



Virtual Learning in Elementary Ideation

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WHAT IT TOOK

From the Consulted Team:

- **1 Central Office Leader-** Director of Informational Technology
 - **3 planning meetings** with ROCKiT for a total of 2 hours
- **10 design participants-** 1 Chief of Schools, 3 Principals and 3 Assistant Principals and 2 Instructional Coaches from Elementary and Middle Schools in MMSD
 - **One 3-hour design session** for evidence collection and brainstorming

From ROCKiT:

- **2 Innovation Strategists** to plan, facilitate meetings, and guide the team through the process
- **20 hours over 2 weeks**

Overview

In the aftermath of COVID-19 school closures, Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) leaders are trying to figure out ways to utilize the learnings and processes gained, particularly around remote learning, to better serve the diverse student population and needs in the public school district. MMSD, like schools all over the country, was pushed to the limit during the pandemic and forced to explore more deeply the opportunities and innovations of virtual learning in traditional public school settings. Plans are in motion to continue virtual learning in some capacity in the fall at the secondary level. However, MMSD leadership wanted to consider if and how to provide space for online learning at the elementary school level as well coming into the 2021/22 school year.

What We Did

Director of Instructional Technology, Dr. TJ McCray, reached out to ROCKiT for support in a guided, creative opportunity for school based leaders to explore the options, advantages and disadvantages, desires and pain points of continued virtual learning in the elementary school space. Innovation



Strategists Lauren Morris and Sam Tai, led a team of MMSD principals and assistant principals through a process to collect pertinent information around virtual learning so that the tech team could make some decisions around if virtual learning should be offered at the elementary level and what that experience would look like.

Principals were asked: If continuing to provide a virtual learning space at the elementary level added value and opportunity to their students' learning experiences? Who wants it? What has worked? Why? What did it take? What hasn't worked? And Why?

Next, ROCKiT strategists lead the team through the Crazy 8s brainstorming protocol to come up with potential online learning solutions for elementary students and families. Next, Principals storyboarded with a partner and shared their ideas allowed the team to think about the essential questions, and most importantly create? high leverage components of a successful elementary virtual learning experience. The team emphasized documenting what was necessary and nice to have for success. In their work, school leaders documented potential limitations and roadblocks (such as staffing) but instead dreamed up what a successful program would include and began to jot down questions for addressing them. According to the participants, the virtual learning academy would be staffed by highly effective and technologically savvy teachers, in a separate model instead of the concurrent model previously used, students could still engage in field trips and extra curricular activities as to remain a part of their homeschool communities, they would maintain access to supply and lunch drop offs as needed, and the steady communication that parent survey data highlighted would remain.

Outcome

Based on the information that was shared by administrators, it was determined that virtual learning would be beneficial at the primary level and a necessary offering to explore. They noted that the remote learning option would provide some families physical and emotional safety, particularly in a still active pandemic. Additionally, this opportunity would allow MMSD to continue to rethink public education offerings and explore ways to serve the ever changing needs of Madison families. The administrators mentioned that there were, in fact, some students who flourished in remote learning.

Although overwhelmingly in favor of the virtual learning option, the team still had concerns about certain aspects such as academic rigor and translating curriculum into the digital space, would this opportunity further marginalize underestimated populations, and how to maintain community, especially relationships to home schools/ feeder schools or the transition between programs, if and when that comes to pass. This creative process jumpstarted a longer process, determining where energy should be focused on elementary level remote learning. The storyboards and brainstorming information provided launching points for working through logistical barriers and priorities as the district plans virtual learning for the 2021-22 school year and beyond.