

# Designing With not For: Takeaways from Hartford Public Schools' Innovation Strategy



November 17, 2023

## An Innovation Revolution



## An Innovation Revolution





1



2

**Whole Group:**



*What is one of the most important innovations that has improved your quality of life? Is this an incremental improvement or true innovation? Please hold off on saying smartphones!*



# Objectives



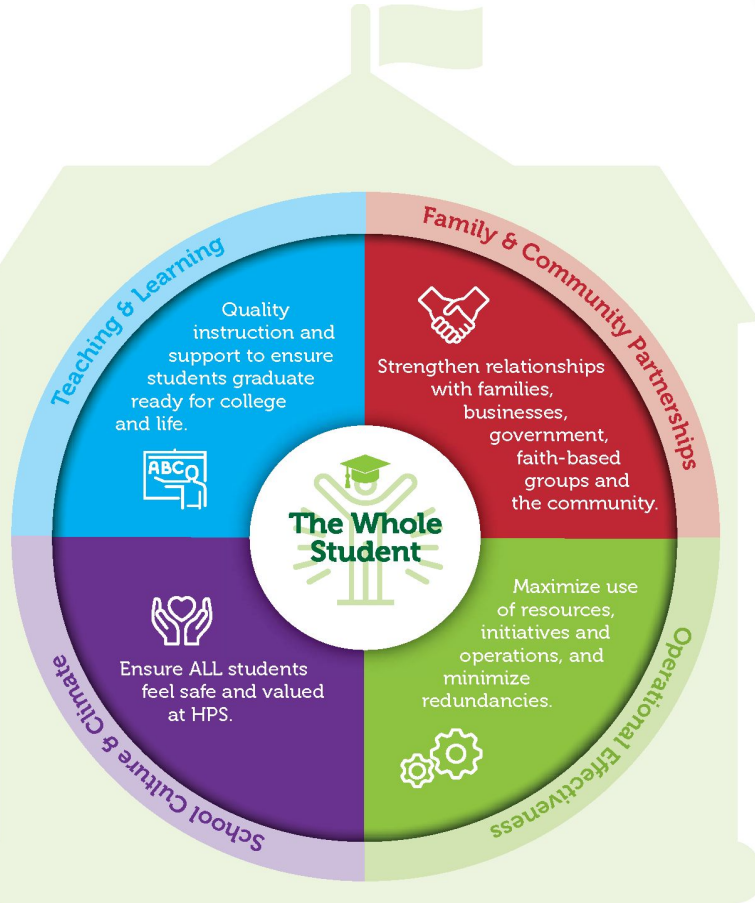
**Today will be successful if we are able to:**

- Identify the reasons why it is essential that we fundamentally change how we support students to learn and achieve their success
- Consider options for supporting and incentivizing school systems to engage in innovation work at multiple levels
- Highlight the crucial role of Board members in the design process of reimagining education
- Discuss emerging ideas for redesigning schools and school systems

# THE FOUNDATION FOR WHAT'S NEXT: HPS' Innovation 2018-2022

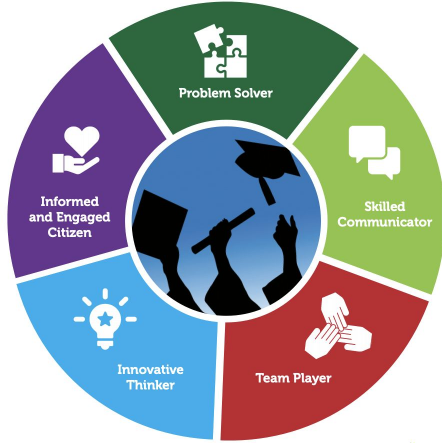


## WHAT WE DID: Our Foundation

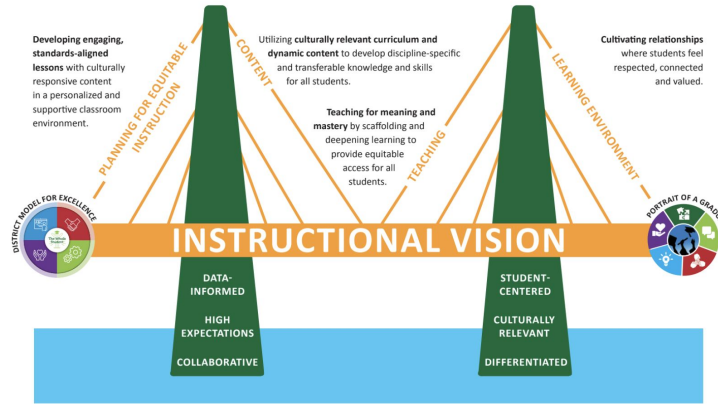


- Equity-centered Budget Process and Formula
- Student Success Center Established, 55 graduated during year one pilot.
- Dual Language Academy created
- Freshman Academy established
- Hope Academy 1 & 2 established
- Launched 39 Attendance Culture/Climate and Engagement (ACE) Teams
- District-level Continuous Improvement Team
- Re-defined/expanded Community Schools
- Secured \$245 million in capital improvement funding to restructure
- Initiated holistic-focused Home Visits - total 1,050 in 2018/2019

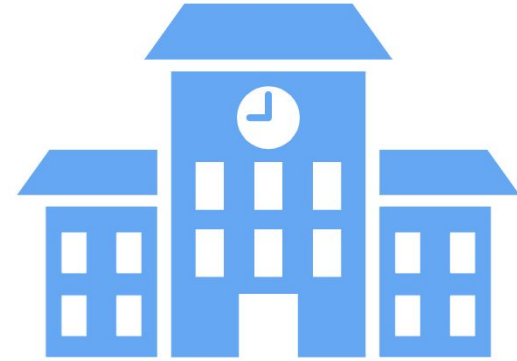
## THE FOUNDATION FOR WHAT'S NEXT: HPS' Innovation 2018-2022



Portrait of a Graduate



Instructional Vision



High School Design



**Why innovation? Why now?**  
**Why is this work critical at HPS and in our nation's schools overall?**



# Our Why - Student Outcomes



1468 Students Enrolled  
in Class of 2016



1160 Graduates  
within Six Years



580 Students Enrolled  
in Post-Secondary



186 Students Persisted  
into 2nd Year

Only 32% of Hartford Public School's Class of 2016 persisted into their 2nd year of college.

Our Why is the 1300 students who didn't make it through post-secondary.



# Our Why - Student Engagement and Relevance



	A Excellent	B Good	C Satisfactory	D Poor	F Fail	Average Grade
Your school overall	22%	44%	24%	7%	3%	B-
Respecting who you are regardless of your race/ethnicity, gender and identity	48%	29%	13%	5%	5%	B
Keeping you physically safe	43%	32%	15%	6%	4%	B
Making you feel included	29%	35%	22%	9%	5%	B-
Exposing you to ideas and opinions that are different from your own	27%	37%	24%	7%	4%	B-
Using technology in new and exciting ways to help you learn	27%	36%	24%	8%	5%	B-
The quality of teaching	23%	43%	22%	8%	4%	B-
Supporting your mental health	22%	32%	24%	11%	11%	C+
Preparing you for your future	20%	41%	25%	9%	5%	B-
Teaching you in ways that adapt to your unique learning needs	19%	33%	27%	11%	10%	C+
Teaching you about potential careers	17%	35%	28%	13%	8%	C+
Making you excited about learning	13%	35%	28%	13%	11%	C+

Source: Gallup and Walton Family Foundation

# Our Why - School Leader Perspectives



January & February 2023  
One-to-one meetings with all principals  
to discuss what is and isn't working well

## Pluses

- Management structures
- Hiring process improvements
- School co-locations
- Walkthroughs + coaching support for new teachers
- Grant funding + CBO partnerships
- Expanded Alternative programming
- Para flexibilities
- Staff is great
- ACE Central Office support

## Deltas

- More time for Principal/school-based PL to develop connections and teambuild
- Too many priorities and information for teachers
- More trauma supports / high student need
- Need CO staff more focused on instruction (EDSLs/Coaches)
- Not enough time for peer learning/network support + more opportunities for Principal leadership
- Exhausted
- Resource challenges
- Enrollment decline + future of magnets
- Length of school day
- School Climate & Culture
- Work / Life Balance for parents & young families
- New Principal 101: Budget, Data, Evaluations, Parent Engagement



# Youth Summit Top Themes



## School Climate and Culture

- “K, 1st grade felt like home; those were the best learning experiences - theme days, support; culture of the school, allowing teachers creativity”
- “Students need to know they can trust the teacher because it creates a sense of safety in the classroom”

## Student Mental and Emotional

- “It's hard to reach out for help. When we ask for help we get brushed off by staff/guidance.”
- “Having a group of friends that help each other out, work together and are there for each other and building a community at school is helpful”

## High-Quality Instruction

- “We should not have to leave our community to find better schools”
- “Everything about school has room for improvement - everything is the same with too much English, math and history, it's the same stuff every year which is quite boring.”






**Multiple stakeholders have shared their feedback regarding innovation in HPS.**

### **Innovation means...**

- *"...thinking outside the box in non-traditional ways and efforts" - Student*
- *"...student-centered, hands on learning, where students construct and demonstrate their knowledge ...Teaching and learning looks and sounds like the students and their families." - Teacher*
- *"...leveraging community partnerships . . . to support the whole child." - Community Member / Partner*
- *....thinking outside the box. Just cause no one has done it doesn't mean it doesn't work." - Family / Caregiver*

The background of the slide is a vibrant green and blue gradient. It features silhouettes of seven children jumping joyfully over a dark world map. The background is filled with various mathematical and scientific notations, including the quadratic formula  $\frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$ , chemical structures like  $\text{CH}_3\text{-H}$  and  $\text{COO-CH}_3\text{-COO-H-H}_2\text{O-J}_4$ , and other formulas like  $\text{CO}_2$ ,  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , and  $\text{CH}_2$ . There are also geometric shapes like a cube and a sphere, and various symbols like  $\pi$ ,  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ ,  $\delta$ ,  $\epsilon$ ,  $\zeta$ ,  $\eta$ ,  $\theta$ ,  $\iota$ ,  $\kappa$ ,  $\lambda$ ,  $\mu$ ,  $\nu$ ,  $\xi$ ,  $\omicron$ ,  $\pi$ ,  $\rho$ ,  $\sigma$ ,  $\tau$ ,  $\upsilon$ ,  $\phi$ ,  $\chi$ ,  $\psi$ ,  $\omega$ ,  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ ,  $\delta$ ,  $\epsilon$ ,  $\zeta$ ,  $\eta$ ,  $\theta$ ,  $\iota$ ,  $\kappa$ ,  $\lambda$ ,  $\mu$ ,  $\nu$ ,  $\xi$ ,  $\omicron$ ,  $\pi$ ,  $\rho$ ,  $\sigma$ ,  $\tau$ ,  $\upsilon$ ,  $\phi$ ,  $\chi$ ,  $\psi$ ,  $\omega$ .

"Just as an engine has little value atop a horse and buggy, truly realizing new possibilities requires fundamentally reimagining elements of existing paradigms in order to transition to something new and better."

*-The Out the Box Report*



## iNet

Engaging individual school communities in reimagining the design and delivery of school.



## Student-Designed School

Engaging students in designing the school that they would want to attend.



## Central Office Innovation

Engaging Central Office in redesigning how schools are supported to innovate.





## Supporting Innovative Learning Communities: Hartford Innovation Network (iNET)





## Reimagining school: The Hartford Innovation Network



### iNet at HPS

HPS will support and design additional school models to **realize** its Mission and Portrait of a Graduate. Through the Hartford Innovation Network, **a small number of schools will co-design and pilot innovative approaches** tailored to their school communities.



### What will we do?

By the end of the 23-24 school year, we will...

- **Design and launch an innovation network** that pilots, in a **site-specific manner**, elements of reimagined instruction.
- **Review and assess** potential improvements at the district level to **sustain and replicate innovative models**





### *How we engage matters:*

- **Co-Creation** is the work of joining with stakeholders in a process to develop vision and public value
  - Example: Working with parents and families to design a new school
- **Co-Production** is the work of joining with stakeholders in a process to execute on the vision and secure the full promise of the public value
  - Example: Families and students serving on a governance body of a school to ensure it meets the vision of expeditionary learning



What does it mean to reimagine  
the student experience?



**Pair Share:**



*What is one of the most powerful or deep learning experiences you have ever had (whether formal or informal)? What were the qualities or features of that experience that made it deep or powerful?*

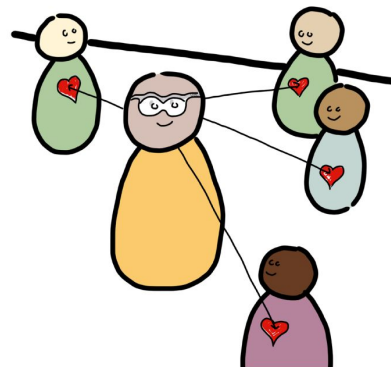
# Liberatory Design

## Designing With not For

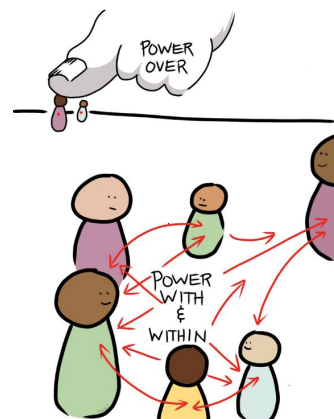


# LIBERATORY DESIGN

mindsets and modes to  
design for equity



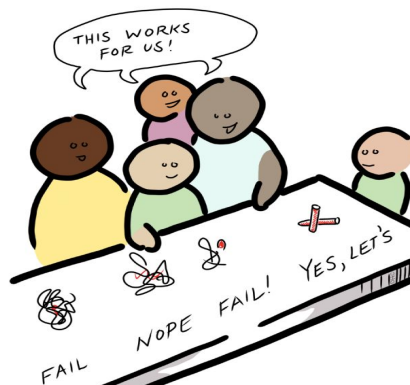
Focus on Human Values



Work to Transform Power



**LIBERATORY  
DESIGN  
MINDSETS**



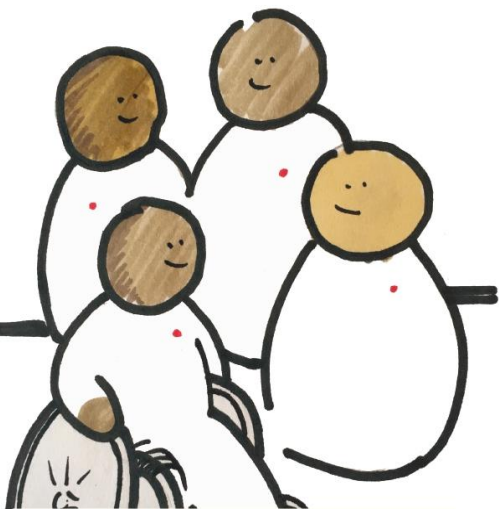
Take Action to Learn



Seek Liberatory Collaboration



## Taking the next steps: Liberatory Mindsets: ACTIVITY



### Seek Liberatory Collaboration

Recognize differences in power and identity.  
Design "with" instead of "for."

### Seek Liberatory Collaboration

#### Why?

Design work is fraught with power and identity dynamics (e.g. designer as expert, who's generally situated with advantage). To fully realize the liberatory potential of a design process, both for the people we are designing with and for the designer, it's critical to reframe the relationship as one of partnership.

#### How

- Actively seek diverse identities and skill sets as you build your team.
- Acknowledge and build from the strengths, stories, and skills of each other.
- Set conditions for collective learning, risk-taking, and action.
- When framing the question, "How Might We...?" ensure the "We" is diverse and inclusive.

**QUESTION TO CONSIDER:** Why is it vital for us to change the way we interact with our communities moving from an expert-centric approach to one of genuine partnership and equity?

In your small groups, take a few minutes to discuss your insights and experiences on this question. Think about the provided "Why?" and "How?" points.

Briefly reflect on how you can apply the insights from the discussion to your own school communities and projects. Think about practical steps to foster genuine partnership and equity in their education initiatives.

## HPS iNet Schools' Draft Definition of Innovation



Innovation is the dynamic process of centering student voice and community to creatively address challenges and develop new approaches that meet the diverse needs of students, elevates the student experience, and improves equitable outcomes.





## Listening to our Community of Stakeholders: Student-Designed School





## Reimagining school: Student Designed School



### Year 1

HPS Students will embark on a year of **Project Based Learning, earning Civics credit while they explore** and navigate their way through the complexities of the public education systems and structures locally and nationally.



### Summer



Students will continue their design work via a **PAID summer internship and participate in learning excursions to generate new ideas.**

### Year 2

Students will design their school based on their learning across the year, summer internship, and learning excursions.  
Then: **The Student Designed School will be Presented to the Board.**





## Reimagining school: Student Designed School: Recruiting



## Activity: Practicing Listening to Design



### In triads: Yes and...

- This is a rapid-fire, generative activity
- It is meant to be light and fun - don't think too hard!
- Round-robin: One person makes a statement, the next person says, "yes, and..." Continue, until time is up
- The objective is to listen and trust. Liberatory design asks for us to be free, collaborative and safe

The word "Yes" is written in a large, black, cursive font. Below it, the word "AND..." is written in a large, black, bold, sans-serif font. A red horizontal line with small red bows at each end is positioned between the two words. In the top right corner of the slide, there is a cluster of small, dark blue dots.

**We will model this for you!**

## Activity: Yes And...



### Sentence starter:

Innovation in our district or in our school  
would ( look/feel/sound) like...

### In small groups

- “Yes, and...” to discuss:  
What would innovation look and sound like in our professional learning space?
- How did this feel?
- Which 1-2 responses are most important to share with the whole group?





## Supporting Innovation: Central Office





## Circling Back to our School Leader Perspectives



January & February 2023  
One-to-one meetings with all principals  
to discuss what is and isn't working well

### Deltas

- **More time for Principal/school-based PL to develop connections and teambuild**
- **Too many priorities and information for teachers**
- More trauma supports / high student need
- **Need CO staff more focused on instruction (EDSLs/Coaches)**
- **Not enough time for peer learning/network support + more opportunities for Principal leadership**
- **Exhausted**
- **Resource challenges**
- Enrollment decline + future of magnets
- Length of school day
- School Climate & Culture
- **Work / Life Balance for parents & young families**
- **New Principal 101: Budget, Data, Evaluations, Parent Engagement**

## Reimagining school: Central Office Innovation



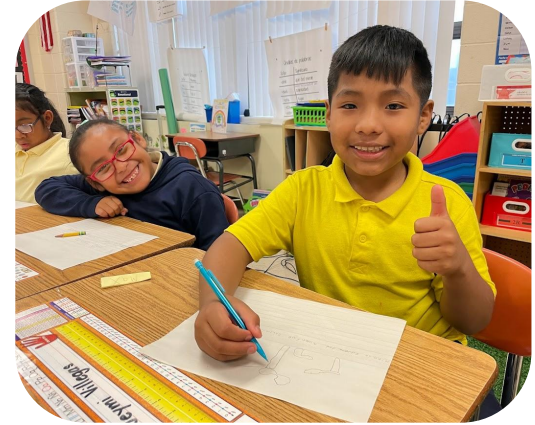
### Central Office at HPS

Assess efficacy of central office teams, systems, and structures and then identify key improvements to better align central office services to meet school needs and support innovation.

### What will we do?

By the end of the 23-24 school year, we will...

- Analyze of existing central office teams, systems, structures, and processes for barriers to efficient support of schools and innovation
- Provide professional learning on management, customer service, and new systems and processes
- Propose and begin to execute on systems and process improvements
- Identify and provide flexibilities necessary to empower school-based innovation



## Central Office Engagement Designing With not For at CO



### Part 1: Survey

Survey Window: Tues, 9/18 - Weds, 9/27

#### Purpose

- Identify **currency strengths** and **areas of focus** within departments and central office overall
- Help **determine priorities** for central office innovations
- Directly influence upcoming Attuned-led professional development sessions to address prioritized central office needs
- Guide collaboration with the cabinet and the Innovation Advisory Committee, to **support identified culture & operational improvements** in the central office.

### Part 2: Focus Groups

September 28 (in-person) and October 4 (virtual)

#### Purpose

- Provide an opportunity to **voice the feedback** you shared in the survey, as well as share more detailed suggestions for shifts
- Each focus group will take **45 minutes**







## Innovate





# Innovate



## OUR WHY:

- Time for change is now
- Our students deserve it (and want it)
- We commit to designing With not For
- When students have ownership and joy, their overall success will follow





**CLOSING ACTIVITY: Let's Zoom Out:**

**Change is happening in education with us or without us. With your elbow partner, name one innovation (not an incremental improvement) that you believe is essential in your system in the next 3-5 years?**

# Questions



# Contact Us



**Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez**

Superintendent  
[Superintendent@hartfordschools.org](mailto:Superintendent@hartfordschools.org)



**Paul Foster**

Deputy Superintendent  
[Paul.Foster@hartfordschools.org](mailto:Paul.Foster@hartfordschools.org)



**Suzanne Palmieri**

Assistant Director of Strategic  
Initiatives  
Suzanne.  
[Palmieri@hartfordschools.org](mailto:Palmieri@hartfordschools.org)



**Philip Rigueur**

Chairman of the Board  
[Philip.Rigueur@hartfordschools.org](mailto:Philip.Rigueur@hartfordschools.org)