

Before the Meeting

Ice Breaker

- ★ Why did you apply to be an RSVP Ambassador? How do you hope to grow this year?
- ★ What gifts (assets) do you bring to the group?
- ★ What is one thing you hope to learn today? How can your "colleagues" support you?



Excellence and Equity

RSVP Summer Institute
August 11, 2025

8:30 am – 4:00 pm



Overview of the Day

- Review RSVP Purpose and Alignment to V2035
- Engage in Welcome & Inclusion Activity
- Discuss Foundations for Co-design Partnerships & RSVP
 - Break
- Learn the Modes and Mindsets of Liberatory Design
 - Lunch
- Engage in a Liberatory Design Sprint to Internalize the Modes and Mindsets
 - Break
- Debrief the Design Sprint
- Offer Feedback on the Learning
 - Campus micro-tour

Grounding Moment

- **Returning RSVP Members:** What was your best memory of last year's RSVP committee and why did you choose to participate in the leadership of the committee?
- **New RSVP Members:** What are you most excited to contribute this year?
- **Adult Facilitators & Adult Guests:** Why is this student advisory important to you?

Overarching Purpose

Raising Student Voice & Participation

Elevate student voice and student experience to inform school and district decision making (Core Values)

Provide a structure for two-way communication and co-design partnerships between adults and students (System Portrait)

Provide a safe place for students to activate the leadership skills that they are learning and/or developing in alignment with the Graduate Portrait

Build relationships between adults and students where all voices are equal (Adult Portrait)

Core Value

Centering Student Needs and Voice

We believe the every student has the ability to thrive and that success requires that we attend to the needs of the whole child.

We believe that incorporating student voice and building student agency, so that students can intentionally influence their own circumstances, are essential to our success in understanding and meeting each student's needs.

Graduate Portrait Elements



Students view diversities as assets to our inclusive community, understand the historical roots of racial and cultural biases that have led to institutional practices of oppression and know how to act in ways that promote equity and inclusion.



Ethical
Problem Solver

Students know how to apply diverse thinking, research, and problem-solving methods to develop creative solutions that address the needs of the people for whom the solution is intended.



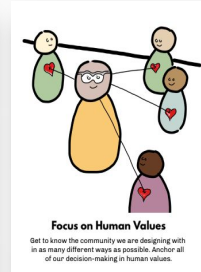
Interdependent
Collaborator

Students value collaborating in diverse teams and know how to harness the collective genius of their team members to maximize productivity and reach outcomes.



Welcome & Inclusion

Community Agreements 24–25



- Ask questions beginning with "Tell me more..." to surface what we don't know, rather than asserting what we think we know
- Build from the strengths, stories, & skills of the team and honor the wisdom in the community
- Keep the problem *and* solution spaces open by listening to multiple, diverse perspectives rather than rushing to fix
 - Powerful design emerges from the "mess," which shows that we are doing something and trying new ways
- Put aside preconceived notions of how things should be and think/talk "crazy" (wild ideas to spark creative courage)
- Create opportunities for sense-making before decision-making

bell hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*



Image Source: [Lion's Roar](#)

"Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world."

Who We Are...

60 Members

- 12 high schools represented
- 9 returnees
- 10 Student Board Member (SBM) semi-finalists & 4 SBM finalists

Demographics

- 42 Female, 16 Male, 1 Non-Binary, 1 Prefer not to say
- 23 Juniors, 37 Seniors

● Races:

- 2+ races – 7
- Afro-Latina/o/x – 2
- American Indian or Alaskan Native – 1
- Asian – 10
- Bengali – 1
- Black/African American – 5
- Filipino – 1
- Hispanic/Latino/a/x – 23
- Pacific Islander – 1
- White – 8
- Not Reported – 1

Low-Tech Social Network

Make sure you have a large card

Draw your "avatar" or pic and write your name along with your preferred pronouns

At the bottom include 3-5 keywords/phrases related to any of the following:

- Value(s) you hold
- Unique facts about you (Assets)
- Identities you center



Dr. Nader I. Twal
(he/him/his)

Middle Eastern
Man of Faith
Father and Husband
Grew up overseas

Low-Tech Social Network

Discussion:

1. How did it feel to engage in this activity? Why?
2. What connections surprised you? Why?
3. What skills, assets, or perspectives caught your attention? How might you learn more about the person who has them?

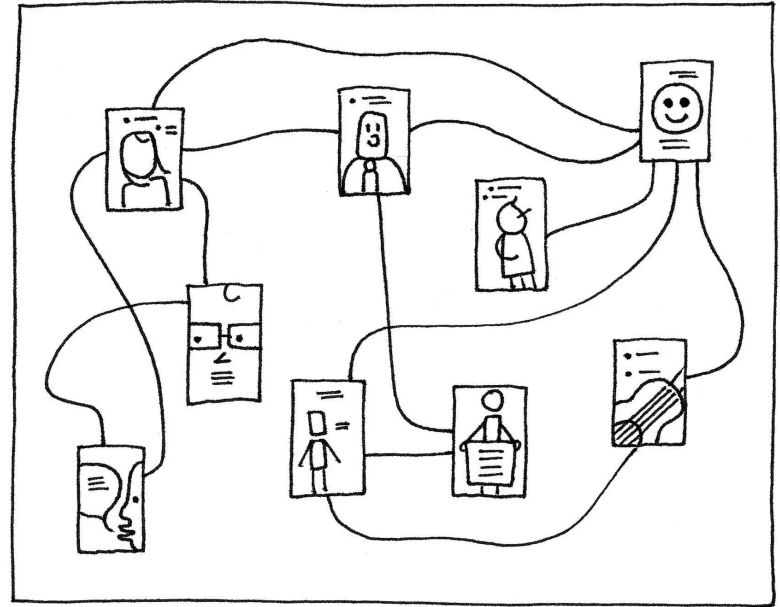


Image Source: [Gamestorming](#)



Co-Design Partnerships & RSVP 2025-2026

"Every organizing effort... needs to begin by exploring and clarifying the intention and desires of its members. What's possible now that we've agreed to try this together? How does the purpose of this effort connect to my personal sense of purpose, and to the purposes of the larger system?"

Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers (1996)

Co-Design



Adult Driven:

Adults are primary organizers, but work in meaningful partnership with youth over time. This mode is appropriate when youth don't have the capacity to be full and equal partners, but their voice and perspective is critical to the effort.



Co-Driven:

Effort is driven jointly by youth and adults. Strong structures, processes (e.g. regular time, clear communications), and trusting relationship are vital to success here, and perspective is critical to the effort.



Student-Driven:

Students are primary organizers. Adults, as allies, play a supporting role in service of student leadership and can provide "bridges" to the rest of the system.

Student Voice and Leadership

Students are often ready to express their needs and desires (use their voice) and take on more leadership than adults are ready to invite. That said, there are important skills and mindsets for students to learn that support their own equity leadership development. The following table was adapted from Californians For Justice, 2022.

Not Partnering	Being Heard	Collaborating	Leading
Dismissed, Tokenized, Marginalized	Episodic	Partnering over time	Stepping forward
	Students articulate their perspective, serve as data source, provide feedback	Students involved as stakeholders, collaborate with adults, co-construct decisions	Students identify problems, generate solutions, direct collective activity
	Expression, Consultation	Participation, Partnership	Activism, Leadership



Adult Partnership

Adult Partnership

Adult educators need to consider where they need support or guidance in order to partner with students in liberatory ways in service of equity. It is important to name the need to tend to this as a growth area and provide a way for adults to develop their own capacity as liberatory partners to students.

Not Partnering	Hearing	Collaborating	Supporting
Dismissive, Paternalistic, Tokenizing	Episodic	Partnering over time	Stepping back
	Adults learn to learn from youth; decenter own adult perspective	Adults learn to partner with students; recognize the necessity of youth input	Adults learn to transform power more broadly and sustainably

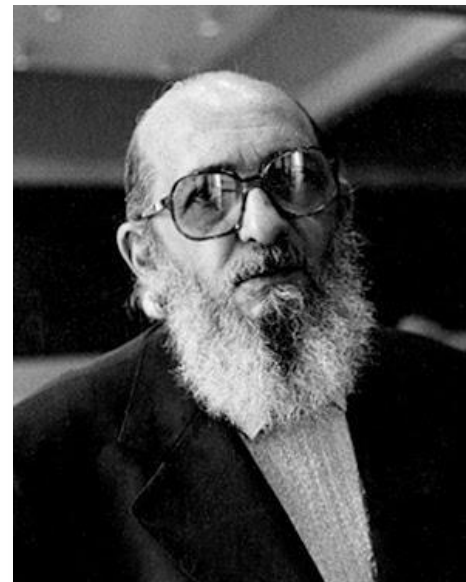


Is Partnership Enough?

"The challenge is that we are all the inheritors of previous systems of oppression that have shaped our current perceptions of reality.

It is quite difficult to be fully aware of the current moment and our existing limited-situations without intentionally noticing and reflecting in order to act in the world for our own liberation."

Paulo Freire

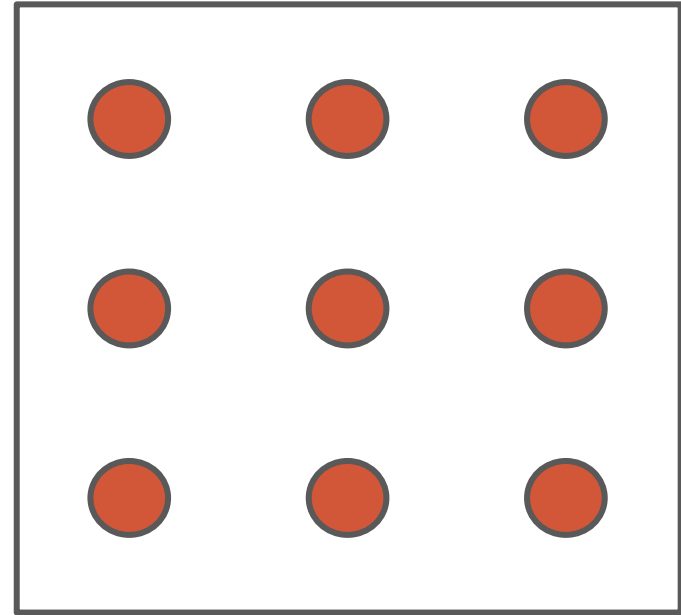


Connect the Dots

Connect the dots using only 4 straight lines, without lifting your pencil/finger from the page.

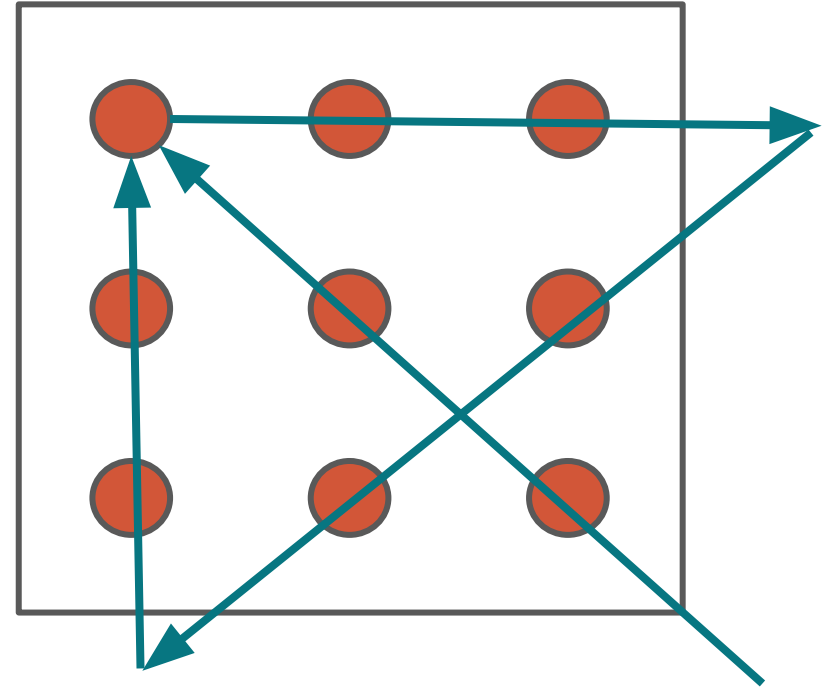
Work individually for 1 minute, then I will prompt you to work as a team for 1 minutes.

Be ready to share out.



Connect the Dots

- Why did you stay inside the lines?
 - For those who did not stay inside the lines, why did you go outside of the lines?
- Who told you that staying inside the lines was a rule?
- How did you come to the understanding that lines were limiting?
- Where in your work might you have internalized messages about “how things work” that might need to be *liberated* as you envision your leadership this year?



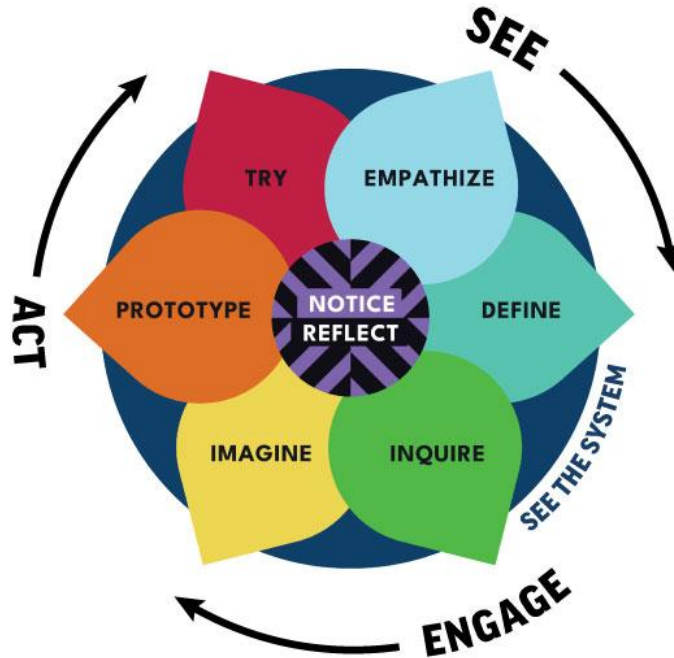
We can't afford to
continue to think in
the same ways we
always have and yet
somehow expect
different results.



Photo by [David van Dijk](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Intro to Liberatory Design

Liberatory Design – Designing “With”



Source: [National Equity Project](https://www.national-equity-project.org/)

Liberatory Design (Deck)



Background - National Equity Project

Liberatory Mindsets



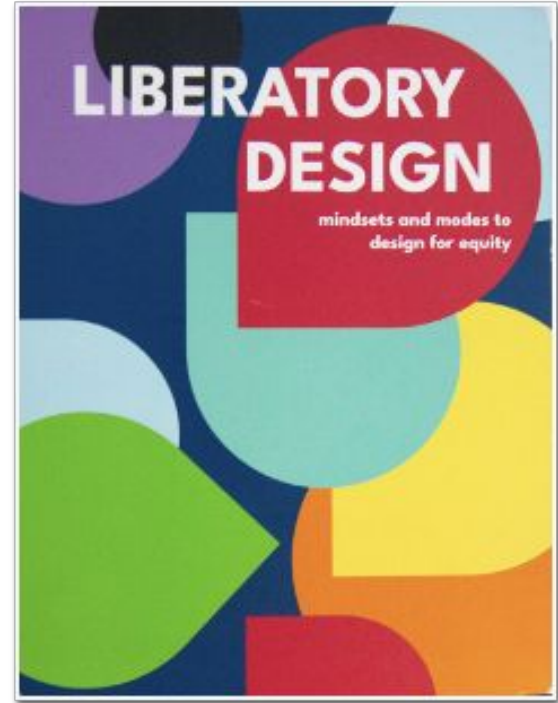
Making Meaning: Liberatory Mindsets

Divide the mindsets up among your group.

Take two minutes per mindset to learn as much as you can about the ones you are assigned.

Be prepared to share your “first draft summary” of the mindsets you are assigned in your own words.

- 30 seconds to share each mindset



Observe: Liberatory Design Mindsets

Be prepared to discuss:

- Where do you see evidence of the mindsets?
- Where are there missed opportunities to engage the mindsets?



Observe: Liberatory Design Mindsets

Be prepared to discuss:

- Where do you see evidence of the mindsets?
- Where are there missed opportunities to engage the mindsets?



Design Thinking

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Empathize

Define

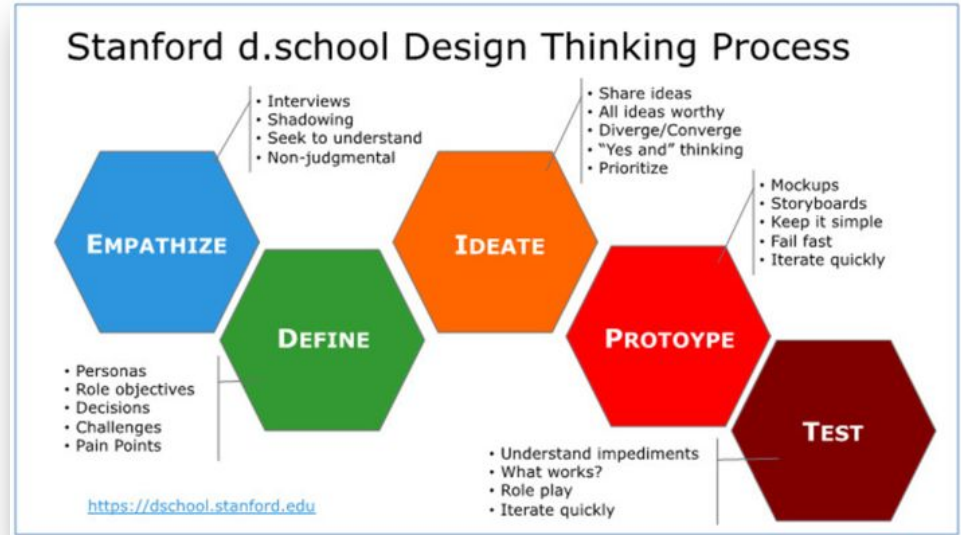
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Ideate

Prototype

Test

Design Thinking



Deeper Dive: Modes of Design

MODE
EMPATHIZE

Empathize

Define

Ideate

Prototype

Test

WHAT is the empathize mode

Empathy is the foundation of a human-centered design process. To empathize, you:

- **Observe.** View users and their behavior in the context of their lives.
- **Engage.** Interact with and interview users through both scheduled and short "intensity" encounters.
- **Immense.** Experience what your users experience.

WHY empathize

As a human-centered designer you need to understand the people for whom you are designing. The problems you are trying to solve are rarely your own—they are those of particular users, in order to design for your users, you must build **empathy** for who they are and what is important to them.

Watching what people do and how they interact with their environment gives you clues about what they think and feel. It helps you to learn about what they need. By watching people you can capture physical manifestations of their experiences, what they do and say. This will allow you to interpret intelligent meaning of these experiences in order to capture insights. These insights will lead you to the innovative solutions. The best solutions come out of the design insights into human behavior. So, listening to capture those insights is better than you might think. Why? Because you rarely accurately think the full set of information it says we aren't even aware of. We need to learn to see things "with a fresh set of eyes" - look for insights along with a human-centered mindset, so what goes to those new eyes.

Engaging with people directly reveals a tremendous amount about the way they think and the values they hold. Sometimes these thoughts and values are not obvious to the people who hold them. A deep engagement can explore both the designer and the designer for the unanticipated insights that are revealed. The stories that people tell and the things that people say they do—even if they are different from what they actually do—are strong indicators of their deeply held beliefs about the way the world is. Good designs are built on a solid understanding of these kinds of beliefs and values. Engage to:

- Discover needs that people have which they may not be aware of
- Guide innovation efforts
- Identify the right users to design for
- Discover the emotions that guide behaviors

In addition to spending with and observing your users, you need to have personal experience in the design space yourself. Find for creative if necessary! experience to immerse yourself to better understand the situation that your users are in, and in which you are designing.

1.1

MODE
DEFINE

Empathize

Define

Ideate

Prototype

Test

WHAT is the define mode

The **define mode** is when you unpack and synthesize your empathy findings into compelling needs and insights, and create a specific and meaningful challenge. It is a mode of "focus" rather than "broaden." The goals of the define mode are to develop a deep understanding of your users and the design space and, based on that understanding, to come up with an actionable problem statement **your point of view**. Your point of view should be a guiding statement that focuses on specific users, and insights and needs that you uncovered during the empathize mode.

More than simply defining the problem to work on, your point of view is your unique design vision that you crafted based on your discoveries during your empathy work. Understanding the meaningful challenge to address and the insights that you can leverage in your design work is fundamental to creating a successful solution.

WHY define

The define mode is critical to the design process because it explicitly expresses the problem you are striving to address through your efforts. Often, in order to be truly generative, you must first reform the challenge based on new insights you have gained through your design work. This reformulated problem statement can then be used as a solution-generating springboard.

As a test, a good point of view (POV) is one that:

- Describes focus and frames the problem
- Inspires your team
- Provides a reference for evaluating competing ideas
- Engages team members to make decisions in response to a high-level goal of the team
- Fuels brainstorming by suggesting "how might we" statements
- Captures the heart and mind of people you intend
- Saves you from the impossible task of developing solution concepts that are all things to all people
- You intend and informative as you learn by doing
- Guides your innovation efforts

1.2

MODE
IDEATE

Empathize

Define

Ideate

Prototype

Test

WHAT is the ideate mode

Ideate is the mode of your design process in which you are to generate radical design alternatives. Metaphorically it represents a process of "going wide" in terms of concepts and outcomes—it is a mode of "broaden" rather than "focus." The goal of ideation is to explore a wide solution space - look a large quantity of ideas and a diversity among these ideas. From this vast depots of ideas you can build prototypes to test with users.

WHY ideate

You ideate in order to transition from identifying problems into exploring solutions for your users. Various forms of ideation are brought to:

- Step beyond obvious solutions and thus increase the innovation potential of your solution set
- Harness the collective perspectives and strengths of your teams
- Discover unexpected areas of exploration
- Create fertile (structured and flexible) terrain for your innovation efforts
- Get obvious solutions out of your heads, and drive your team beyond them

Regardless of what ideation method you use, the fundamental principle of ideation is to be inclusive of when you and your team are generating ideas and when you are evaluating ideas - typically keeping these two tasks separate, and only mixing the two intentionally.

1.3

MODE
PROTOTYPE

Empathize

Define

Ideate

Prototype

Test

WHAT is the prototype mode

Prototyping is getting ideas and explorations out of your head and into the physical world. A prototype can be anything that takes a physical form, but is a well of good ideas, a role-playing activity, a space, an object, an interface, or even a storyboard. The resolution of your prototype should be commensurate with your progress in your project. In early explorations keep your prototypes rough and rapid to allow yourself to learn quickly and insights a lot of different possibilities.

Prototypes are most successful when people (the design team, the user, and others) can experience and interact with them. What you learn from these interactions can help drive deeper empathy, as well as these successful solutions.

WHY do we prototype

Traditionally prototyping is thought of as a way to test functionality. But prototyping is used for many reasons, including those from mutually exclusive categories:

- **Empathy gathering.** Prototyping is a tool to deepen your understanding of the design space and your users' areas of your solution phase of your project.
- **Exploration.** Build to think. Creating multiple solution options.
- **Testing.** Create prototypes and develop the context to test and refine solutions with users.
- **Integration.** Inspire others (stakeholders, clients, customers, investors) by showing your vision.

Many of the goals of prototyping are shared across all four of the above categories.

How to prototype

Learn. If a project is worth a thousand words, a prototype is worth a thousand pictures.

Save diagrams. Prototyping is a powerful tool that can stimulate ambiguity, assist in ideation, and reduce miscommunication.

Build to communicate. Prototyping can be a great way to have a different kind of conversation with users. **Fail quickly and often.** Creating quick and dirty prototypes allows you to test a number of ideas without investing too much time and money.

Manage the solution-building process. Identifying a variable to explore encourages you to break a large problem down into smaller, testable chunks.

1.4

MODE
TEST

Empathize

Define

Ideate

Prototype

Test

WHAT is the test mode

Testing is the chance to get feedback on your solutions, refine solutions to make them better, and continue to learn about your users. The test mode is an iterative mode in which you place your low-resolution artifacts in the appropriate context of the user is the. Prototyping as if you know you're right, but test as if you know you're wrong.

WHY test

To refine your prototypes and solutions. Testing informs the next iterations of prototypes. Sometimes this means going back to the drawing board.

To learn more about your users. Testing is another opportunity to build empathy through observation and engagement - often yields unexpected insights.

To test and refine your POV. Sometimes testing reveals that not only did you not get the solution right, but also that you have failed to frame the problem correctly.

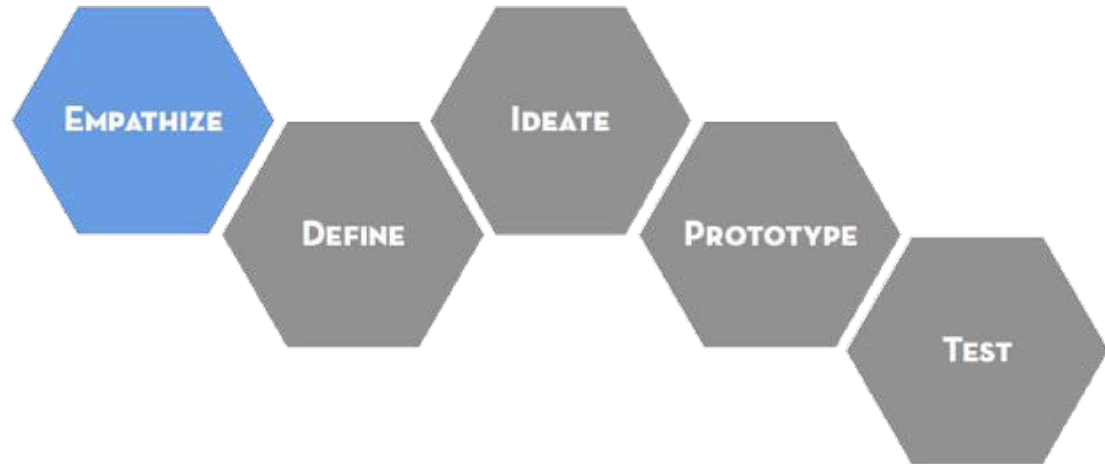
1.5

Empathize

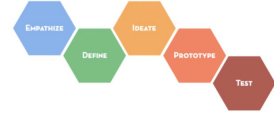


Empathy is the foundation of a human-centered design process. To empathize, you:

- Observe
- Engage
- Immerse



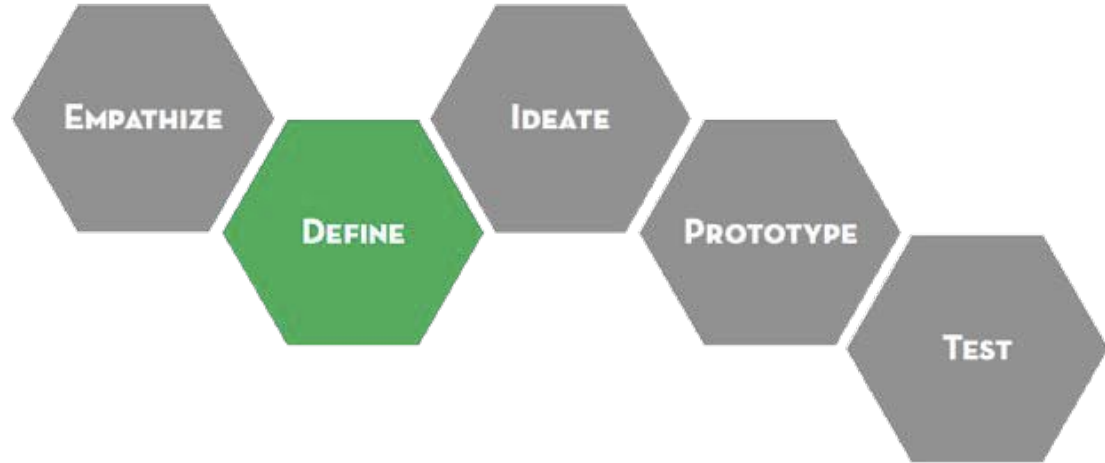
Define



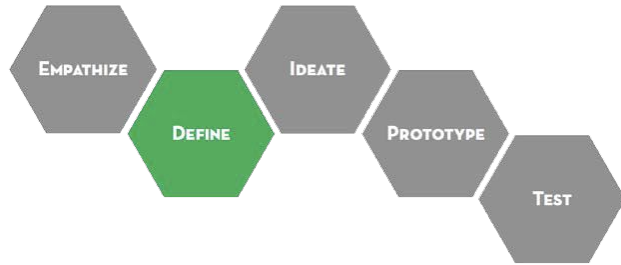
Unpack and synthesize your empathy findings into compelling needs and insights, and scope a specific and meaningful challenge.

"Focus" rather than "flare"

How might we....

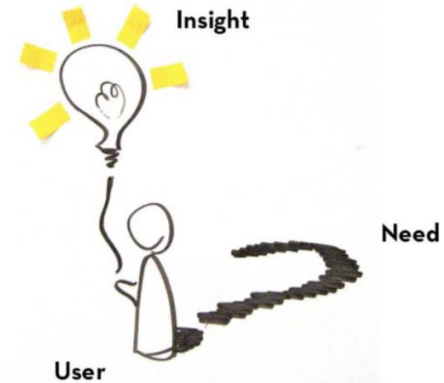


Define

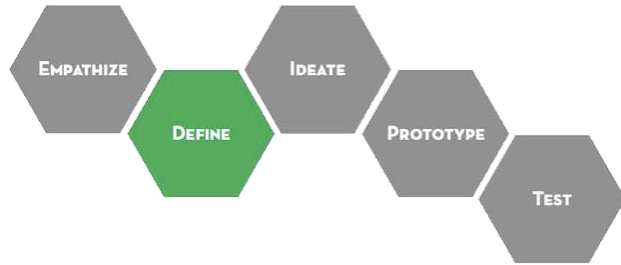


_____ needs a way to
_____ because (or but or surprisingly)
_____.

METHOD
POINT-OF-VIEW MADLIB



Define



----- needs a way to

because (or but or
surprisingly)-----.

Leads to "How Might We..."

METHOD

"How Might We" QUESTIONS



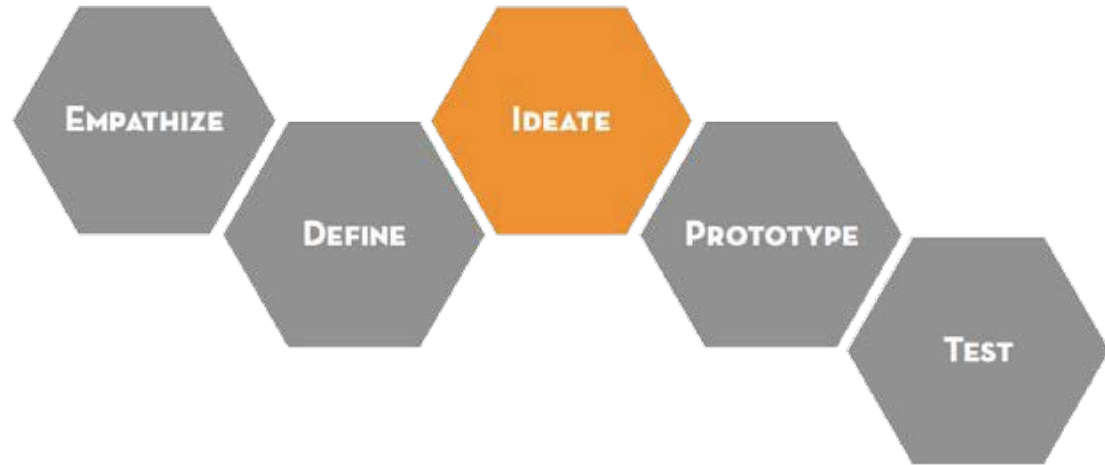
Ideate



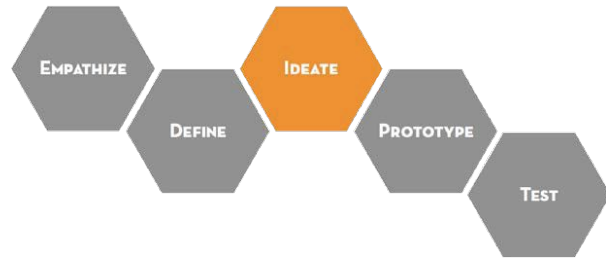
Generate radical design alternatives, "going wide" in terms of concepts and outcomes.

"Flaring" rather than "focusing"

Yes, and....



Ideate (Imagine)



One Conversation at a Time

Go for Quantity

Headline!

Build on the Ideas of Others

Encourage wild ideas

Be Visual

Stay on Topic

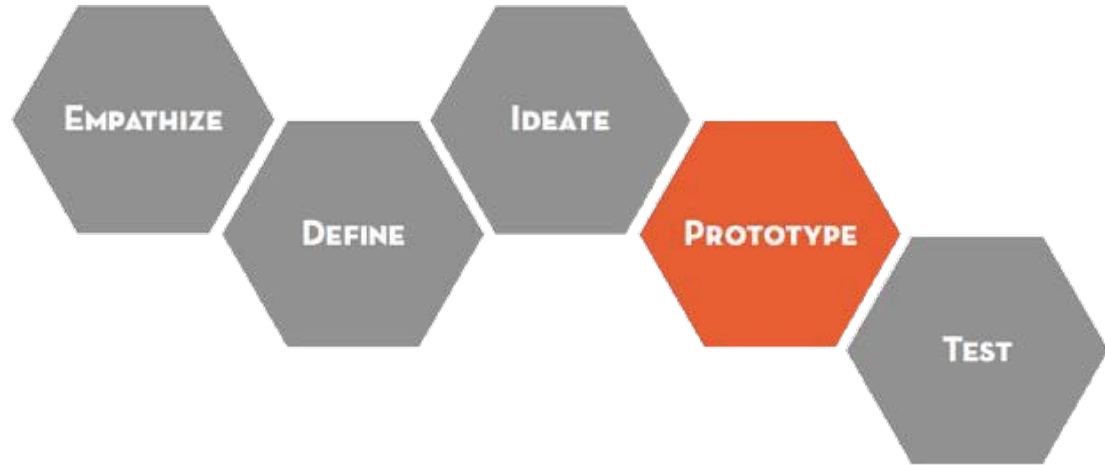
Defer Judgement -
NO Blocking

Prototype

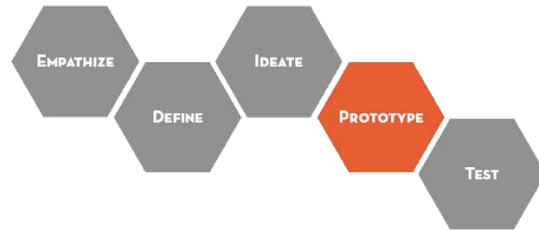


Get ideas and explorations out of the head and into the world. Takes a physical form.

"Low resolution" v.
"High resolution"

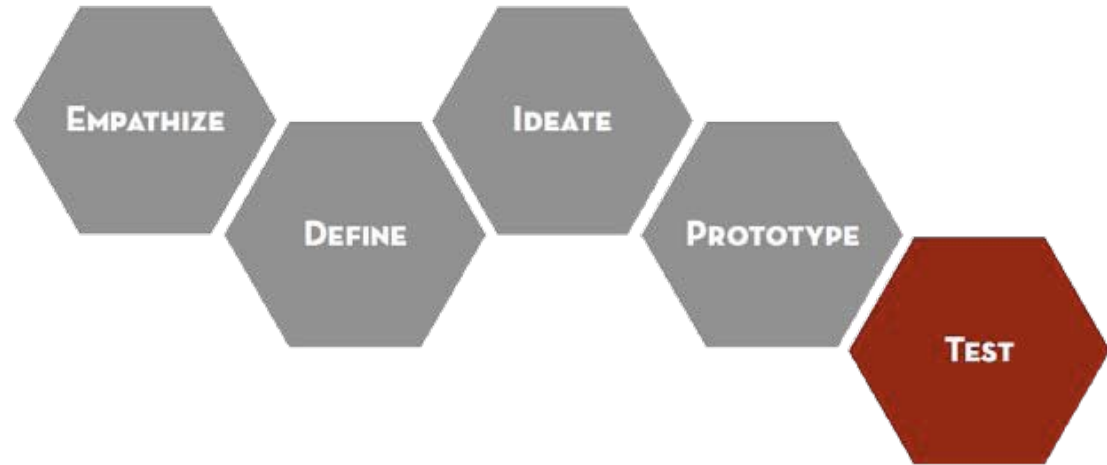


Prototype



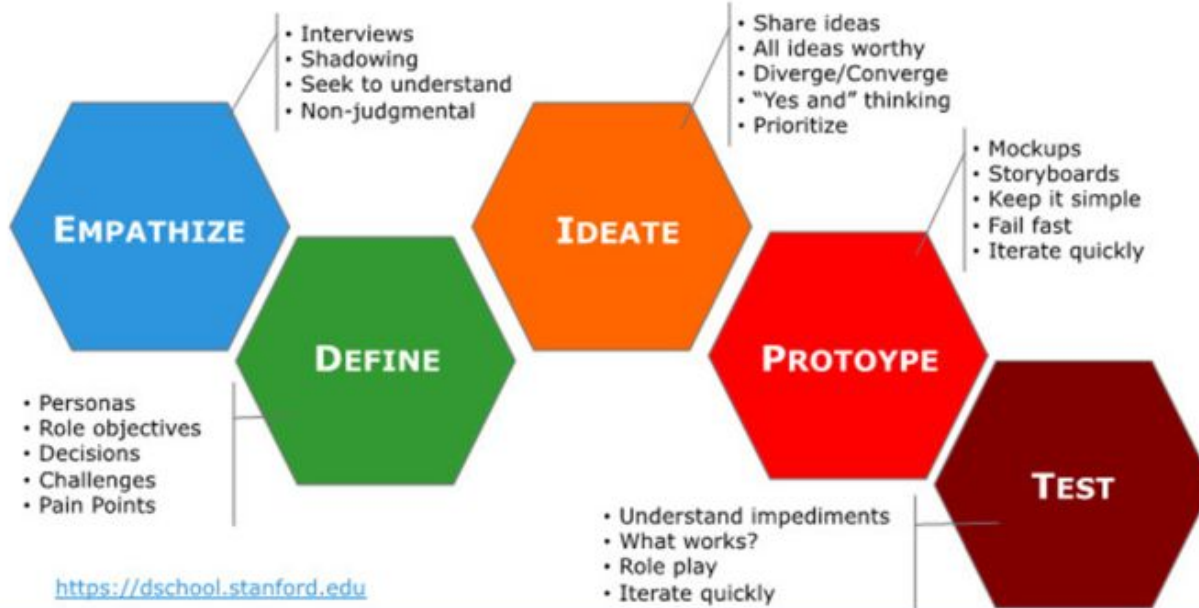
Test (Try)

Opportunity to get feedback on solutions, refine them to make them better, and continue to learn about users (re-empathize for even clearer re-defining).



Design Thinking Revisited

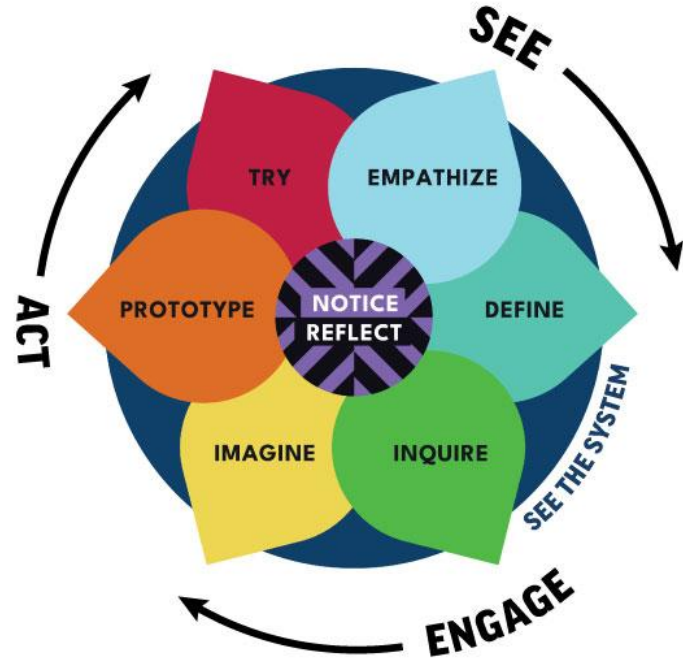
Stanford d.school Design Thinking Process



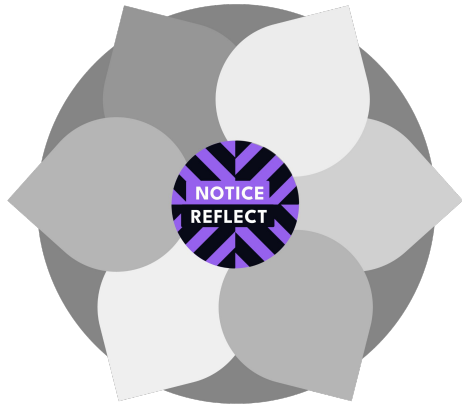
Liberatory Design

Take a moment to study this image that describes the Liberatory Design process.

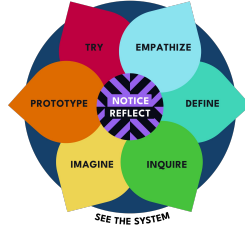
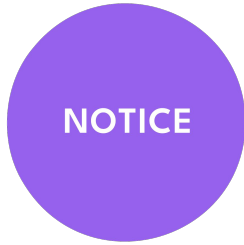
- How is it similar to Design Thinking?
- How is it different from Design Thinking?



Liberatory Design – Tania Anaissie



NOTICE and REFLECT are at the heart of liberatory design...



Helps designers & leaders:

- Practice **self-awareness** (own identity, values, emotions, bias, power, assumptions)
- Collectively build **situational awareness** (context, people, power, history, current state)

Helps designers & leaders:

- **Pause** mid-stream to **reflect** on actions, impact, emotions, relationship
- **Adjust** our intentions, presence, direction

The liberatory design **mindsets** support these.



Practice self-awareness
(identity, emotions, power)
and situational awareness
(context, people, history)

Pause to reflect on actions,
impact, emotions, relationship -
and adjust intentions, direction,
presence

Share prototypes with
stakeholders - to learn and
improve your design

Listen to stories from those
impacted by the challenge - and
build relationship in the process

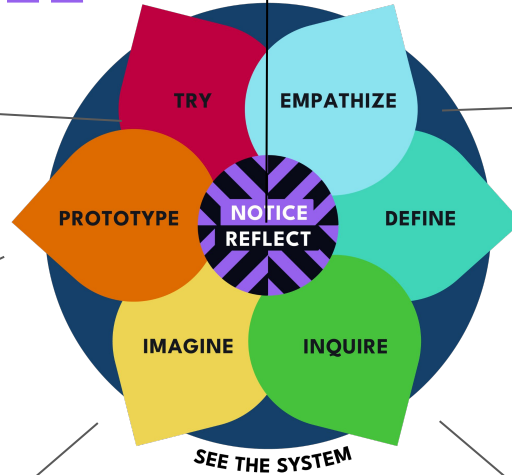
Build rough versions of
potential approaches - to
help you think and learn

Frame the challenge and opportunity;
determine how complex it is -- and if
we need to understand it better
before designing

Get outside of your box
and imagine “what if?!”

Recognize patterns of inequity, look at
the system creating those—and identify
a challenge to address

Design small “safe-to-fail” actions
to learn more about your situation
- to inform your design direction



Design Thinking (for)

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Empathize

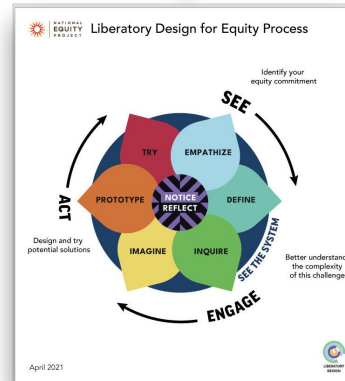
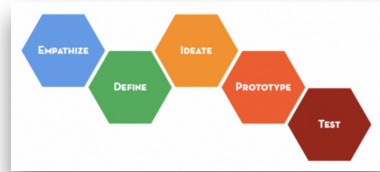
Define

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Ideate

Prototype

Test



Liberatory Design (with)

Notice

Reflect

Empathize

Define

Inquire

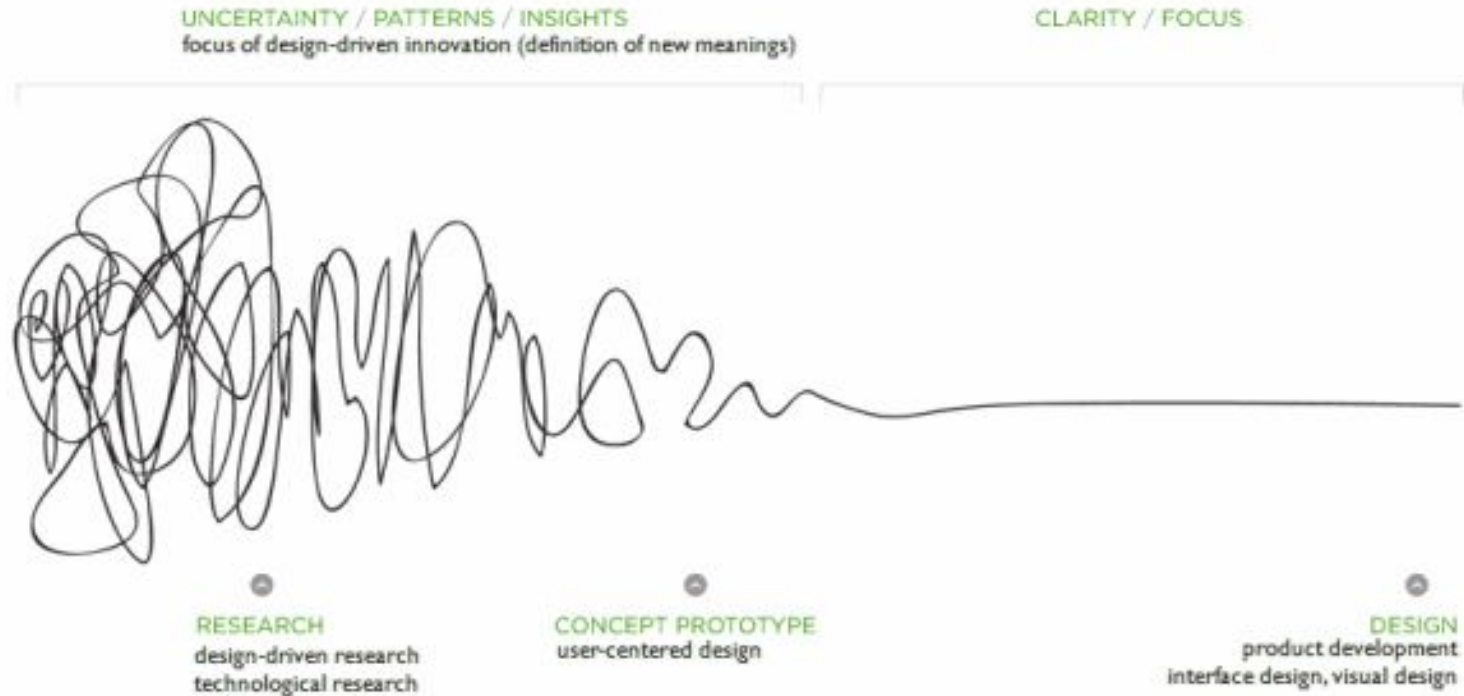
Imagine

Prototype

Try

See the System

So how does it all fit together?



Source: Brian Mathews

<http://chronicle.com/blognetwork/theubiquitouslibrarian/2013/09/18/moving-from-data-driven-to-design-driven-innovation/>

Liberatory Design Sprint

Design Challenge

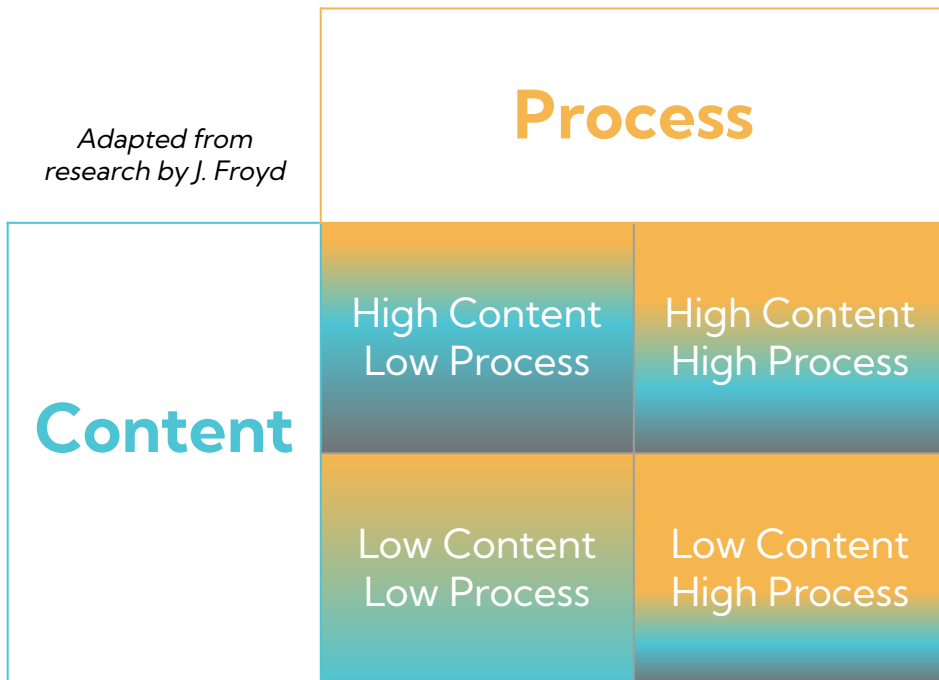
Task:

Deepen experience with Liberatory Design by engaging in a LOW content, HIGH process design sprint

Challenge:

Redesign the school backpack

*Adapted from
research by J. Froyd*



Notice & Reflect

- ❑ Who are you? What are the key identity markers that you want to center in your awareness today?
- ❑ How are you situated in relation to privilege, this challenge, and the person with whom you are paired?
- ❑ How can you make sure that you are practicing self-awareness throughout the process?

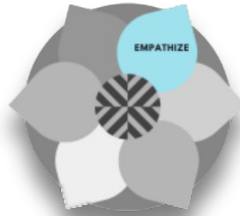


Empathy Interview

1 Interview: What are their painpoints?

6min (2 sessions x 3 minutes each)

Notes from your first interview

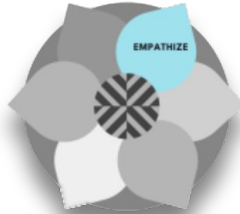


Empathy Interview: Dig Deeper

2 Dig deeper: Follow-up on interesting answers...

6min (2 sessions x 3 minutes each)

Notes from your second interview



Switch roles & repeat Interview



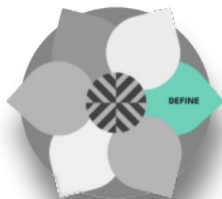
Define: Capture Findings

3 Capture findings 3min

Goals and Wishes: what is your partner trying to achieve through

?

use verbs



Insights: new learnings about your partner's feelings and motivations. what's something you see about your partner's experience that maybe s/he doesn't see?*

*make inferences from what you heard



Define: Point-of-View

4 Take a stand

with a point-of-view 3min



partner's name/description



needs a way to

user's need

because (or "but ..." or "Surprisingly ...")

[circle one]

insight

3:00



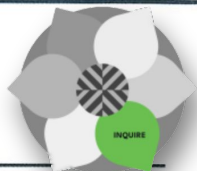
Inquire: Check Your Assumptions

4 Take a stand

with a point-of-view 3min



_____ partner's name/description



needs a way to

_____ user's need

because (or "but ..." or "Surprisingly ...")

[circle one]

_____ insight

4:00



Imagine (Ideate): 5 Radical Solutions

5 Sketch at least 5 *radical* ways to meet your user's needs. 4min



write your problem statement above

				
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4:00



Imagine (Ideate): 5 Radical Solutions

6 Share your solutions & capture feedback. 8min (2 sessions x 4 minutes each)

Notes



d.

Switch roles & repeat sharing.

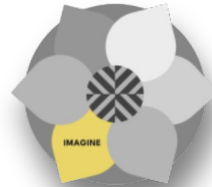
8:00



Re-Imagine

7 Reflect & generate a new solution. 3min

Sketch your big idea, note details if necessary!



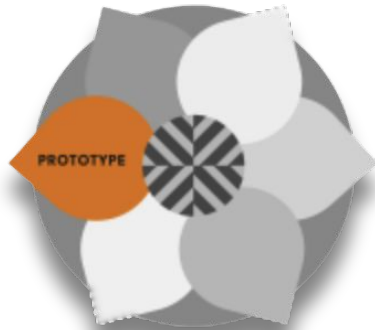
3:00



Prototype: Build Your Solution

8 Build your solution.

Make something your partner can interact with!



5min

d. 



Try: Share Solution & Feedback

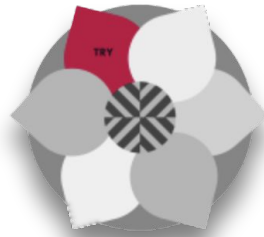
9 Share your solution and get feedback.

✚ What worked...

▣ What could be improved...

? Questions...

! Ideas...



7min (2 sessions x 3.5 minutes each)



Notice & Reflect

- ❑ Did the process “feel” liberatory? Why? Why not?
- ❑ How did your emotional state affect the way you showed up?
- ❑ How did you practice self-awareness? How did you succeed? How can you improve?



Debrief and Reflection

Graduate Portrait Elements

In what ways did you experience or grow in the following areas?



**Equity &
Inclusion Leader**

Students view diversities as assets to our inclusive community, understand the historical roots of racial and cultural biases that have led to institutional practices of oppression and know how to act in ways that promote equity and inclusion.



**Ethical
Problem Solver**

Students know how to apply diverse thinking, research, and problem-solving methods to develop creative solutions that address the needs of the people for whom the solution is intended.

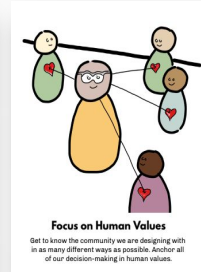


**Interdependent
Collaborator**

Students value collaborating in diverse teams and know how to harness the collective genius of their team members to maximize productivity and reach outcomes.

What revisions or updates would you recommend?

Community Agreements 24–25



- Ask questions beginning with "Tell me more..." to surface what we don't know, rather than asserting what we think we know
- Build from the strengths, stories, & skills of the team and honor the wisdom in the community
- Keep the problem *and* solution spaces open by listening to multiple, diverse perspectives rather than rushing to fix
 - Powerful design emerges from the "mess," which shows that we are doing something and trying new ways
- Put aside preconceived notions of how things should be and think/talk "crazy" (wild ideas to spark creative courage)
- Create opportunities for sense-making before decision-making

Closure & Feedback

What comes up for you as you read this quote now?



Image Source: [Lion's Roar](#)

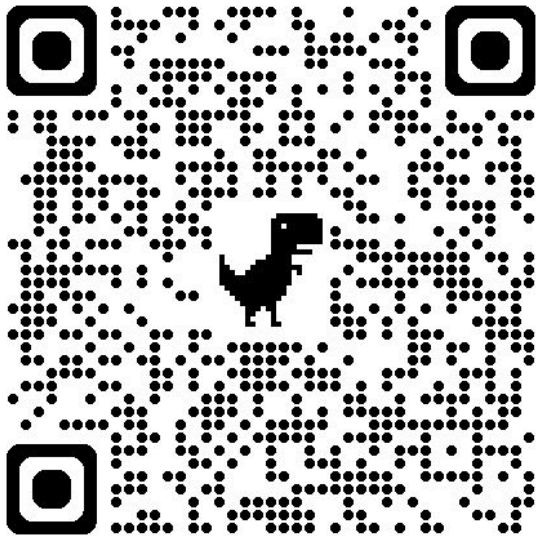
"Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world."

bell hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*

“By centering students’ needs through the liberatory design process, we repositioned students as centers of knowledge. We listened to them in ways that shifted our practice, and we recognized that both teachers and students have the capacity to educate each other... Our students recognized that their voices and perspectives mattered, and they began to advocate for themselves in new ways.”

Jessica Lee Stovall, Lamar Timmons-Long, Thomas J. Rodney and Taylor Hall
“Black Teachers’ Use of Liberatory Design to Promote Literacies of Healing” (Stovall 2023)

Feedback



Please scan the QR code and take a moment to offer us your insights and feedback.

Your voice matters. We want to hear you!