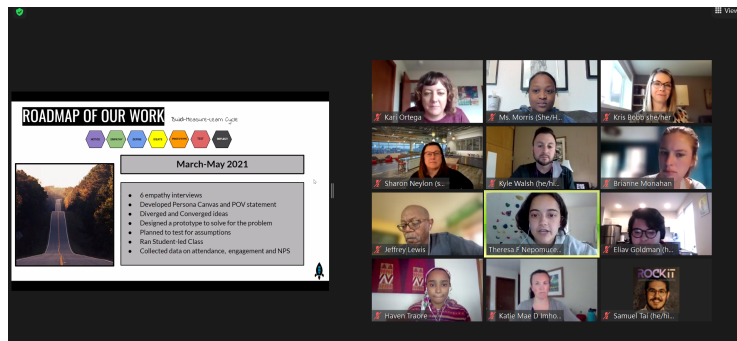


Photo shows Mission Control reviewing the team's work alongside elements of Liberatory and human-centered design at the final pitch.

Early in the process, the team met with Mission Control, a group made up of Toki staff, MMSD Central Office staff, and two community partners (American Family Institute for Corporate and Social Impact and an independent consultant/Natural Circles of Support). During this meeting, the design team shared their challenge and Mission Control posed some questions for the team to consider moving into this work. This acted as a launching platform for Mission Control to support the design team during this process.

Phase 1: Research/Empathy Gathering

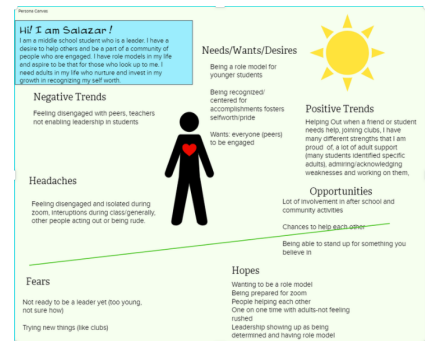
The Toki Student Leadership design team began by digging into the needs, wants, desires and greatest pain points of 8th grade students of color. The team interviewed six 8th grade students of color and asked them about their interests, where they have seen student leadership in and out of school, when they have seen themselves or others as student leaders, and to describe what student leadership would look like in a perfect world.



The design team, working 100% virtually, used MURAL to bring together all of the data from the interviews in order to generate insights. Students shared that they wanted to be a role model for younger students, recognized and centered for accomplishments that foster self-worth and pride, and for all of their peers to be engaged. Based on the key insights and themes from empathy work, the team created a persona canvas and defined their client, Salazar.

"Qualities a great leader has is standing up for themselves, protecting others, not being a follower and just knowing what's right for them and not other people." -Anaya (Toki Student)

Point-of-View Statement: *Salazar is a student leader at Toki Middle. He enjoys helping others and being a part of the community. He needs a way to explore and expand his leadership skills, in more spaces than the classroom. He needs more role models and educators to understand and uplift his leadership skills because he is a natural leader that has been often overlooked and discouraged because of previous school experiences.*

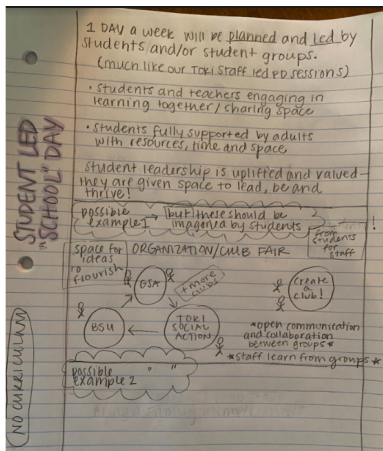


Phase 2: Ideation

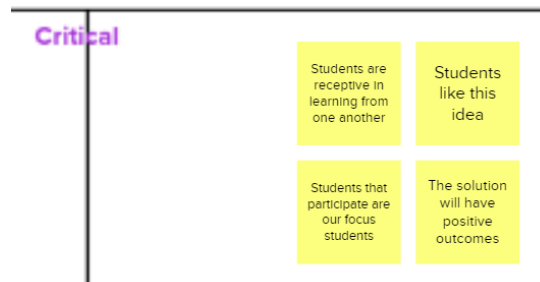
After engaging in empathy and defining the problem, the team moved to the ideation phase of the innovation process. Using the Point of View statements and How Might We statements to guide their brainstorming, the team came up with a variety of solutions using a Crazy Eights protocol. These solutions included staff becoming students, intergenerational schooling, and student decision boards. The team then considered components for a few solutions and each completed a solution sketch where each member identified a solution and broke it down into a storyboard sketch that fleshed out the solutions more in depth. The goal of the solution sketches was to get some simple ideas out front, hear everyone's voice, and decide where to go from there. From the solution sketches, the group identified some areas they liked and wanted to build out within a prototype.



Phase 3: Prototyping and Testing



The group decided to prototype a student-led school day. While they know student-led activities and classes have happened elsewhere, this choice was guided by the idea of bringing natural student strengths and talents into the classroom through this student-led day. With the full-day as an ultimate goal, the team narrowed it down to a class-period in order to test and measure. As the team considered critical assumptions, they wanted to test whether students were receptive in learning from one another, whether students liked the idea, whether their focal students would participate, and if the solution has positive outcomes.



The team underwent some large shifts in testing due to unprecedented experiences of moving from virtual to in-person teaching during the weeks of testing. However, the team was able to test a group of 10 6th grade choir students in leading a day of virtual choir. They collected data through classroom observations and a student survey that was completed after the lesson. The team walked away exhausted, but with some key learnings that will guide future work.

- “Students will always choose joy.” -Eliav Goldman (Toki Teacher)
- Students need time, both for planning and executing their vision
- Students are excited to bring their background knowledge to class
- Students can work together to design an outcome
- Students tied their outcome to their experiences (ex: connecting execution of a prank to acting and performance skills)
- Students can collaborate in authentic situations
- General guidelines for the time they are designing will be beneficial

Along with these key learnings, the team recognized the challenge of re-opening layered with this test and have a lot of ideas for how to continue testing this idea.

Outcome

The team prepared their pitch, and brought their recommendation to persevere through another testing cycle to Mission Control (a council made up of five leaders to listen to the progress, remove roadblocks, offer support and guidance). This fall, the team wants to advance their prototype and test what this could look like with more time to plan and execute the vision with more student voice in the planning process.

Mission Control heard the pitch and confirmed the decision to persevere with this work in the fall of 2021. Not only that, they shared support for resources above and beyond the request for hours, support, and connections.

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. On the left, a presentation slide titled "Toki: Student Leadership" is displayed. The slide includes a "CHALLENGE STATEMENT", "TARGET CLIENT", "THEIR RECOMMENDATION", "RESOURCE REQUEST", and "WHAT THEY HOPE TO DO Q1 NEXT YEAR". The "RESOURCE REQUEST" section lists: "Central office support to be innovative and ROCKiT", "Help finding metrics to assess efficacy of the tool", and "5 hours of extended employment for 3 teachers to be used during the fall to plan and collaborate with students". The "WHAT THEY HOPE TO DO Q1 NEXT YEAR" section lists: "Run another prototype-test cycle with the focus population (8th grade students of color)".

On the right, there is a grid of nine video thumbnails for participants:

- Kari Ortega
- Ms. Morris (She/Her/...
- Kris Bobb (she/her)
- Sharon Neylon (she/...
- Kyle Walsh (he/him)
- Brianne Monahan
- Jeffrey Lewis
- Katie Mae D Imhoff-S...
- Samuel Tai (he/him/thi...

What It Took

From the Design Team:

- **8 participants** - 3 teachers from Toki Middle School, 1 PBIS Coach from Toki Middle School, 2 students from Toki Middle School, 1 central office staff member from Student Services, 1 American Family staff member from Ignite
- **8 days over 3 months** for a total of 10 hours per team member
- **1 Innovation Strategist** to coach, plan, facilitate, and guide the team

From the Design Council:

- **5 participants** - 1 Toki Middle School staff, 2 central office leaders, 1 American Family Institute partner, 1 Circles community partner
- **3 hours** - 2 meetings with design team

From ROCKiT:

- 1 Innovation Strategists to plan facilitate, and guide the team through the process
- **62 hours - over 5 months**