



2015
—
2016

PROGRAM REPORT

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“This experience has reminded me that leadership is about positive influence. It has highlighted the power of an individual to start major change because each of us impacts others.”

- PRISCILLA HORTON,
DIRECTOR OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP
AT BRONZEVILLE LIGHTHOUSE
CHARTER SCHOOL

THANK YOU

We are grateful to The Chicago Public Education Fund for enabling educators to develop new learning models and lead innovation in Chicago schools through our partnership this year. No policy-maker or president is as powerful as a teacher when it comes to directly shaping a student's educational experience. Frontline educators have the unique and deep knowledge of their students, schools, and communities to enable the creation of transformational solutions. We cannot wait to see the impact these educators continue to make for today's students, for future students, and for the field of education. The TrueSchool Team wishes to extend a huge thank you to The Chicago Public Education Fund for their partnership, support, and vision.

- Amy Vreeland, TrueSchool Founder + CEO

ABOUT TRUESCHOOL

TrueSchool Studio's professional learning experiences develop a culture of innovation within schools and effective, scalable solutions across schools.

Our programs focus on bottom-up innovation in education – tapping into the incredible expertise of visionary educators working on the ground and leveraging the power of collaboration and shared learning across a global network. We develop a vibrant community and pipeline of education innovation leaders.

School design teams come from across diverse schools to work side-by-side and to reimagine what is possible in education. This questioning of the status quo and testing of new ideas is essential for building dynamic, relevant, impactful learning experiences that respond to the world our students experience now and into the future.

We work with school leaders, teachers, students, parents, and community members to design and pilot new learning models through our Student-Centered Design Process. Ideas and leadership come from the school community. We provide expertise on a process for change and coach teams as they go through the design process: building empathy, defining opportunities, creating prototypes, gathering feedback, actualizing solutions, and scaling what works.

Our focus on innovation is inextricably linked to our focus on equity. We identify the most promising new learning models and share these models across global networks with the vision of improving access to an excellent education for ALL students everywhere.



“The key takeaway is the importance of using a design process that pushes your thinking to optimize your plan of action to make real change in teaching and learning in the classroom. The TrueSchool team was instrumental in this process with our school.”

JUAN GUTIERREZ,
SCHOOL LEADER AT HENRY
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL





TrueSchool Solution has offered our team a phenomenal, personalized learning experience! TrueSchool has taken us through the Student-Centered Design Process to allow us to convert our innovative ideas into concrete realities at our school. They set out a robust process for us to follow that put a premium on our deep and flexible thinking about a real problem and potential solutions. Rather than walking our team and all other teams through the process in lock step, the TrueSchool team provided supports and pushes in all of the right places to help us iterate and prototype in a meaningful way. They have really taken the importance of personalizing and differentiating instruction for adults (not just for children) to heart!

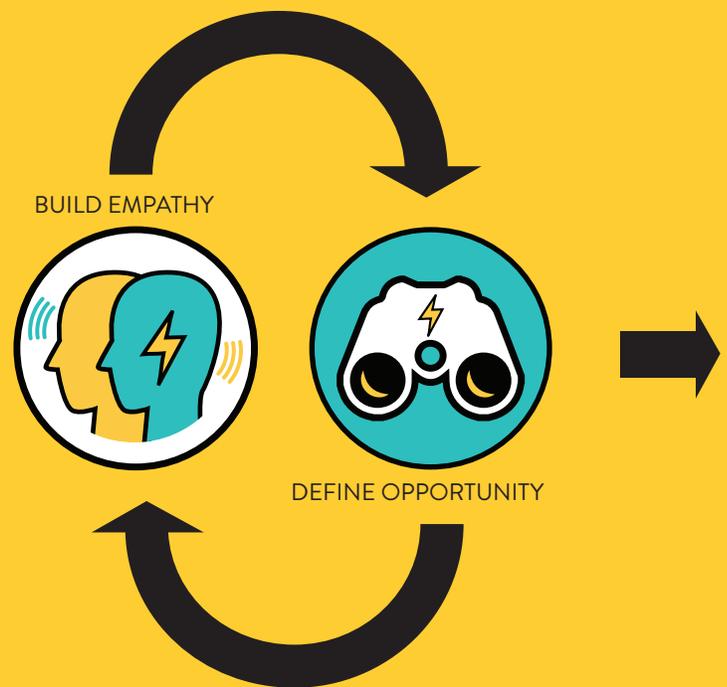
We have re-imagined the physical classroom space to promote student ownership of learning in our school and are able to meaningfully measure the impacts of our solutions as a result of our work with TrueSchool over the last year.

The TrueSchool process has helped push our thinking in really productive ways and will be crucial to sustaining not only our current initiative, but many others in the school that require us to adapt and design in light of our students' needs. To paraphrase the proverb, they're all about teaching you how to fish instead of just giving you a fish!"

RENEE BLAHUTA,
SCHOOL LEADER AT NORWOOD PARK SCHOOL

THE STUDENT-CENTERED DESIGN PROCESS

We believe the best ideas for the present and future of education come from frontline educators - the critical designers of the student experience. Our process empowers educators to reimagine school with students at the center of the process.



BUILD EMPATHY

Build empathy by exploring the current user experience.

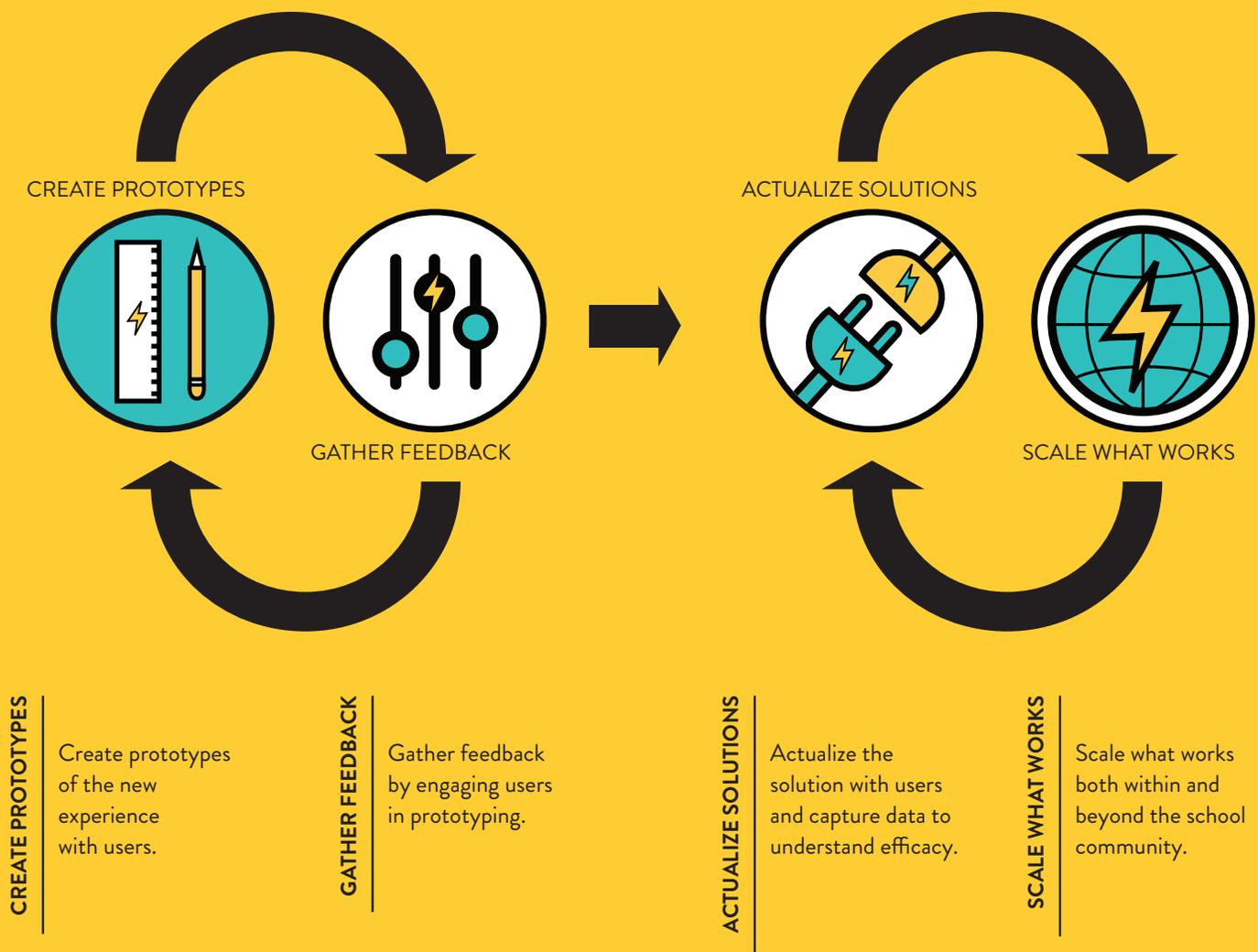
DEFINE OPPORTUNITY

Define the opportunity for a new experience.

SOLUTION

During TrueSchool Solution, educators design and lead new learning models within their school. We provide professional learning and coaching to think boldly and differently about learning. We equip educators with a process they can continue to apply to effect change as we move towards a world in which all students have access to an excellent education. Through this program, educators develop enduring capacity to transform schools from within.

Educators participate in TrueSchool Solution as a school R+D team of 3 to 5. Solution builds on the foundation of our previous programs (Spark + Sprint) to support school teams to design and implement a pilot.



Solution takes place over one academic year and includes three components:

Studios —facilitated in-person design sessions for all schools in the cohort to learn together

Coaching Sessions —team-specific meetings to analyze data, share feedback, and overcome challenges

Fieldwork — team-driven implementation, analysis, and collaboration on-site at schools and out in communities

Solution is segmented into two phases: the fall semester and spring semester. Each phase includes one whole-cohort Studio and two team coaching sessions. The TrueSchool Team visits each school to more deeply understand the school’s context, culture, and assets for solution design.

During the fall semester, school teams design and implement a pilot solution at the multi-classroom level. Educators define leading indicators of change and gather formative data to understand what’s working and what can be improved. During the spring semester, school teams roll out a refined solution grade-wide, department-wide, or school-wide scale. In the final Studio, educators assess summative data and plan for the solution of the future.

KEY FINDINGS

1

IMPACT ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

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This work has a transformative impact on student outcomes

2

IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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This work has a transformative impact on student achievement

3

SCALE + SUSTAINABILITY

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Educators build sustainable solutions at scale

4

NEW LEARNING MODELS

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Educators identify opportunities and implement new learning models

5

DATA-DRIVEN PILOTS

+++++

Educators incorporate data to refine new learning models

6

SELF-EFFICACY

+++++

Educators increase self-efficacy to lead change

7

TAKE RISKS TO LEARN

+++++

Educators take smart risks to answer key questions

8

SCHOOL CULTURE

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TrueSchool Solution promotes a school culture of creating and implementing new learning models

9

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

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Solution fosters a culture for school leadership and teachers to collaborate on decision making

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TEACHER LEADERSHIP

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Solution schools encourage authentic teacher leadership

11

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Schools form a network for collaboration and idea diffusion

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PROGRAM SATISFACTION

+++++

Educators are hungry for personalized professional learning opportunities

1 IMPACT ON STUDENT OUTCOMES



This work has a transformative impact on student outcomes

Solutions developed through TrueSchool programs are linked to positive impact on student outcomes. TrueSchool aims to positively impact students through both academic and social-emotional growth.

Educators report that they see solutions impact students in diverse ways beyond academics. Examples include increases in non-cognitive and social-emotional competencies, self-confidence and self-esteem, and family and community engagement. These non-academic areas of growth are often linked to growth in academics.

95% OF EDUCATORS REPORT THEY ARE IMPLEMENTING A SOLUTION THAT IS IMPROVING STUDENT OUTCOMES



“This experience supported teachers to grow and develop their teaching practice while students benefit from the innovative changes in the classroom.”

- JUAN GUTIERREZ,
SCHOOL LEADER AT HENRY
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



2 IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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This work has a transformative impact on student achievement

Proficient performance on standardized academic assessments is a critical area of focus for students and schools. Educators believe that the solutions generated through the TrueSchool Solution program are associated with improved student performance academically.

This growth is different based on the scope and focus of each school’s innovation and ranges from short-term impact on weekly quizzes and unit tests to long-term impact on end of year standardized assessments.

95% OF EDUCATORS REPORT THAT THEY ARE IMPLEMENTING A SOLUTION THAT IS IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



“Through this opportunity, my colleagues and I have found true collaboration in a way that has measurable student outcomes. We were provided with the tools and supports to implement action research and effectively work with those results to scale a successful literacy program.”

-MARISSA DURIC,
3RD GRADE TEACHER
AT HENRY
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

3 SCALE + SUSTAINABILITY

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Educators build sustainable solutions at scale

During TrueSchool Solution, each school design team creates or adapts a new learning model for their school. The first objective for schools is to implement a pilot, gather data, and refine the solution based on learnings. During the second half of Solution, school design teams look ahead to plan for scale and sustainability. Educators make data-driven decisions to expand the pilot either broadly, to spread to more users, or deeply, to make a more significant impact with the same group. 82% of educators agree or strongly agree that, “I lead implementation, impact, and sustainability at scale.” This shows a marked increase of 27% from the beginning of the program to the close (growth from 55% to 82%). Educators build sustainability of the solution in terms of resources, space, and people beyond the school design team. 92% of educators agree or strongly agree, “Our solution is sustainable in the long-term.”



“In this process, I learned to incorporate a joint visioning process, and then a smaller model as we build toward scale progressively.”

-DANA LUCAS,
DIRECTOR OF TEACHER
LEADERSHIP AT
BRONZEVILLE LIGHTHOUSE
CHARTER SCHOOL

27% GROWTH FROM 55% TO 82% OF EDUCATORS WHO LEAD IMPLEMENTATION, IMPACT, AND SUSTAINABILITY AT SCALE

92%
OF EDUCATORS
AGREE OUR SOLUTION
IS SUSTAINABLE IN
THE LONG-TERM



4 NEW LEARNING MODELS



Educators identify opportunities for new solutions and design new learning models.

Building empathy with students and stakeholders is the most important step to gaining an understanding of the current challenges. Through this discovery work, educators identify opportunities for change that are ripe for redesign. These may be areas that urgently need improvement or opportunities to go from good to great. Educators practice and improve their ability to identify these design opportunities.

97% of Educators agree or strongly agree that, “I identify and seize opportunities for change.” Educators have a broad perspective for what assets the innovative new models may leverage, such as space, time, people, or technology. 95% of educators agree or strongly agree, “I incorporate new education models, tools, and strategies into my instruction and practices.” This shows a 10% increase from the start of the program to the close.



“I feel more confident to dive in and try self-designed solutions.”
 - WILL REED,
 STEM TEACHER AT
 BROOKS COLLEGE
 PREPARATORY ACADEMY

95% OF EDUCATORS INCORPORATE NEW EDUCATION MODELS, TOOLS, AND STRATEGIES INTO INSTRUCTION AND PRACTICE



97% OF EDUCATORS IDENTIFY AND SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE



“This experience has changed my perspective. Moving forward, I will include more empathy actions in my work on any decision.”
 - JENNIFER SUTTON,
 ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
 AT VON STEUBEN METRO
 SCIENCE CENTER

5 DATA-DRIVEN PILOTS

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Educators incorporate data to refine new learning models

Gathering feedback is the most effective way to gain insight to the user experience and understand what is working and what is not working. Educators build the skill of designing and implementing a pilot during TrueSchool Solution. The school design teams begin by testing prototypes in Sprint and then move to designing a pilot in Solution. At the close of Solution, 87% of educators agree or strongly agree, “I know how to effectively pilot test on a small scale in my classroom or school.” This increased 20% from 67% at the start of the program. Educators become hungry to gather both quantitative and qualitative feedback to assess the efficacy of the pilot and refine the design to accomplish impact for students. Educators learn to select methods of impact measurement specific to the school solution and create systems and protocols for data management. At the close of the program, 90% of educators agree or strongly agree, “I measure, track, and reflect on impact data.”



“I will apply the skills of creating pilots, collecting data and rolling out on a larger scale helps to make projects in the future more sustainable and well thought out.”

- JAMIE JARAMILLO,
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL AT
STEINMETZ HIGH SCHOOL

87%

OF EDUCATORS KNOW HOW TO EFFECTIVELY PILOT TEST ON A SMALL SCALE IN CLASSROOMS OR SCHOOLS. THIS IS A 20% INCREASE FROM THE START OF THE PROGRAM

90%

OF EDUCATORS MEASURE, TRACK, AND REFLECT ON IMPACT DATA



6 SELF-EFFICACY

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Educators increase self-efficacy to lead change

A critical part of effective change management in schools is a high sense of individual and collective self-efficacy. When educators see themselves as capable agents of change in the school building, they are more likely to identify opportunities for improvement and put solutions into action. TrueSchool Solution fosters this mindset by encouraging Educators to start small and think big to reimagine learning models for their students. At the close of the program, 95% of educators agree or strongly agree that, "I confidently lead change in my school." This shows a 19% increase in educators who agree or strongly agree from the beginning of the program. Practices of increased self-efficacy emerge as educators define opportunities, pilot test, and gather feedback to refine their solution over the course of the year. 80% of Educators agree or strongly agreed with the statement "I solve problems in my school" at the beginning of the program. At the end of the program, 95% of educators agreed or strongly agreed.



"This experience has broadened my perspective of the possible initiatives we could take on at our school."

- MARTHA ALBA,
SCHOOL LEADER AT
COOPER DUAL
LANGUAGE ACADEMY



"After this experience, I can see myself taking more initiative to change programs in the school."

- MELISSA PADILLA,
TEACHER AT PULASKI
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

95% OF EDUCATORS WHO AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE "I CONFIDENTLY LEAD CHANGE IN MY SCHOOL." THIS IS A 19% INCREASE FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE PROGRAM



95% OF EDUCATORS AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE, "I SOLVE PROBLEMS IN MY SCHOOL." THIS IS A 15% GROWTH FROM PRE TO POST PROGRAM

7 TAKE RISKS TO LEARN

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Educators take smart risks to answer key questions

Educators showed significant growth in their willingness to take risks. Like many fields, there is a bias towards the status quo in education. However, we have an urgent need to reimagine school and pilot test new learning models to provide a highly relevant, 21st century education. TrueSchool educators know that it's because the stakes are so high that we need to take smart risks. Informed and calculated risks help us to discover new solutions to rapidly improve student outcomes and move towards equity of access to an excellent education for all. 92% of educators agree or strongly agree, "I take risks and fail forward fast." This shows a 50% increase from 42% at the beginning of Solution to 92% at the close of the program.

50% GROWTH OF EDUCATORS WHO AGREE THAT THEY TAKE RISKS AND FAIL FORWARD FAST FROM 42% AT THE START OF THE PROGRAM TO 92% AT THE CLOSE OF SOLUTION



“The fail forward mindset has created a more active learning environment in my classroom. It has increased more active collaboration amongst our teacher teams.”

- MARISSA DURIC,
3RD GRADE TEACHER
AT HENRY ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL



8 SCHOOL CULTURE

TrueSchool Solution promotes a school culture of creating and implementing new learning models

TrueSchool Solution aims to develop a school culture open to innovation and implementing new learning models. A key element of this culture is a willingness to try new ideas, learn from what works, and refine solutions. TrueSchool Solution enables teachers to design and implement these new learning models. 92% of Educators report that the principal encourages trying new models, tools, and strategies to rethink the learning experience or learning environment. School leadership sets the tone for teachers by making space for new ideas. At the close of Solution, 95% of educators agree or strongly agree to the statement, “School leadership actively solicits creative solutions to problems.”

92%

OF EDUCATORS SAY THEIR PRINCIPAL ENCOURAGES TRYING NEW MODELS, TOOLS, AND STRATEGIES TO RETHINK THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE OR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



95%

OF EDUCATORS SAY THEIR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACTIVELY SOLICITS CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS



“I’ve learned to let go as a leader. The best way to lead is to provide your teachers with the freedom to innovate. They will be more empowered to make meaningful change because they will take ownership of the process. Ultimately, our students benefit the most when teachers lead the change.”

- JUAN GUTIERREZ,
SCHOOL LEADER AT HENRY
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



“It has made me see the value of shared leadership and responsibility.”

- LINNETTE MORALES,
INTERNATIONAL
BACCALAUREATE
PROGRAM COORDINATOR
AT MOOS ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL

9 DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

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Solution fosters a culture for school leadership and teachers to collaborate on decision making

TrueSchool develops a culture of distributed leadership where school administration supports teachers to lead change. Teachers are brought into conversations about broader school decisions and have the autonomy to make decisions for their classrooms, departments, and grade levels. These practices lead to a greater sense of trust and a collective purpose among faculty. 95% of teachers agree or strongly agree to the statement, “At our school, teachers have the support of our principal to make decisions regarding school-wide policies and/or instructional practices.” This culture of distributed leadership is led by teachers on the ground and reinforced by the school administration from the top. At the close of Solution, 92% of educators agree or strongly agree to the statement, “I have the trust and appreciation of my principal.”



“This project helped reinforce my confidence in allowing staff to lead projects. I felt more comfortable with releasing responsibilities to others. It goes to prove that when you have the correct leadership, buy in, and people who care, they will work to make sure the project is a success.”

-JAMIE JARAMILLO,
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL AT
STEINMETZ HIGH SCHOOL

95%

OF EDUCATORS HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THEIR SCHOOL LEADER TO MAKE DECISIONS REGARDING SCHOOL-WIDE POLICIES AND/OR INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES



92%

OF EDUCATORS HAVE THE TRUST AND APPRECIATION OF THEIR PRINCIPAL

10 TEACHER LEADERSHIP

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Solution schools encourage authentic teacher leadership

Another measure of distributed leadership is the autonomy of teachers to hold leadership roles beyond their classrooms. Teachers are often called upon to lead school initiatives without choice. Solution aims for teachers to take on leadership roles aligned to their strengths, passions, and areas of desired professional learning in a sustainable way. At the close of Solution, 97% of educators agree or strongly agree to the statement, “My principal willingly allows and encourages teachers to assume leadership roles.” This shows a 28% increase from the start of Solution, when just 69% of educators agreed to the statement. During Solution, the need for a new leader in a specific role commonly arises. Examples include a data specialist, a program coordinator, or a technology lead. At the close of Solution, 90% of educators agree or strongly agree to the statement, “Our school culture is one that encourages teachers to assume leadership roles.”



“This experience has given me a chance to have a concrete leadership role in personalized learning, an area I feel strongly about. I am grateful to have experienced this learning opportunity with my staff and the staff of the other selected schools.”

- MEGHAN NALLY,
MUSIC TEACHER AT
NORWOOD PARK
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

92% OF EDUCATORS REPORT THEIR PRINCIPAL WILLINGLY ALLOWS AND ENCOURAGES TEACHERS TO ASSUME LEADERSHIP ROLES

90% OF EDUCATORS AGREE THEIR SCHOOL CULTURE IS ONE THAT ENCOURAGES TEACHERS TO ASSUME LEADERSHIP ROLES



11 NETWORK

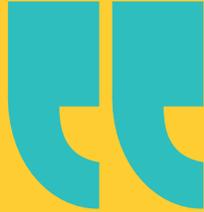
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Schools form a network for collaboration and idea sharing

TrueSchool creates a new network of schools and builds connections between diverse schools. Through our in-person Studios and digital collaboration, schools develop solution ideas with thought partnership and feedback from other educators who come from schools across a region. The collective insight strengthens ideas and promotes collaboration over competition.

Our programs contribute to a collective impact movement across schools who are building, learning, and growing together. By leveraging and sharing experiences across a global network, we aim to learn faster, serve students better, and expedite the improvement of student outcomes everywhere.

87% OF EDUCATORS REPORT THEY ARE PART OF A NETWORK OF SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS THAT SHARES IDEAS AND COLLABORATES



“Although we are all from different parts of the city, different level schools, different backgrounds, passion for students and the work we do is the overarching factor that strengthened our work. TrueSchool was able to harness those differences and allowed each group to be different but the protocols at meetings brought all the differences together to feel like a singular vision and project.”

- JAMIE JARAMILLO,
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
AT STEINMETZ
HIGH SCHOOL

12 PROGRAM SATISFACTION

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Educators are hungry for personalized professional learning opportunities

TrueSchool leads school design teams through the Student-Centered Design Process. Educators build deep empathy with their school communities and leverage school-specific assets to design a new learning model truly suited to their school needs. 92% of educators agree or strongly agree that, “This TrueSchool professional development experience is aligned to my unique areas of need and interest.” Our coaching is adaptive to meet individual, team, and school-specific needs. This coaching promotes both team and individual development at the growing edge. 95% of educators rate their experience of Sprint and Solution as very good or excellent.

92%

OF EDUCATORS AGREE THIS TRUESCHOOL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE IS ALIGNED TO THEIR UNIQUE AREAS OF NEED AND INTEREST



95%

OF EDUCATORS RATE THEIR EXPERIENCE OF SPRINT AND SOLUTION AS VERY GOOD OR EXCELLENT



“TrueSchool is a knowledgeable and invested partner through this entire process. The highly articulated thought process associated with the design cycle was presented in multiple formats and was very accessible. Our use of that process resulted in implementation of high-quality flexible learning environment solution that has positively impacted student learning.”

- RENEE BLAHUTA,
SCHOOL LEADER AT
NORWOOD PARK SCHOOL



“The program is very much worthwhile. It is responsive to the needs of schools and I wish the district would take a similar approach with all the schools.”

-JUAN GUTIERREZ,
SCHOOL LEADER AT HENRY
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

BROOKS COLLEGE PREP HIGH SCHOOL BLUEPRINT

STEM II CURRICULUM



TRUESCHOOL TEAM

+ WILL REED

STEM II Teacher

+ STEVE ROGG

Director of STEM

+ MIRIAM SCHMID

STEM II Teacher

+ MICHAEL SCHROERS

Mathematics Coordinator

+ ARLINGTON VIGILANCE

STEM II Teacher

+ LINA ZAYED

STEM II Teacher

PROBLEM

Students lacked opportunities to engage with real-world and cross-curricular learning experiences in STEM, which resulted in limited student engagement and inspiration.



SOLUTION

New, integrated science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) curriculum for 10th grade students linking Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and the Next Generation Science Standards.

The team defined student practices and culture for rigorous, real-world, project-based learning to be used across disciplines and classrooms.



LEVER FOR CHANGE

The team of STEM teachers meet on a regular basis to work solely on developing the STEM II curriculum.

The STEM professional learning community is effective for both developing STEM II curriculum as well as defining processes for collaboration on content and project development for STEM in the future.

SOLUTION EXPERIENCE

The Brooks College Preparatory High School design team created authentic STEM learning experiences for their students through project-based learning. Members from the STEM department collaborated on a new teacher-created curriculum that integrated STEM subjects including math, engineering, computer programming, and science, among others. The team worked not only on content, but also on highly engaging delivery tactics that would drive improved academic performance.

Last year, in partnership with the TrueSchool Team, some members of the Brooks STEM team pioneered development of a STEM I curriculum for 9th grade. Student schedules had one, longer STEM block rather than science and math. This year, the school design team took on new members for their next project: developing the second year of curriculum, STEM II for 10th grade students. They plan to continue to build a scaffolded, rigorous, integrated STEM curriculum across all grades as their students progress through high school. The Brooks design team had an increased focus on hands-on learning and broader teacher collaboration including all 14 instructors in the STEM department. The teachers met on a regular basis to develop curriculum together and to plan engaging, project-based lessons. An important complement to project-based learning was the school's process of standards-based grading, a system that primarily assesses student mastery of skills. A key element of standards-based grading is student-specific, focused feedback on strengths and areas of improvement. This was an important element of the curriculum to promote student exploration and ownership of their increased mastery.

In addition to implementing the new STEM II curriculum with 10th grade students, the school design team led a school-wide STEM Exhibition to promote the culture of project-based learning. All grades did a hands-on project related to the same area of STEM; each grade had a slightly different focus with applications to real world problems. In the spring semester, all students presented their projects at the Exhibition, which was open to invited guests and all members of the school community. At Brooks, the school design team is working to build a culture of STEM rooted in excellent and highly relevant content for their students.



+3 POINTS

BROOKS HS RECEIVED 83 OF 100 POINTS ON
SESSENTIALS "AMBITIOUS INSTRUCTION"
RUBRIC IN 2015-2016, A 3 POINT INCREASE
FROM THE 2014-2015 SCHOOL YEAR

INTEGRATED STEM CURRICULUM

The Brooks school design team developed a STEM department that authentically and completely integrated each of the four fields of study: science, technology, engineering, and math. The team took a highly disciplined approach to creating these new units by leveraging the Understanding by Design framework to backwards plan to ambitious objectives and create highly-engaging, inquiry-based lessons for students. The STEM department and school design team also completed a full Japanese Lesson Study cycle including instructional materials research and research lesson. The Brooks design team worked with community partners for students to tackle real-world problems through applied research and problem-solving. The school design team aimed to elevate their STEM instruction from combined math and science to a truly integrated curriculum providing students with a deep understanding of concepts across the fields of STEM and associated disciplines.

BROOKS DESIGN TEAM PRINCIPLES

- + Be adaptive and agile - always be learning
- + Protect and invest time in the work
- + Everyone is engaged in the here and now

175
STUDENTS IMPACTED

19
HOURS OF
PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

14
STEM INSTRUCTORS ENGAGED

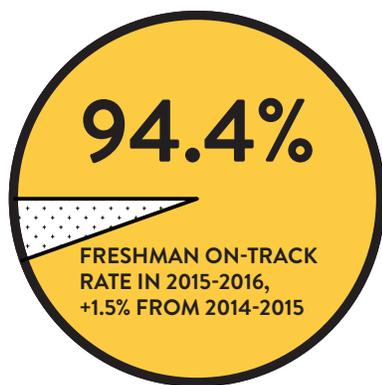


LOOKING AHEAD

In the upcoming academic year, the Brooks design team will take on the challenge of developing curriculum for the penultimate year: STEM III. After the foundation of STEM I and STEM II, students will select an advanced placement course from several options in their senior year. The team aims to expand the real-world applications by partnering with private sector companies and community organizations to provide on-site learning opportunities, speakers, and sector-specific projects. They will be a model of a “learning happens everywhere” approach in which students get out of the building and tackle challenges in broader Chicago. As they develop the STEM III curriculum, they will assess vertical alignment with STEM I and STEM II and improve the curricula to provide a student experience that is scaffolded for increasing rigor, skill development, and college and career readiness in STEM fields.

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Brooks prepares students to be global leaders through a rigorous and enriched academic experience, utilizing such strategies as cooperative learning and inquiry requiring higher-order thinking skills. Brooks is a selective enrollment school serving 834 students in grades 9-12.



“The best parts about this experience are the autonomy given to school leaders and teachers to design their own solution and the potential for collaboration across schools.”

- WILL REED,
STEM TEACHER + SCHOOL
DESIGN TEAM MEMBER



“This was the perfect balance between PD activities and time to work on individual school plan.”

- MICHAEL SCHROERS,
STEM TEACHER
+ SCHOOL DESIGN
TEAM MEMBER

COOPER DUAL LANGUAGE ACADEMY BLUEPRINT

SCAFFOLDED STUDENT TRANSITIONS



TRUESCHOOL TEAM

+ MARTHA ALBA

Principal

+ MARIA MIRANDA

3rd Grade Teacher

+ JANET PETERS

Reading Coach

+ MARICRUZ RODRIGUEZ

4th Grade Bilingual Teacher

+ MARIA VAILANT

2nd Grade Teacher

PROBLEM

The student transition from 2nd to 3rd grade was challenging due to lack of alignment in curriculum and classroom experience.



SOLUTION

Refined 2nd and 3rd grade literacy curriculum for a scaffolded transition with increasing rigor between grades.

Teachers assess current standards and practices to build a strategically scaffolded structure for students to progress successfully to the next grade level.



LEVER FOR CHANGE

Teacher collaboration leads to the creation of new aligned literacy units targeted for student needs across grades.

Teachers have deep knowledge and expertise of the literacy curriculum.

SOLUTION EXPERIENCE

The Cooper Dual Language Academy design team aimed to smooth the student transition between grades. The school design team observed that redundancy in their curriculum was a problem: students were experiencing repetitive themes, units, and learning methods. The content was strong, but it was not strategically sequenced across grades to enable incremental student growth. Therefore, the team's primary area of focus was curriculum and delivery methods for instruction.

As the school transitions to the Common Core State Standards, they are taking the opportunity to more effectively scaffold student learning experiences. The goal is for each grade's content to build upon the foundation of the prior grade and push students to grow to their maximum potential. The Common Core State Standards are more focused standards that students work to master over several grade levels with increasing sophistication. The school design team aimed to clearly scaffold unit plans and lessons over the 2nd and 3rd grade curricula to both support and challenge students as they learn each standard. As a complement to curriculum, teachers also aimed to scaffold the responsibilities students are expected to manage. The teachers in particular focused on the spring semester of 2nd grade and first semester of 3rd grade.

The school design team considered several models for teacher collaboration to accomplish this goal. The TrueSchool Team helped them to select full day collaborative sessions between the 2nd and 3rd grade teachers focused heavily on communicating concrete examples of how the standards are taught in each grade respectively. Through this deep dive into methods of content delivery and expected student actions, teachers were able to get all the ideas onto the table and arrange the content and instructional methods in order of increasing rigor. As a result, the teachers were able to adjust curriculum to create an effectively scaffolded transition of learning methods in 2nd grade to those of 3rd grade. The school design team believed this would increase student mastery of standards, student achievement, and student engagement. Additionally, the teachers had a hunch that students may feel more supported academically and would grow in their self-confidence and willingness to ask questions about misunderstandings.

TEACHER COLLABORATION TIME

In order to align the second and third grade curricula, the school design team determined it would be most effective to dig in with several full day summits with all teachers present rather than brief, weekly or monthly professional development sessions. The administration protected three days during the spring semester for the teachers to collaborate on curriculum development as well as on practices for continuing to refine and adapt the curriculum as it is implemented. The teachers have limited cross-grade collaborative time so they worked to set up systems for digital collaboration on an ongoing basis. To refine the process for next year, the team captured the common language, meeting structure, and shared practices that they found most successful.

COOPER DESIGN TEAM PRINCIPLES

- + Ask questions of students, teachers, and parents to inform our direction forward.
- + Take responsibility for our collective success.
- + Be adaptive - creativity loves constraints.

185
STUDENTS IMPACTED

6
TEACHERS ENGAGED



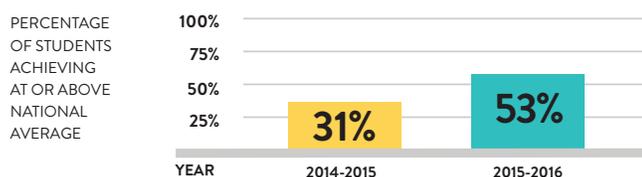
LOOKING AHEAD

In the academic year ahead, the Cooper Dual Language Academy school design team will apply the process they have piloted for collaboration between 2nd and 3rd grades to other transitions in the elementary school. The 2nd and 3rd grade teachers captured the protocols and successful practices they learned this year for other teacher teams to leverage. They plan to institute new collaborative practices for the teachers in particularly important transitional years for students: pre-kindergarten to kindergarten and 5th grade to 6th grade. Teachers will collaborate on aligning the curriculum and literacy skills between grades, as well as the social emotional skills and self-management responsibilities that help students successfully navigate new expectations.

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Cooper Academy offers a challenging and engaging curriculum which includes hands-on learning in computer/science labs and technology-integrated classroom learning. Students excel in reading/writing, math, and science. Headstart (full & half day) and full day Kindergarten classes are available, as well as a wide range of enrichment programs such as ballroom and folkloric dance, choir, Mariachi Ensemble, and Project FIT. Various family supports are offered in collaboration with community partners. Cooper serves 486 students in grades Pre-K through 5.

2ND GRADE NWEA READING ATTAINMENT



“My biggest takeaway was to really think outside the box for solutions to school issues. We can start with a small scale model to test and see if it is on target and sustainable for implementation in the long term.”

- JANET PETERS,
READING COACH + SCHOOL
DESIGN TEAM MEMBER



“This experience has broadened my perspective of possible initiatives at our school.”

- MARTHA ALBA,
SCHOOL LEADER + SCHOOL
DESIGN TEAM MEMBER

HENRY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BLUEPRINT

CULTURE OF LITERACY



TRUESCHOOL TEAM

+ LORA ABRAHAM

Assistant Principal

+ MARISSA DURIC

3rd Grade Teacher

+ JUAN GUTIERREZ

Principal

+ ALY JAQUITH

1st Grade Bilingual Teacher

PROBLEM

Students were leaving primary grades without the literacy skills necessary for academic success.

Teachers did not have a reading curriculum with aligned strategies and materials to support reading instruction for a linguistically diverse student population.



SOLUTION

Shared reading strategies and collaborative class culture to foster student literacy skills and a love of reading.

New classroom practices enable targeted individual growth, peer support, and collective class progress. Students develop an enduring identity as readers.



LEVER FOR CHANGE

All students participate in shared reading strategies; each child can participate and feel successful.

Classroom interventions were consistent each day and became a core component of classroom culture.

SOLUTION EXPERIENCE

The Henry Elementary School design team tackled the issue of literacy development in 1st and 3rd grades. Henry has many students who are English language learners that need additional reading support. The primary grades literacy team aimed to build student confidence and love of reading to motivate all students to become lifelong readers. The school design team took a two pronged approach: individual student support at the appropriate challenge level and strong classroom culture.

Students in 3rd grade grew from the beginning of the year to middle of the year, but only 33 percent of students met their winter growth goal. In the spring semester, the school design team implemented the new shared reading experience, centered on a daily whole-class reading followed by tiered, differentiated support for individual students. Once the practice became an integral daily part of the 3rd grade classroom, students made significant growth at the end of the year, 65% of third grade students met their end of the year growth goal.

As the culture of collaboration and love of literacy was enhanced throughout the school year, so was the collaboration amongst teachers. Teachers collaborated on assessments to measure student growth and understand trends across classrooms. The TrueSchool Team supported the Henry design team to create practices for data management and teacher collaboration that would be sustainable and contribute to significant impact. Common, timely, and relevant literacy assessments optimized the time spent among grade level teams talking about literacy instruction and achievement. On a weekly basis, teachers analyzed their classroom data in comparison to the other classrooms and discussed instructional methods or tactics that led to greatest student growth. The learnings in each classroom were shared to shape instruction for maximum student impact across classrooms.



“Through this experience, teachers were able to grow and develop their teaching practice while students benefited from the innovative changes in the classroom.”

- JUAN GUTIERREZ, SCHOOL LEADER + SCHOOL DESIGN TEAM MEMBER

CROSS-GRADE LEARNING

Much literacy instruction is personalized and individual to each student; as a complement to that style of learning, students enjoyed and valued this shared literary experience. The structure for daily implementation was standardized across classrooms, but provided a significant level of teacher choice and autonomy to ensure the methods of delivery felt authentic to each teacher's leadership style. Additionally, the practices were broad enough so that they could work with any text appropriate for kindergarten through third grade students. This balance provided teachers with a structure to leverage balanced with the freedom to adapt it to their students' needs. The Henry design team learned that changing attitudes and building culture are very important steps toward knowledge and skill development.

HENRY DESIGN TEAM PRINCIPLES

- + Teacher voice is critical to inform next steps and drive change
- + Transformative insight can be gained from engaging in empathy actions with students to deeply understand their experience
- + We are lucky to get to do this - remember to infuse joy in the work

44
STUDENTS IMPACTED

92%
STUDENTS SELF-IDENTIFY
AS A GOOD READER

250
HOURS OF
LITERACY INSTRUCTION



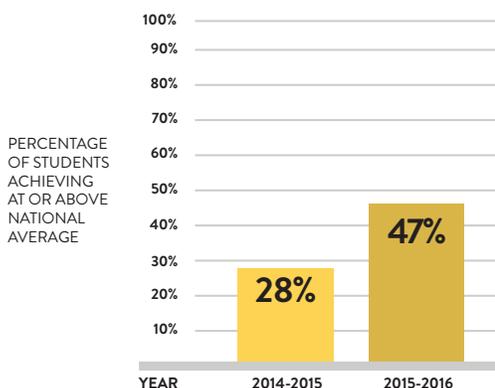
LOOKING AHEAD

In the upcoming academic year, the Henry design team plans to continue to implement the shared reading block. The team plans to expand the standard practice across kindergarten through third grade classrooms. Establishing a consistent shared reading block for all four grades will provide vertical alignment in practice with content that increases in rigor. The team plans to leverage the lessons they have learned about what works for building culture with students and building sustainability for teachers. The school design team wants to invite additional creative and innovative ideas from teachers for instructional practices. The school design team will continue regular data meetings to measure student growth and share ideas that are working across classrooms.

SCHOOL CONTEXT

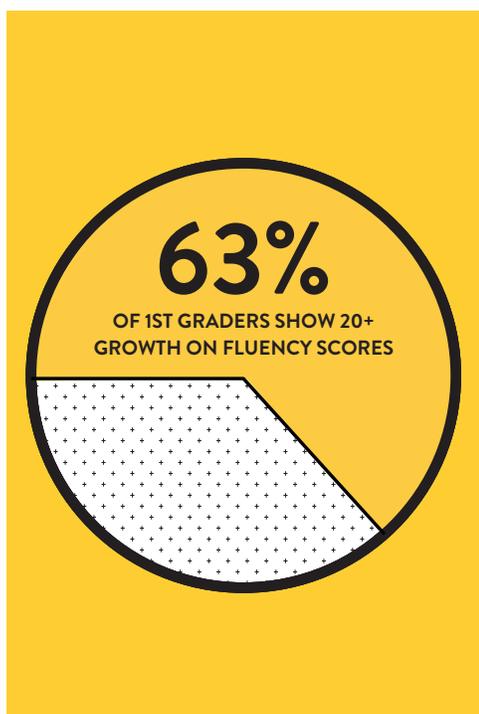
Henry School is an ethnically diverse, multicultural urban school servicing the Old Irving Park and south Albany Park communities of Chicago. We strive for excellence in teaching for all our students. Henry School partners with universities and organizations to bring enriching academic opportunities and resources for teachers, students, and parents. Henry serves 642 students in grades Pre-K to 6.

3RD GRADE NWEA READING GROWTH



“Because of this opportunity, my colleagues and I have found true collaboration in a way that has measurable student outcomes. We were provided with the tools and supports to implement action research and effectively work with those results to scale a successful literacy program.”

- MARISSA DURIC,
3RD GRADE TEACHER +
SCHOOL DESIGN
TEAM MEMBER



NORWOOD PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BLUEPRINT

SPACE FOR STUDENT CHOICE



TRUESCHOOL TEAM

+ RENEE BLAHUTA

Principal

+ JENNIFER DI SANTI

2nd Grade Teacher

+ MELISSA IRWIN

Special Education Teacher

+ MEG NALLY

Music Teacher

PROBLEM

Students felt low levels of ownership over their learning.

The classroom environment was not sufficiently flexible and supportive of personalized learning to enable true student choice.



SOLUTION

Flexible classroom environments with movable furniture options that enable students to make choices to best support their individual learning style. This increases student ownership and independence in learning.

Students reflect on their choices, learning goals, and learning environment to help them thrive academically and social-emotionally.



LEVER FOR CHANGE

Students' voices are incorporated into classroom decision making.

Students have authentic ownership of their own learning and learning environment.

SOLUTION EXPERIENCE

The Norwood Park Elementary School design team took personalized learning to the next level by providing students with increased choice about the design of the learning environment. Personalized learning to meet each student at his or her academic challenge level has been a priority at Norwood Park for the past few years. This year, the school design team wanted to support students to develop increased awareness of and ownership over their personal working style and decision-making over what type of learning environment enables them to thrive.

The school design team first procured new furniture to be used flexibly in classrooms for several types of learning environments. Students could choose to work in various setups including standard elementary school desks, clusters of comfortable low chairs, pillows on the floor, hand shaped chairs, benches, or bigger high school desks. Often, students were also given the choice of working independently or collaborating in groups.

Initially, the school design team focused on the music classes across 4th through 8th grades and one 2nd grade classroom as a small-scale learning prototype. Other teachers were welcome to opt in to participate and the school design team regularly shared learnings across the faculty. One of the effective tactics for spreading this work across classrooms was protected collaborative time for teachers to work together on personalized learning. Teachers are sometimes intimidated to shift to a classroom where students have more of a role in decision-making and teachers act more as facilitators, sharing management of the classroom with the students. The TrueSchool Team encouraged the school design team to purposefully develop growth mindset in teachers as well as in students to navigate this transition. With this open culture, each classroom joined in the work to some degree over the course of the year so all students experienced new elements of personalized learning.

At the end of a class period or project, students reflected on how their choice in working environment affected their academic performance and social-emotional development. This reflection was scaffolded to be developmentally appropriate and included ratings, written reflections, and one-on-one conferences with the teacher depending on the grade level of the students. For the students in 4th grade and above, the CORE survey was used for students to self-report social-emotional growth, particularly in the area of self-management. The school design team believes that when students improve in self-management, they will perform better academically and be better able to advocate for their individual learning needs. The school design team saw students grow in willingness to take a risk, self-confidence, and perseverance. Interestingly, the school design team has seen younger students embrace this shift to increased ownership and growth mindset more openly than older students, perhaps because they have fewer expectations shaped by more traditional classroom instruction. Across all grades, students continue to show increased ownership of the learning environment.

STUDENT OWNERSHIP

In order to develop authentic student ownership, teachers supported students to develop and analyze skills to reflect on past choices to inform future choices. Autonomous reflection skills are a precursor for actual change in student choices. Students looked at their own performance data and how they felt in different learning environments in order to discover how they work and learn best. Students also assessed their choice to work independently or in groups. Students considered which peers they work with best and assessed the strengths they bring to a group and who are the most effective and complementary collaborators. The school design team learned it was important for students to develop common language and sentence starters to discuss their opinions and have conversations about group work. Reflecting on and adapting workstyles was a new skill for many students and started to build a strong foundation for continued development throughout K-12 education and far beyond.

NORWOOD PARK DESIGN TEAM PRINCIPLES

- + Be both thinkers AND doers
- + Be proactive rather than reactive
- + Know our audience and communicate in a way that is clear and compelling

365
STUDENTS IMPACTED

30
TEACHERS ENGAGED

600+
HOURS OF PERSONALIZED
LEARNING INSTRUCTION



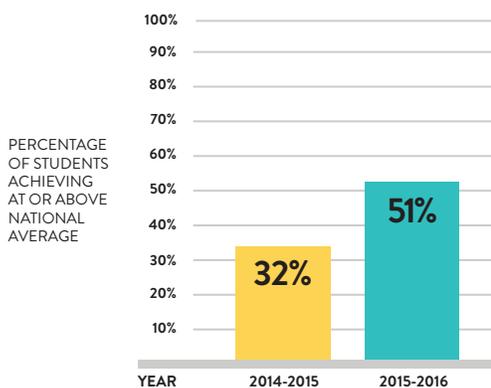
LOOKING AHEAD

In the upcoming academic year, the Norwood Park design team will focus on expanding student choice throughout all grades and classrooms. The first priority will be scaffolding student choice for the early grades, from kindergarten through third grade. They will create a scope and sequence for developing student choice and personalized learning throughout the school from kindergarten through 8th grade. Teachers will foster a school-wide culture of ownership and self-advocacy for individual performance across academic and non-academic classes. The school design team also wants to personalize development for teachers by working with each teacher to identify his or her personal area of growth in flexible learning environments and supporting each of them to develop in the co-created target area.

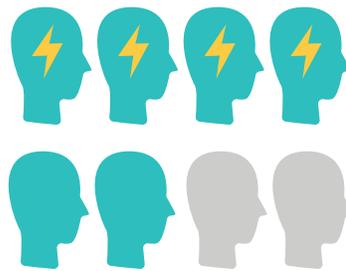
SCHOOL CONTEXT

Norwood Park School is a neighborhood school and a World Language Magnet Cluster School serving approximately 400 PreK to 8th grade students. Norwood Park’s goal is to know and grow each of our students as a child (social-emotionally) and as a learner (academically).

3RD GRADE NWEA READING GROWTH



GROWTH IN STUDENT OWNERSHIP



STUDENTS SHOWED GROWTH IN FOUR OF THE NINE SURVEY ITEMS, AVERAGES FOR TWO ITEMS REMAINED THE SAME



“The design cycle works! It is a very useful tool when innovating, and I plan to continue using it in my school improvement work.”

-RENEE BLAHUTA,
SCHOOL LEADER
+ SCHOOL DESIGN
TEAM MEMBER



“When I’m comfortable, I can do my work better. I know which spots help me think better and the ones that are not good for me. I want to be the best student I can be to get ready for 3rd grade. We’re getting harder and harder work everyday and that’s good because it’s getting me ready.”

-LUKE ANTI,
2ND GRADE STUDENT

STEINMETZ HIGH SCHOOL BLUEPRINT

COLLEGE CAFE



TRUESCHOOL TEAM

+ JAMIE JARAMILLO

Assistant Principal

+ CLAUDIO MENDRANO

Data Strategist

+ STEPHEN NGO

Principal

+ BETH PEREZ

Teacher

+ VICTORIA SERRITELLA

Teacher



“I come to College Cafe because I want to be a part of a team that helps me figure out where I want to go to college, how it benefits me, and what I want to major in. College Cafe gives me motivation to do more than basic expectations so I can become a heart surgeon someday.”

-CATHERINE, 9TH GRADE STUDENT

PROBLEM

According to student surveys and feedback, students lacked resources and direction to think constructively about long-term college and career choices.

Students needed support to explore options for post-secondary pathways and proactively plan the necessary actions during high school to be college-ready.



SOLUTION

College Cafe is a space for 9th and 10th grade students to get inspired by mentor and alumni speakers and participate in post-secondary planning actions such as college and major exploration, and course planning.

The College Cafe contributes to a college-going culture starting from the beginning of 9th grade.



LEVER FOR CHANGE

Students find comfort in a safe space and ask questions about their academic opportunities. They are authentic and thoughtful when reflecting on their personal why and best fit pathway after high school.

Students speak positively of the College Cafe to other students, which increases attendance through trusted peer word of mouth.

SOLUTION EXPERIENCE

The Steinmetz High School design team built a college going culture starting in 9th grade through the new College Cafe. All Steinmetz students are urged to strive toward gaining admission to college, regardless of the intended choice for college or career after graduation. Many students lack the resources to plan for this transition. One common challenge is financial constraints that are often a barrier to admission that could be mitigated with additional, earlier student guidance. At Steinmetz, conversations about post-secondary options often started when students entered 11th grade. The school design team realized that this is too late in high school for all students to be set up for a successful college application process. The team aimed to make this goal attainable for all students by fostering culture and providing specific support to students in 9th and 10th grade through the College Cafe.

The purpose of the College Cafe is to support students to begin to explore and plan their post-secondary pathway. The school design team engaged in empathy actions with students and alumni to understand the barriers and opportunities for the college application process. The College Cafe is a space where facilitated sessions are offered for 30 minutes twice each week during lunch for 9th graders and 10th graders respectively. The activities of the College Cafe sessions varied each week to keep engagement high and provide high quality content to students. Skill development sessions focused on the development of skills such as how to calculate your GPA, how to email a teacher or professor for help, and time management. Other sessions featured school alumni or speakers who shared stories and advice from their personal journeys to and through college. Some sessions provided flexible but structured research time for students to explore potential colleges, majors, and extracurricular activities. Overall, sessions aimed to help students identify what they need to accomplish in high school in order to move forward on their desired pathway.

This year, students chose to attend the College Cafe when they wished to and were not required to attend. As the school design team expected, many of the students who attended were very driven and high performing academically. The team aimed to influence a target group of students who were medium or low performing academically and could particularly benefit from added support in order to stay on, or switch to, a path toward college. This effort was somewhat successful but the school design team did not feel like they were reaching the students they most hoped to impact. Therefore, in the upcoming academic year all freshman students will take a seminar class on college readiness and planning.

In the short term, the College Cafe led to improved Freshman On Track rate, stronger school-wide culture, and mastery of topics covered in the College Cafe sessions. In the longer term, the school design team expects to see growth in the high school graduation rate, the percentage of students accepted to multiple colleges, and the percentage of students attending and persisting through college. They will track this long term data to understand enduring impact. Other new initiatives in the school such as college visits and student recognition programs together with the College Cafe contribute to this long-term goal.

FRESHMAN SEMINAR

Based on learnings from the College Cafe this year, the Steinmetz school design team is creating a freshman seminar class for all 9th grade students. The team has built and leveraged excellent content for the class through design of the College Cafe curriculum this year. The seminar class will be a highly effective way to build the culture of college-going right from the beginning of the 9th grade year since all students will have this shared experience. Teachers in other subjects will be able to reference and reinforce the skill development through applications beyond the seminar class. To incorporate learnings from the College Cafe, the structure of the freshman seminar will be active for students, leverage technology, include the voices of many alumni and stakeholders, and make time for individual and small group conversations.

STEINMETZ DESIGN TEAM PRINCIPLES

- + Practice a bias toward collaboration - share learnings both big and small
- + Bring joy to the work
- + Protect time to have the opportunity to reflect and check-in as a team

78
STUDENTS IMPACTED

14
ALUMNI + MENTOR SPEAKERS

25%
STUDENTS HAVE ATTENDED A
COLLEGE CAFE SESSION

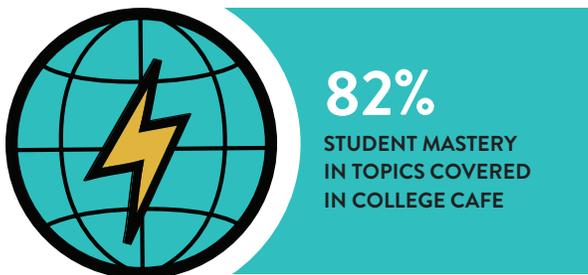


LOOKING AHEAD

In the upcoming school year, the Steinmetz High School design team will continue the efforts of the College Cafe through the freshman seminar class and the newly reopened Student Resource Center. The freshman seminar will build upon the learnings of the College Cafe and provide that experience of exploration, learning, and proactive planning to all 9th grade students. The school design team will adapt the learnings of this year's 30-minute, twice weekly College Cafe to a full length, course for all students. In addition to the class, flexible student support similar to the College Cafe will be offered on a weekly basis in the Student Resource Center. The Student Resource Center is a space dedicated to student needs, including access to technology and individualized support on post-secondary planning. In the future, the Steinmetz design team hopes to offer parent education around the college application, acceptance, and enrollment process to enable parents to better support their students throughout high school.

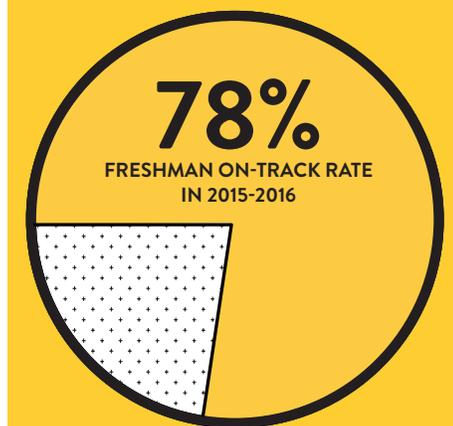
SCHOOL CONTEXT

Steinmetz offers all students a personalized curriculum through three smaller learning communities: Truth, Justice and Law; Communication, Expression and Art; and Science, Math and Technology. Steinmetz serves 1452 students in 9-12 grade.



“Many of the ideas I garnered through this program are applicable to other areas of my life and our school. For example, I can now better leverage resources to make sure that a program will work. I have tools to go back and analyze what we’re doing critically and consider how it could work with other new programs in our school.”

-BETH PEREZ,
10TH GRADE TEACHER
+ SCHOOL DESIGN
TEAM MEMBER





TRUE SCHOOL
SCHOOL

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