



Tangible Steps Toward Tomorrow

New designs for early education, ages 0-8

A human-centered approach to evolving the system of early education
for the needs and possibilities of the 21st century

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New designs for early education, ages 0-8

W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION + IDEO

WE SEE A FUTURE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION,
where education is not a separate activity from society—but allows kids to
be embedded and thrive within their local community. A future in which
the community is invested in, and responsible for, the success of each
child's experience.

Where children and their care givers are engaged in learning that responds
to their unique ways of understanding and interpreting the world.

And where teaching and leading in education remains an engaging
and creative activity, with permission to evolve with new knowledge,
understanding, trends, and technologies.

 W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION + 



**“We lose so
not being
reach them
early years.”**

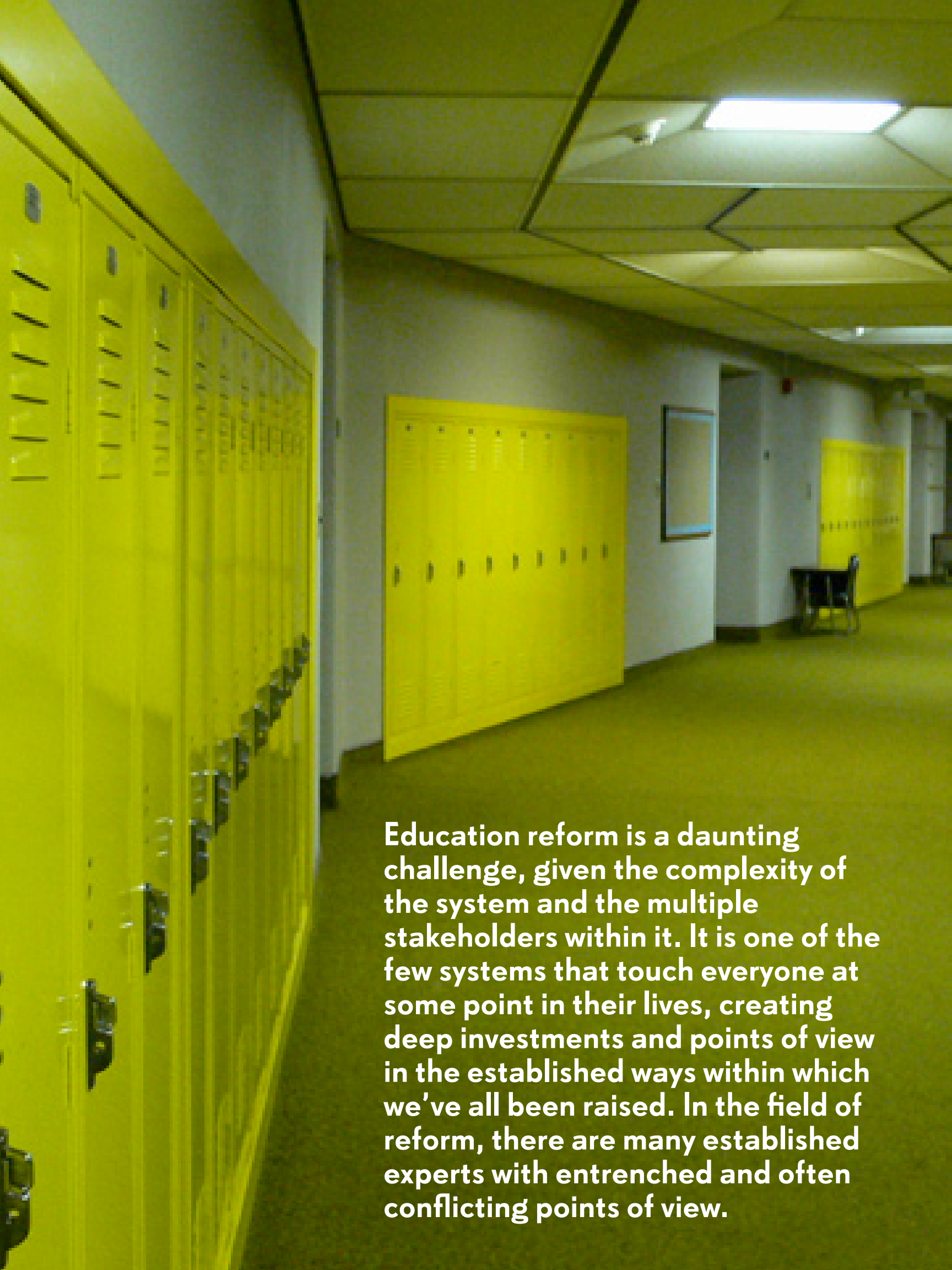
Superintendent, Central Ohio



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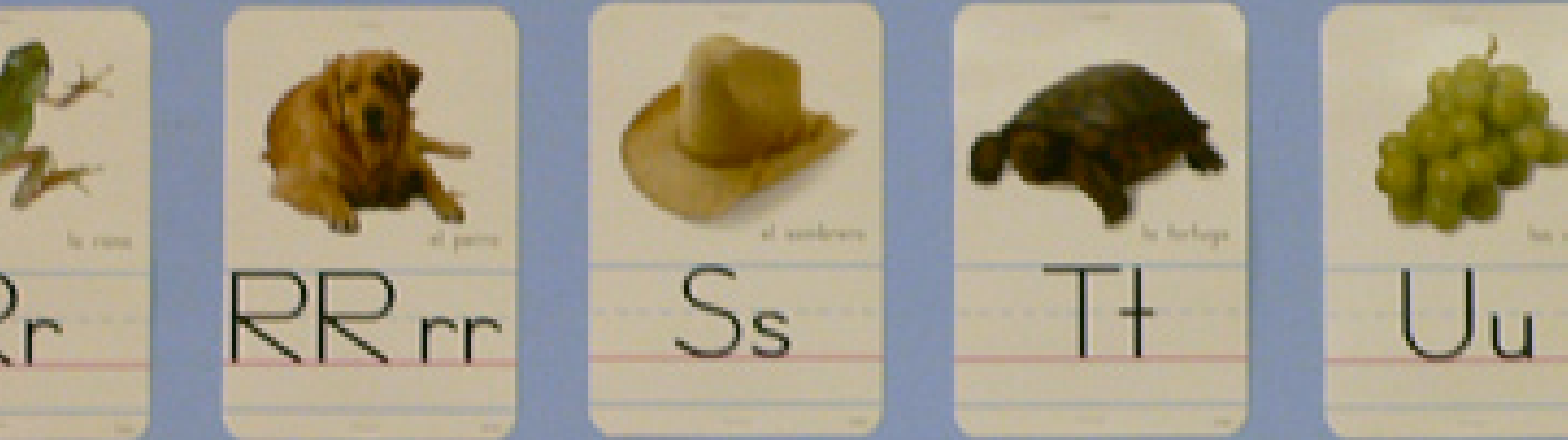
In the US today, many children are not set up to succeed in school. For example, one recent study states that 46 percent of kindergartners arrive at school at risk for failure. Helping to increase "School Readiness" – for both the student and the school – is the drive behind this project.



Education reform is a daunting challenge, given the complexity of the system and the multiple stakeholders within it. It is one of the few systems that touch everyone at some point in their lives, creating deep investments and points of view in the established ways within which we've all been raised. In the field of reform, there are many established experts with entrenched and often conflicting points of view.

With a fresh approach in mind, WKKF approached IDEO to envision possibilities for change.

IDEO is a design consultancy, with a human-centered methodology. We learn directly from people who live in the space we are seeking to understand. We observe and speak to them within their context so we can empathize with their needs and motivations. From this inspiration, we generate ideas, which become visual, tangible prototypes.



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The goal of this project has been to use this methodology to create new solutions to the challenge of school readiness. The IDEO team immersed itself in the full ecosystem of early childhood education, conducting observations in classrooms and in the homes of parents, as well as connecting to experts within and outside of Kellogg's network. We also drew on the ideas and expertise of directors from the SPARK (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids) initiative.

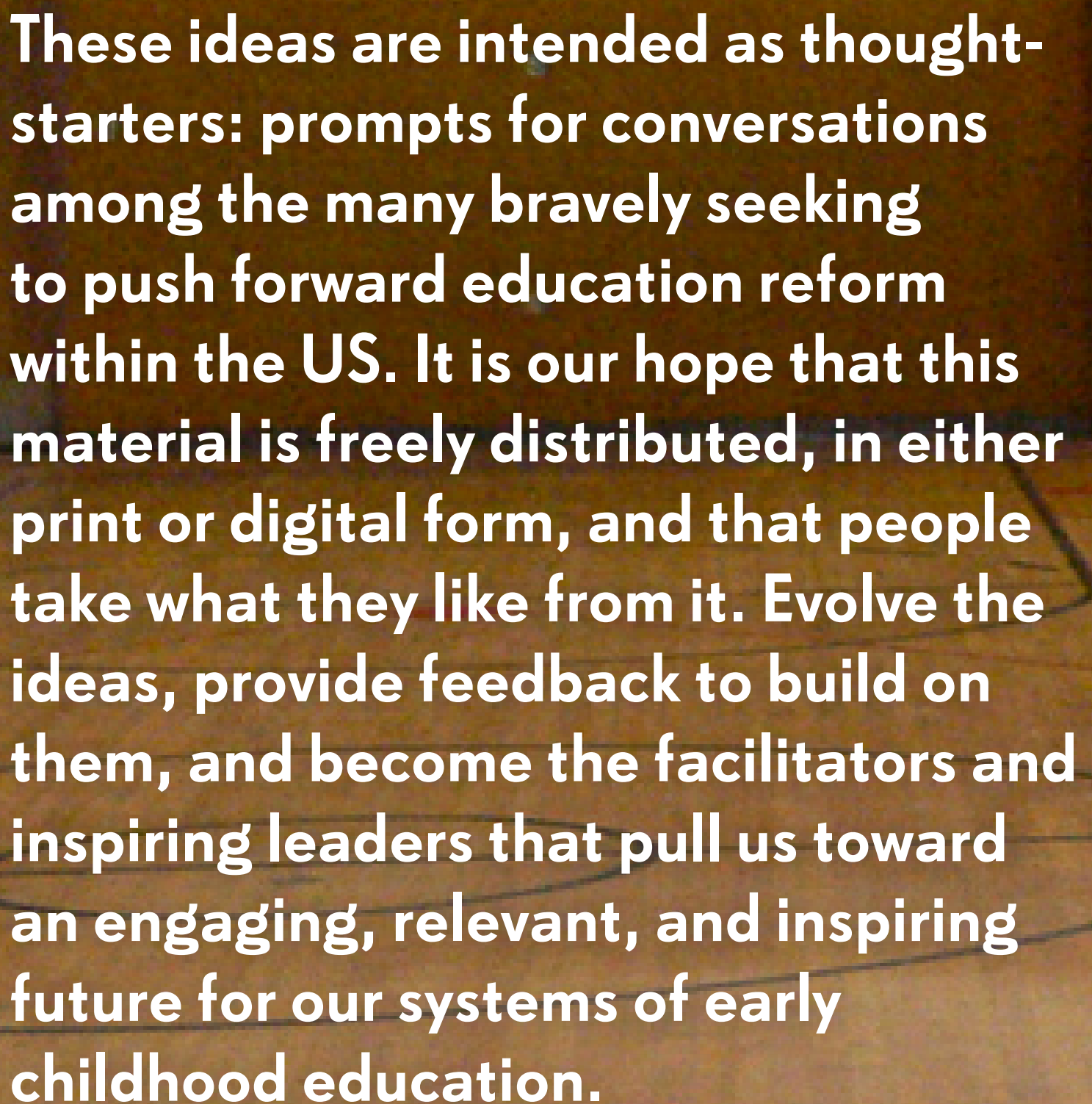


The solutions here are presented in the forms of scenarios: idealized occasions of use, from the user's point of view. The solutions have focused around three areas: parents, teachers and schools. The rationale for this is that these are the three major influences on the child's education, and that they are also discrete and observable groupings, as opposed to broader social or political issues.



m somebody Yo soy alguien





These ideas are intended as thought-starters: prompts for conversations among the many bravely seeking to push forward education reform within the US. It is our hope that this material is freely distributed, in either print or digital form, and that people take what they like from it. Evolve the ideas, provide feedback to build on them, and become the facilitators and inspiring leaders that pull us toward an engaging, relevant, and inspiring future for our systems of early childhood education.

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The W. K. Kellogg Foundation's initiative, Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK) has been a main source of inspiration for these designs. Please see page 129 for a list of the people involved.

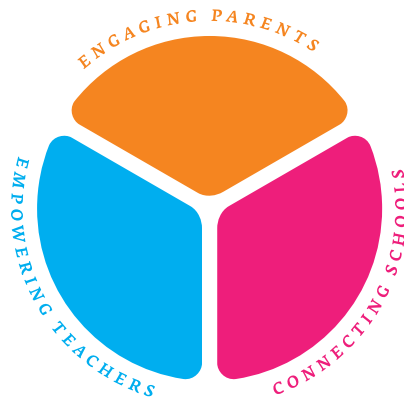
The SPARK initiative of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation is designed to unite communities so that all children can be successful before and after they enter school. SPARK fosters partnerships of selected communities, schools, state agencies and families to ensure that they work together effectively for young children. With the initiative serving as a catalyst or "spark," the goal is to ensure that vulnerable children are ready for school and that schools are ready for children.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation supports children, families, and communities as they strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success as individuals and as contributors to the larger community and society.

18	Impact Area 1: Engaging Parents Leading parents along the path to full participation in their child's education
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Impact Areas

Focusing on three major solution sets



Our fieldwork revealed a large array of opportunities to influence early childhood education, ranging from basic needs such as health and security and other factors such as architecture. In order to focus this work, we designed to the three points that we consistently heard as the strongest sources of needs: the parents, the teachers and the schools relationship with its community.

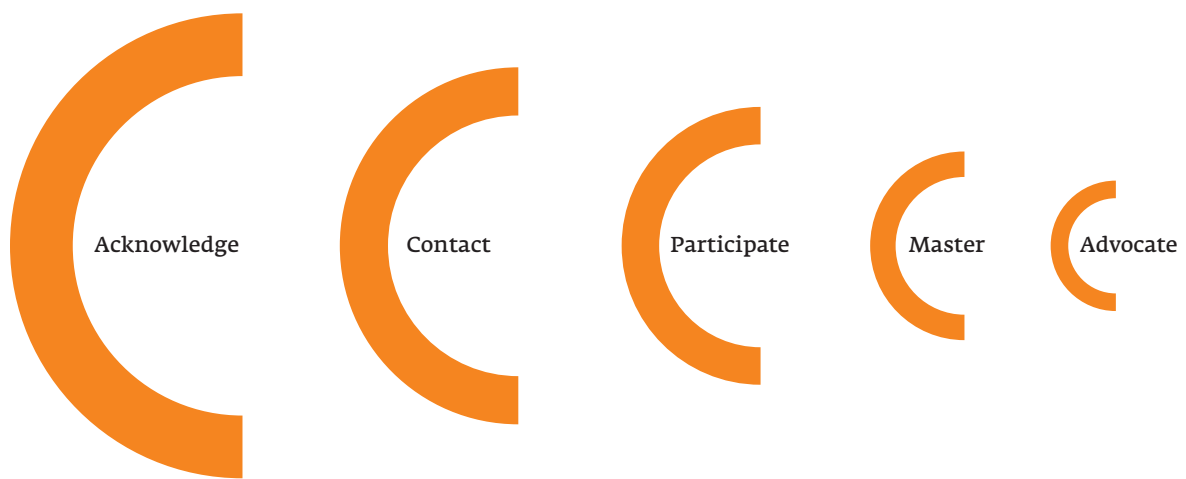
Within each of these areas, we have attempted to provide interconnected design solutions. While many of the individual ideas are inspired by existing initiatives we have observed, they acquire an extra level of power when joined up into a system.



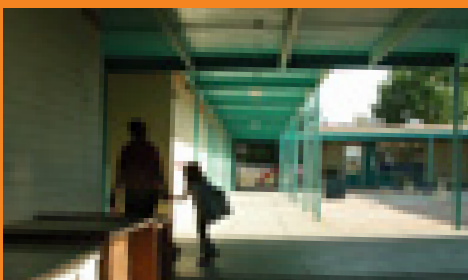
Engaging Parents

Engagement is a journey with multiple stages

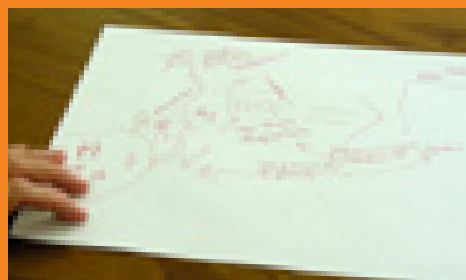
We heard repeatedly that an engaged parent is a major determinant of a child's success. However, becoming engaged with a child's education or with a school is not a one-step process. It is a journey, comprising multiple stages. The transitions between each stage represent opportunities for design. Although there is of course huge variation between the different circumstances of parents, it is possible to hypothesize a path to engagement for all parents. This is shown in the accompanying framework diagram.



The purpose of this framework is to help us have empathy towards the complexities of parents' lives, and help us look for opportunities to accelerate the elements that drive engagement, while reducing the hurdles that deter. (Please note: we do not wish to imply that every parent needs to be moved all the way to becoming an Advocate. The intention is merely to attempt to generally increase parental engagement wherever possible.)



"We see it all as a process with small steps forward. We want to help them identify the paths, the steps and the successful parts to hold on to."
 – Leader, New Mexico Community Foundation

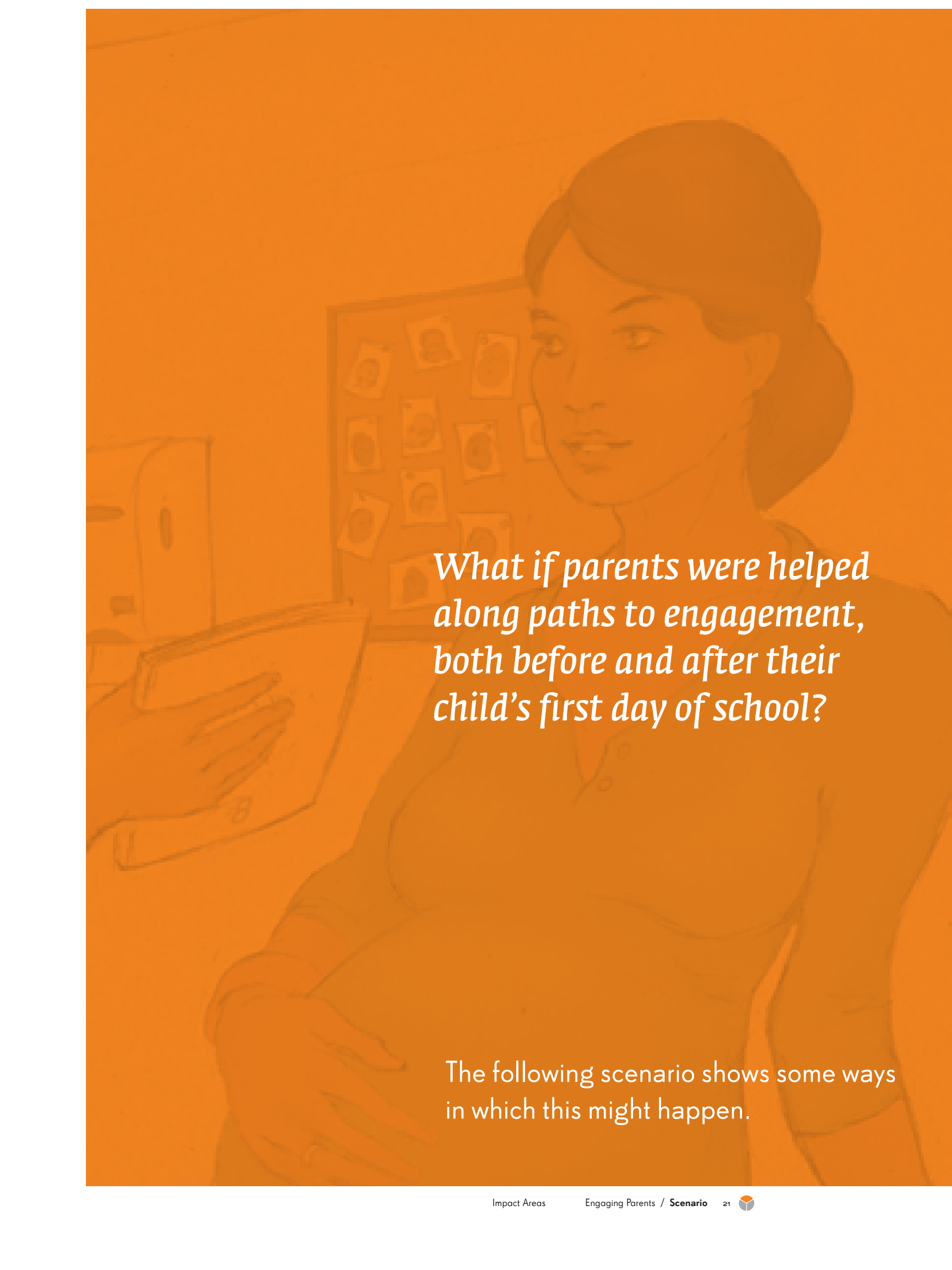


"For many parents, school represents a teacher-to-parent relationship and that's scary. SPARK is a parent-to-parent connection."
 – Leader, Sisters of Charity of Canton, Ohio



"My Parent Partner helped me understand what parts of my child's education were most important and how to slow down in some other expectations."
 – Parent, Canton, Ohio

Scenario

An illustration of a woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a dark top, holding a folder. She is looking towards the left. In the background, there is a bulletin board with several small photos or cards pinned to it. The entire scene is rendered in a monochromatic orange color scheme.

*What if parents were helped
along paths to engagement,
both before and after their
child's first day of school?*

The following scenario shows some ways
in which this might happen.

Teresa is headed to one of her final pre-natal appointments. Her doctor hands her an introductory flyer and explains to Teresa:

Zero8 is a program that provides parent coaches to all parents, helping them to learn about their child's development.

Dr. Jordan has participated in the program herself with her children and recommends it. Teresa has also seen advertising around the city about this program. But she's still somewhat overwhelmed about having a baby, she can't begin to think about school for her child... and really, when does she have time to take classes, anyway. Isn't parenting something that you just figure out on your own?





Scenario

Building a strong relationship

After observing how much her baby learns every day and wanting to know more about it, Teresa decides to apply for the Zero8 program when she sees an ad on a box of baby wipes. It states that “parenting is about getting support from others” and so she decides to find out what they offer.

She begins meeting with her coach, who is a trained Zero8 expert, when her son, Galeno, is four months old.

The first meeting takes place in the doctor’s office so that her doctor can make the introduction, but soon after they meet at Teresa’s home so that the coach can help Teresa create a safe and learning-rich environment. The time together gives Teresa and Galeno a chance to learn from their coach. Teresa passes quickly from one milestone to the next. One of the first things that she learns is the importance of talking to her child even before he can speak. Teresa appreciates the patience and respect that her coach has for Galeno and for her when she raises questions.





Scenario

Alternative approaches to awareness

Michael also has a young son, and he knows a bit about the Zero8 coaches that are available. But he prefers to figure things out on his own. He knows that his son needs activities to keep him stimulated, so Michael shops the toy aisle to find things to keep a one-year-old busy.

He discovers that Zero8, the program he has heard about for parents, is also here in the store.

Zero8 has labeled a selection of toys with an approval rating and additional activities that parents can do with their children. Michael makes a selection and feels confident that he has chosen well for his son.





Scenario

From experience to participation

By the time Teresa and Michael's boys reach Kindergarten, both parents have learned how important it is to participate in the classroom. But another parent in the class, Rosa, is less comfortable with the role of classroom parent. In fact she had a terrible school experience when she was young, and it still makes her uncomfortable today. Her daughter will have to go to school, but Rosa wants to have little to do with it. Which is why Rosa is a bit surprised when she reads the first message the teacher sends her, free to her cell phone.

The message is simple: "Hello parents, we are reading stories about the night skies in class. Be sure to look at the stars with your child tonight!"

This is not the type of message Rosa expected from the teacher, and she is relieved that she can help her daughter without going to the school. She begins to see that her daughter can learn at home—and Rosa can help. She texts back to the teachers, "Gracias, she loved it."





Scenario
Tracking engagement

The teacher uses an electronic system to send the messages out to the parents. It has made communication more of a dialogue between her and all of the parents, helping them all to be more engaged. It is no longer a matter of taking time to write out messages only when the students are in trouble.

Now the system helps her send out group messages, keeping parents informed of the learning in the classroom and how they can participate.

She can also craft individual messages about good and bad days with her students.

The system helps her track her messages to parents and their responses back, a requirement from her principal. It also helps record extra steps she has taken to help her students in the classroom. One child, Robert, participates in the Zero8 program and so already had a file in the system. It described the speech therapy his mother was taking him to before he came to Kindergarten. As his teacher, she is able to record Robert's progress and note when she sends home extra activities for him to do with his parents. This system has created a way for her to connect with parents and students in a positive and productive way that actually saves her time!





Solutions



for engaging parents

Zero8 Coaching

Helping parents understand and engage in their child's development
(birth through age 8)

Zero8 is an incentive-based parent coaching program that starts at birth and supports the child and caregiver through elementary school. It is built on the proven successes of programs like Parents as Teachers from SPARK Georgia and Parent Coaches from SPARK Ohio. The Zero8 program is voluntary and aimed at all parents, regardless of social status or income level. It is a program that supports parents, making them aware of their child's learning needs, offering experiential help and preparing them to participate in and feel in control of their interactions with the school system.

Features and Interactions

- » The program is free to families, with incentives for participation.
- » The Zero8 program is promoted by an aggressive campaign that uses traditional and viral marketing to spread the word that this program exists to help parents gain access to information and resources.
- » Initial communication happens via trusted sources for new parents: obstetricians, medical clinics, social workers, churches, and childcare centers.
- » Local organizations run the program and train the parent coaches with support from national funding. They recruit community members and experienced parents to become parent coaches.
- » Coaches go through a Zero8 training program in which they learn to administer screenings for learning development and how to navigate the social services system.
- » The program will require an application from the parent so that the matching service will find a Zero8 coach who can relate well with the parent. Ideally, the coach would have a similar background as the family to reduce barriers to trust.
- » Once matched, the coach meets with the family regularly through home visits. If the parent prefers to meet at another location, community centers, and other public venues have rooms that may be reserved for such appointments.
- » The visits will be tailored to the parents' needs, with a basic structure of first focusing on child safety and nutrition, then moving to verbal and social skills. As children get closer to Kindergarten, the lessons prepare them for school by teaching the needed skills, introducing them to books and games they will see in class, taking them on a tour of the school, and introducing them to their teachers.
- » There are clear milestones within the program to celebrate parent learning as well, marked with certificates of achievement and rewards. Once the child begins school, the coach awards the parent with a Zero8 diploma.



- » Parents who show good promise are encouraged to sign up for training to become Zero8 coaches themselves. Zero8 coaching is a flexible part-time job that is ideal for parents with young children.
- » In addition to the regular coaching, there is a fathering program. Fathers meet at a Zero8 office for a monthly discussion on topics related to being a positive influence for their children's future. They learn from other men from their area who serve as role models. They earn gift certificates and free passes to family activities.
- » Obstetricians can take brief courses that cover the latest findings in Early Childhood Development and training on how to support at-risk parents, so

- that they are current on the topic and prepared to offer effective support. The doctors are rewarded and referred through the Zero8 program.
- » A database is the backbone of the information from Zero8 coaches. To ensure continuity and accountability, the program stores reports from the coaches in a database that can be accessed via the internet. After completing a lesson with a family, the coach takes notes on her PDA from which she can upload the information to the database to track progress and ensure all lessons are covered.
- » Parents can access the database from any internet-accessible computer. They can track their progress in advancing through different levels,

- which entitles them to a number of incentives including essential items like formula and diapers, as well as perks that will help the parent bond with their child, such as zoo tickets.
- » Pediatricians can access the database for a more comprehensive view of the child. The coach and pediatrician act as a team to spot any developmental problems early. If problems are detected, such as a speech impediment, the coach can refer the family to a speech therapist in the Zero8 network.

Research is showing that the early years matter. By the time they come to school, it's too late. We've lost the most valuable years to make a difference.

– Early care and education expert, NM

What Can Be Done: Near Term

- » Provide obstetricians and pediatricians with up-to-date information about child development and suggestions for activities for parents to do with their children, that they can distribute to all their patients.
- » Initiate parent classes as a first step towards parent education, being sure to open them to all parents so there is no social stigma associated with them. Begin with classes run by parent volunteers alongside early childhood experts.
- » Start small first, proving the value of parent coaches by implementing a local, or state funded program and measuring changes in performance of children over time, before implementing the national program. Build on what has been proved and measured in the SPARK Ohio program.

What Can Be Done: Long Term

- » The federal government recognizes parents as children's first teachers and as a key to the success of the "No Child Left Behind" act. Create a national, unified campaign to provide parent coaches across the country, accessible to all parents, focused on guiding parents in activities that engage their children in learning and prepare them for school.
- » Send every child a birthday card at birth, with information for parents about learning. Every few months a new package comes in the mail with information about development, activities to try, and a free story book.

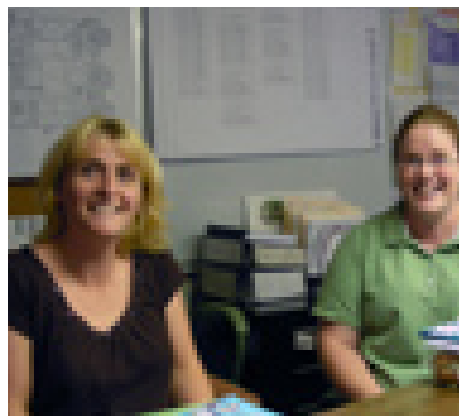
Questions to Consider

- » How can we motivate municipalities to fund innovative early learning programs so that they will save money later?
- » How do we recruit coaches who can espouse early learning principles and build strong, trusted relationships with parents?
- » How can we securely transition the parent-coach relationship and the child's developmental information when families move from one area to another?
- » How can we best measure and build evidence so that the program can effectively scale up to be offered to everyone everywhere?

Parents and caregivers play a crucial role in preparing children for school. But even the most educated parents cannot provide all of the learning tools that children need, and many parents have not been prepared with an understanding of how children learn and develop. Coaches who can work beside parents and children on a personalized, one-on-one basis have an extraordinary opportunity to teach parents how to engage their children in learning from the beginning.

Programs to Reference

- » Ohio's Parent Partners have shown that a one-on-one home-based parent coach system can reach a range of parents and children and effectively prepare them for Kindergarten. They are now working out how to scale the program and make it sustainable.
- » Parents as Teachers and Born Learning are successful national programs that encourages understanding of the importance of learning and development for their young children in new parents.
- » RCMA in Miami offers resources to people from the community to give them an education in order to create more teachers who can reach out to children and work to bring up the level of education of all of the immigrant workers in the center.
- » Doulas are a traditional way to aid mothers with information and emotional support during pregnancy and birth.
- » Life coaches, personal trainers and professional coaches provide very personalized support to increase the effectiveness of everyday decisions.



"Parent Partners are more valuable than preschool because it's one-on-one attention for my child. It makes her feel special but also gives them time to concentrate on specific skills. Preschool is more about socialization than education."
– Parent, Minerva, Ohio



"Our little school got the parents involved in their child's education, so that when the children started elementary school they were comfortable. We now have a parent on the local PTA!"
– SPARK Leader, Atlanta, Georgia

Zero8 Toy Accreditation

A low-barrier entry point for parents to engage in education

Adults are made aware of the learning value of Zero8 accredited toys, and provided with instructions for creating learning experiences using them. Developmental experts who design and oversee curriculum rate and review toys. They publish a list of approved toys, and also provide lessons for the home. A supporting website offers in-depth information about learning stages and how play can support child development.

Children are interacting with multiple stimuli while growing up. Toys are key to learning, but some are more valuable than others. This concept takes advantage of an opportunity to best support developmental moments. Current systems for accrediting toys are not official and can lead to misinformation for parents. Toy companies and parents need one official, reliable source for accreditation.

Features and Interactions

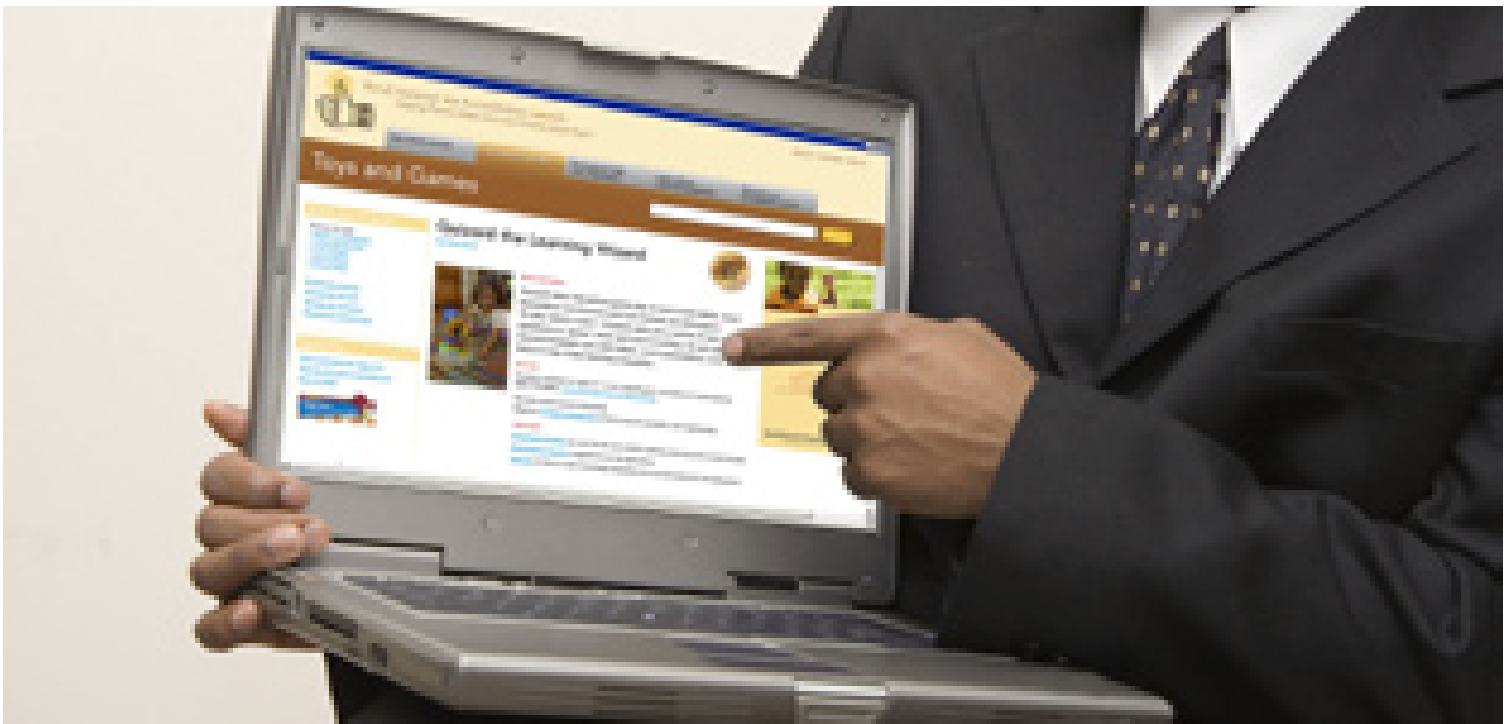
- » Early Learning experts have a trusted voice to accompany toys in the toy store. The Zero8 seal of approval is featured on toys that truly offer a learning experience for different-aged children.
- » Parents, and other adults who are not experts in child development have guidance in the toy store about purchasing the most developmentally appropriate toys for their children. If they want to learn more, there is information packaged with the toy and even more available on a public website.
- » Toy companies are encouraged to produce toys that are educational and developmentally appropriate so that they can be highlighted and awarded through the Zero8 program.

What Can Be Done: Near Term

- » Set up a Mythbusters-style website for developmental learning toys to which parents and educators can turn for the latest reviews by education experts on children's toys. Include free activities that parents can do with kids at each level of development.
- » Principals are given a list of toys that are best for learning for each age group. Principals, as a trusted source for education information, distribute the lists to parents and ECE centers.

What Can Be Done: Long Term

- » Establish a federal Zero8 education department that requires all toys that want to bear the term "Developmental" or "Learning" to be approved.
- » Establish a national award system that places a trusted label of "Zero8 approved for learning" on toys that pass rigorous review for their learning and development value to children.



Questions to Consider

- » How do we ensure that this approvals board is not corrupted by incentives from the toy manufacturers?
- » Who are the experts needed to test and review the educational value of toys?
- » Is it by force or by virtue that toy manufacturers include additional learning activities and information with the Zero8 awarded toys?

Programs to Reference

- » Parenting magazines currently offer awards for educational toys or quality products. But separating the awards from the media altogether would build a stronger sense of trust from parents.
- » Many independent groups offer approved lists of toys for children but the educational expertise is not clear to parents and consumers.
- » The Caldecott and Newbury Book Awards have proven themselves over time as the two most prominent and respected awards for children's books.

Parent Contact Database

Helping teachers to proactively engage parents

A database that facilitates dialogue and tracks contact between parents and teachers. Communication information is gathered from parents and stored in a database that allows teachers to send out free announcements and notes through text message, email or other media. This type of positive, proactive messaging to parents sets the stage for a positive relationship and encourages their participation.

Features and Interactions

- » At the beginning of the school year, parents provide their contact information and choose a contact format from a number of options. Included is a preferred language of contact and whether they have text messaging available on their cell phone. This information is stored in the database.
- » Teachers are encouraged to send messages to parents on a regular basis to keep them informed of class topics. They also compose individual notes that praise children's progress in the classroom in order to keep communication generally positive.
- » Teachers compose messages through an internet site accessible from home or school. For each message they can select whether it will go to an individual parent or a list of parents.
- » A number of message templates are available for

frequently sent messages, and teachers can create their own message templates. Common templates have been translated to multiple languages, and new messages can be uploaded to the system for centralized language translation, as needed.

- » The system will be able to convert a message to a text message, email or printed note, depending on what the parents have listed as a preference.
- » Teachers can go to the database to see at a glance how much contact they've had with parents and what the content of the messages has been.
- » To ensure that communication is as respectful and effective as possible, the database may be accompanied by communications training that suggests how to deliver constructive criticism.
- » The school's principal can also access the

database to see how his teachers are doing regarding parent engagement. He can leave comments and feedback for the teachers.

- » Parents are able to send communications to teachers through the system as well. The software will track responses back from parents to highlight engaged parents.
- » The database is accessible by all schools with the proper security clearance. This way, information can easily follow the child from elementary to middle to high school and across districts.
- » Information from Zero8 and other early childhood support programs feeds into the teacher's file on each child, alerting them to learning differences as well as favorites and ways to reach out to parents.



Right now the state is concerned most with reading, math, and parent engagement. I'm still trying to figure out a good system for tracking engagement

- Principal, New Mexico

What Can Be Done: Near Term

- » Set up easy ways for teachers to send out positive communications to parents, i.e. stacks of pre-paid postcards with encouraging messages.
- » Encourage greater communication between teachers and parents with school-owned cell phones for teachers, to keep their own private numbers private.
- » Schools could sponsor cell phone plans for teachers with unlimited local calls and text messaging to encourage frequent communication to parents.

What Can Be Done: Long Term

- » A national software system would be created for use by all teachers, pre-K through 12th grade. It would be sponsored by a national cell phone provider so that messages to and from parents are free. It would be supported by a national campaign to provide schools with up-to-date technology for communications.

Questions to Consider

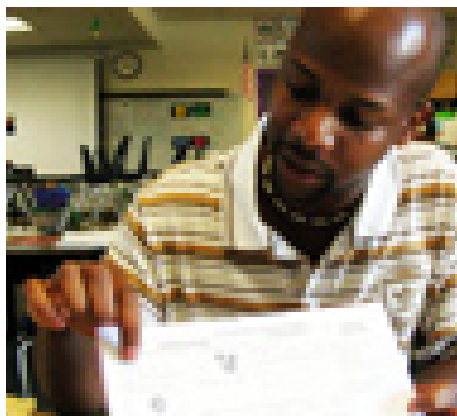
- » What percentage of parents have cell phones with text messaging? What percentage will have text messaging in two years?
- » Do teachers prefer to manage this system through their computers at school, through a web interface so it can be used at home, or via a cell phone application?

Parents need to stay in touch with their children's education but many parents need help crossing the chasm into the classroom. Breaking down the barrier between parent and teacher begins with positive communication. Parents can be discouraged by teacher communication that is focused on the negatives. Being informed helps them stay more engaged in their child's education, and helps build trust with the teachers.

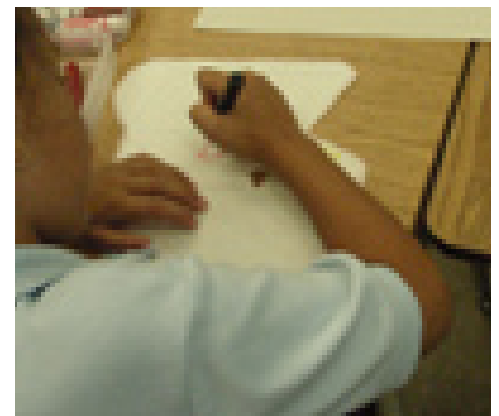
But teachers have paper work to handle already. This solution can offer them an automated system that helps to communicate quickly and efficiently, so that the first points of contact are encouraging.

Programs to Reference

- » Hotel customer service uses customer relationship management (CRM) software that helps them take extra pains to remember the customers' preferences so that when the customer checks in, they know the room preference and favored beverage.
- » Credit cards ask what is the best mode of communication and will send bills through traditional post mail or electronically via email.
- » Blue Mountain Greeting cards has a number of templated cards and messages and even has them available in different languages.



"Because a lot of families don't have email, I will send a text message to all the families saying that a homework assignment is due or to not forget their shoes because I know that if I text them, they will get it."
– Teacher, Hayward, California



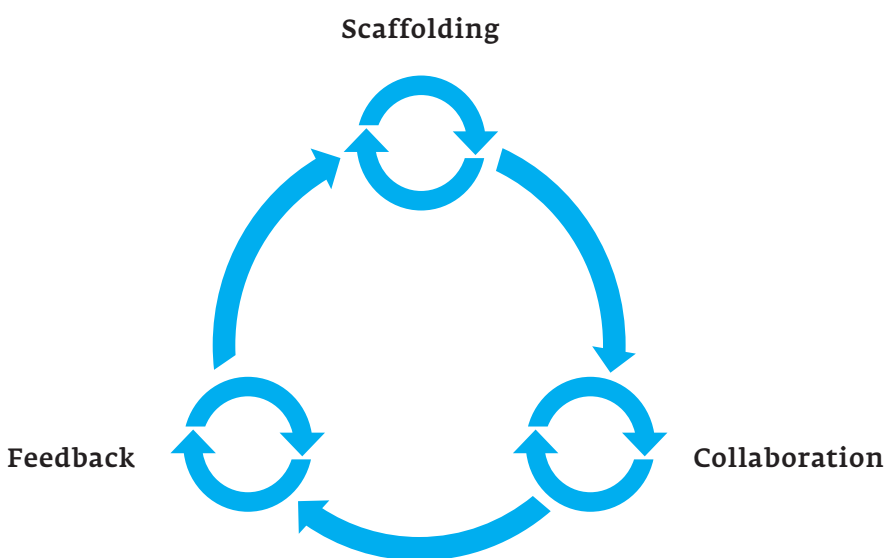
"I thought I was in frequent communication with the teacher. Everything looked fine. Then my child failed kindergarten!"
–Parent, Miami, Florida



Empowering Teachers

Providing structure, support and reinforcement to motivate teachers

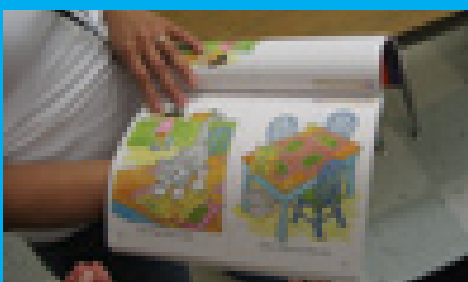
The push for standards and accountability has had the unintended consequence of disempowering and demotivating many teachers. In particular, we heard from many teachers that their creative freedom has been reduced to make way for structured learning tasks. In order to find areas for empowerment, attention must be paid to both the practical and emotional needs of teachers.



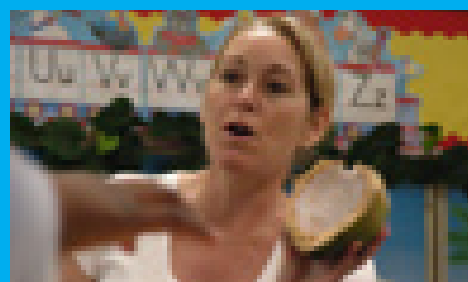
To become empowered, teachers require 3 things:

- » A clear “scaffolding” from the school leadership, which defines the task(s) they are being empowered to perform, with a focus on end goals and values, rather than merely prescribing what to do.
- » Support, inspiration and understanding from their peers: rather than being isolated, they would benefit from feeling part of a collaborative movement.
- » Regular feedback and reinforcement. They need to know that they are doing the right thing, to see their progress measured and to also receive emotional support and encouragement from mentors.

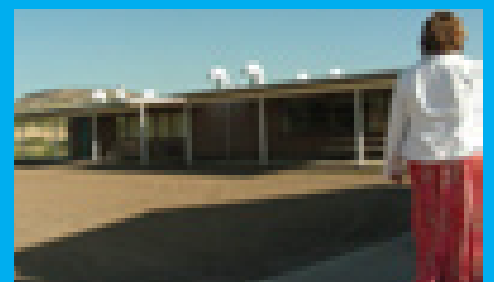
Each of these represents a design opportunity. How can we provide the right structure, support and reinforcement to help increase empowerment within the teaching profession?



“In training you’re taught to treat kids as individuals. On that job, there’s no time for ‘fluff.’”
– Ex-Teacher, San Francisco, California

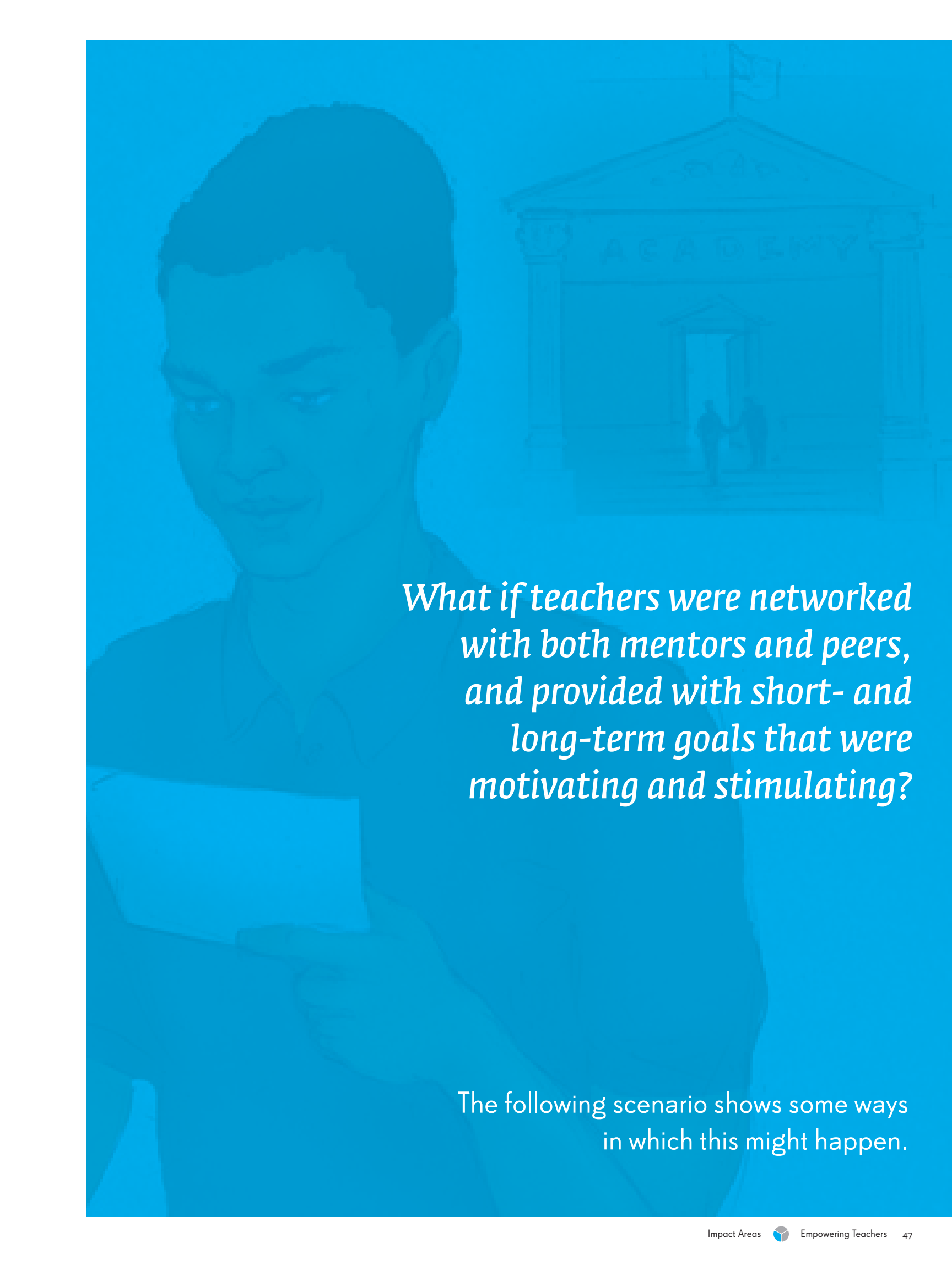


“Summer enrichment programs give selected teachers the opportunity to explore creative curriculum and themed learning with less pressure that the school year. They are given structured time to collaborate with other teachers on developing new lesson plans and aids to meet state standards.”
– Miami-Dade Learning Lab Schools, Miami, FL



“We are losing too many teachers in the first three years, a 60% loss. We can’t add anything else to their work, they need more support.”
– Teacher’s Union Leader, New Mexico

Scenario



*What if teachers were networked
with both mentors and peers,
and provided with short- and
long-term goals that were
motivating and stimulating?*

The following scenario shows some ways
in which this might happen.

Scenario

Recruiting into a desirable career

D'Marc is a bright high school student.

Before he begins his senior year he receives a postcard from a National Teaching Organization representative.

“Congratulations on your Young Leaders Award. Have you considered teaching?”

It continues, “You will have the chance to inspire hundreds of young people, plus an array of great benefits! Stop in to visit your local representative for more information.”





Scenario
Scaffolding for transitions

A few years later D’Marc is graduating from college with a degree in Education! In two months he will begin teaching at Boston’s Launch Pad School with sixty other new teachers.

He can’t wait to try out his skills under the guidance of a master teacher who offers feedback and encouragement through his first years.

He is ready to apply his skills, connect with his students and develop creative ways to incorporate the state standards for his first graders.

When he arrives he has already determined a ritual for his classroom every morning! And he finds a group of like-minded teachers who spend Wednesday evenings collaborating on their upcoming lesson plans over dinner at the school. They support each other when individual students have trouble in the classroom and when they need inspiration to face the strict teaching standards.





Scenario

Collaborating throughout the system

After two years of supported teaching at the Launch Pad School, D'Marc is now ready to work on his own in the classroom. Fortunately, he has several tools to support him. The first is a networking website just for teachers that will allow him to share ideas and advice with his cohorts, and other teachers across the country.

Also the Go-U Prescriptions system allows him to easily draw on community organizations for enrichment or remedial learning solutions for his students.

Finally there is the opportunity to present back to the Launch Pad School on an aspect of teaching in which he succeeded during his first year on his own. He will earn an extra week of pay after the school year ends to have time to reflect on his experiences and prepare the presentation. It will be videoed and distributed around the teacher network to share his insights.





Scenario

Create a scaffolding for growth

After his third year of teaching, D’Marc begins to think about next steps for his career. He loves his classroom work but is ready for a new challenge; after all, the excitement of learning every day is why he was drawn to teaching in the first place. He attends the career coaching sessions at his school and finds that he has three ways to focus his career:

Managing

becoming a leader within the school

Learning Theory

becoming a leader of other teachers

Connecting

becoming a liaison within the community

Because he grew up in this community where he now teaches, D’Marc is strongly connected here. He knows that he could really bring people together in creative ways if he takes on the Connecting role.





Solutions

A photograph of a woman in a classroom, overlaid with a blue tint. She is looking slightly to the right. In the background, there is a door with an "EMERGENCY" sign above it and a bulletin board with various papers.

for empowering teachers

Teacher Recruiting

Attracting young leaders to the teaching profession

A national effort to recruit young leaders and achievers into teaching through targeted communication and rebranding of teaching as a rewarding career that contributes richly to society.

Currently teaching is not viewed as a career choice for the best and most ambitious. It is an easy profession to enter into but difficult job day to day. Teaching requires a multitude of skills and teachers play an integral role in preparing children for learning. It is time that we made efforts toward making that career more desirable. The NCEE's "Tough Choices or Tough Times" report describes teachers as coming from the bottom third of their graduating high school classes. What would our schools look like if we employed the top third of graduates?

Features and Interactions

- » A national teaching organization sends targeted invitations to high school students who have received awards for leadership, academic success and community service. Camp counsellors and other young people who work with children are also targeted. The communication pieces provide information about the appeal of working in education and the benefits of becoming a teacher.
- » Each major city has a resource center where interested people can meet with recruiters for further information on teaching and advice on choosing a teaching school. The spaces can showcase interesting work done by school children as well as innovative ways teachers are reaching out to students.

- » Advertisements featuring the social contributions that teachers make to their communities would support the message that teaching is a desirable career.
- » This attitude toward supporting teachers is echoed by outside movements toward appreciating teachers as serving our country. Government and businesses develop ways to provide soft benefits for teachers, such as reimbursement of college fees in exchange for a commitment to work in needy schools, free passes into museums and places that are regarded as education centers, in addition to lifetime discounts on airlines, hotels, restaurants, cars, etc.

Questions to consider

- » How would we measure the positive impact of the teaching recruiting centers in order to justify their costs?
- » Who will take responsibility for the recruiting communications? Are the teachers unions the appropriate source for this effort?
- » How can we discourage burned-out teachers from presenting a bad example to their students, thus discouraging them from pursuing a teaching career?



What Can Be Done: Near Term

- » Design and distribute communication pieces to send to high school students to help them consider teaching as a career. Provide interactive activities about teaching, such as fun quizzes or questionnaires to gauge their interest and abilities to teach.
- » Create a website that offers clear information about how to take first steps toward becoming a teacher. Suggest activities, colleges and internships that help students get a feel for teaching.
- » Encourage teachers nationwide to talk with students with potential about the possibility of going into teaching.

What Can Be Done: Long Term

- » Appoint a national recruiting organization to target successful high school and college students with messages about the benefits of teaching as a career.
- » Gather resources to set up recruiting centers in major cities, staffed by retired teachers and current teachers.
- » Work with the National Ad Council to promote teaching as a social contribution.

Programs to Reference

- » The US Military invests heavily in reaching out to high school students as a recruitment technique. Their multi-channel reach includes advertising campaigns along with physical centers and outreach programs.
- » Big businesses such as HP and Google partner with colleges, attend job fairs, promote their organizations through advertisements, and have many staff recruiters making sure they get the very best candidates.

Launch Pad Schools

Supportive training grounds for new teachers

A public school that supports new teachers by offering planned time for collaboration and structured methods for feedback during their first years. This concept is an extension of the Learning Lab schools that have been inspired by SPARK Miami, and the United Way's Center for Excellence in Early Education. Students and teachers benefit from paired teachers in every classroom, master teachers as mentors, and a focus on creatively meeting state standards in their own curriculum.

Features and Interactions

- » New teachers share classroom time and feedback with experienced teachers. Formal times for discussion and collaboration are established. Formal mentoring programs assure that new teachers receive consistent praise, feedback and advice.
- » Technology classes are offered so that new teachers are prepared to take advantage of the latest systems that support communications and innovation once they leave the Launch Pad School and enter the traditional school system.
- » Teachers are invited back after their first year of teaching outside the school to present to their peers their new learnings, thus sharing knowledge

and creating a stronger network. The presentations are then recorded and made available to any teachers interested in renewing their skills.

- » A website encourages teachers to post mini biographies on a secure website in order to network, support and share ideas with other teachers across the country. The website will create a collaborative community where teachers feel connected to one another.

Mr. Williams' Day Planner
Lansford Elementary School



3pm
Meet mentor

Happy Hour with teachers
Plan journey with Principal

October **26**

New Mexico has issued state regulations to lessen the burden on teachers during their first three years. New teachers have less paper work to file and are assigned mentors from the school district.

What Can Be Done: Near Term

- » Extend the Miami-Dade Demonstration Schools to be year-round for invigorating experienced teachers and supporting new teachers.
- » Design state policies to require mentors for all new teachers, which has been already implemented in New Mexico.
- » Set up official mentoring programs that reward experienced teachers for time spent mentoring new teachers.
- » Pilot a small group of teachers who currently use an existing social networking site, such as Facebook.com to create an online group to share ideas about education and support each other.
- » Set up district or state-wide “socials” for teachers to network with each other. They would be based around different teaching techniques or topics of interest.

What Can Be Done: Long Term

- » Each state would have enough teaching positions in a Launch Pad School to offer a position to every new teacher they hire. Ideally they would have several Launch Pad Schools so that teachers in their first three years have the positions available with the Launch Pad School.
- » The government would offer benefits to teachers similar to those in the armed services, recognizing that both professions are providing a great service to our country. Benefits are offered to encourage academic achievers to become teachers.
- » Design a website for teachers across the country to share ideas and advice and generally network and support each other. The site is secure and accessible and offers multiple activities for teachers to share their thoughts on teaching.

Questions to Consider

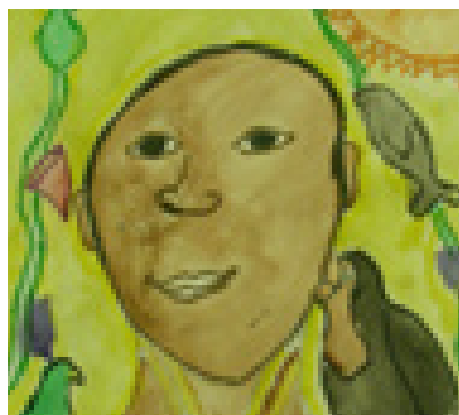
- » Can we define a business case that makes Launch Pad Schools more cost-effective than the current process of needing to retrain and rehire new teachers when the unsupported ones burn out in their first three years?
- » How do we transition new teachers from the Launch Pad School to their next assignment, without too much disruption?
- » Do we need a way to engage teachers who do not want to use the internet to connect to other teachers?
- » How do we support online connection with offline meet-ups? What role might unions be willing to take in this effort?

Teaching is a difficult job, but a rewarding one. We should create systems that support new teachers so that they can make it through to experience the benefits. The first three years of teaching are the toughest. Teachers are more engaged when mentoring and collaboration are incorporated into their workday, it is about more than additional salary. Supporting these teachers in sheltered environments allow them to have hands-on guidance during their first years.

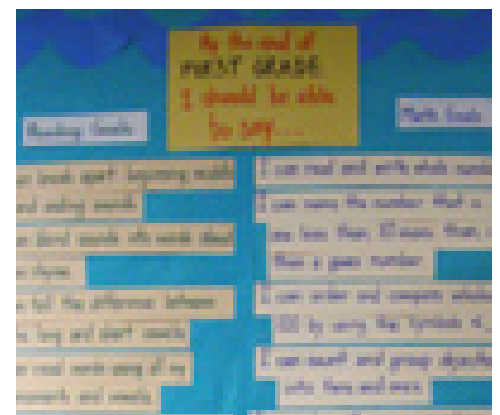
Once young teachers leave the Launch Pad Schools, they use Teacher Facebook and other online collaboration tools to stay in touch with their cohorts and to find mentors who match their teaching perspective.

Programs to Reference

- » Summer Demonstration Schools in Miami are working well to empower teachers to feel in control of the curriculum, giving them time they don't have during the school year to be creative.
- » New Mexico has issued state regulations to lessen the burden on teachers during their first three years. New teachers have less paper work to file and are assigned mentors from the school district.
- » Facebook.com is currently serving to connect thousands of people to others like them for online sharing. Basic profile information is input optionally and connections are discovered based on what people use to describe their interests and activities.
- » Teaching hospitals help develop new teachers through support in a real-world, applied context. In teaching hospitals, the patients are aware that their staff are in a learning mode, and often choose these hospitals for that reason.



"This work is so difficult day to day, but I really feel like I'm part of a team. Our principal meets with me everyday to help."
– Teacher, Oakland, California



"I had a lot of support from Teach for America. We had workshops and lectures and I had a group of people I could talk through things with. But this school has nothing. I can't face that everyday."
– Teach for America Teacher, San Jose, California

Go-U Prescriptions

Matching individual student needs to community resources

A software database that facilitates connections between community learning resources and teachers who seek additional help for students. Provides those community resources as free “prescriptions” from teachers to individual students. Teachers who have students who could benefit from one-on-one sessions with education volunteers, enter requests into the database. Teachers have trackable evidence that they have taken extra steps to help students who are struggling or are in need of enrichment.

Features and Interactions

» The software database creates a broad network of partners who can provide learning experiences that supplement classroom-based education. Community organizations are guided through a process of presenting their offerings in a way that is most accessible to teachers, helping both parties connect in more valuable ways.

» For the community organizations, the software would provide them with details around school curriculum and state standards so that they have the opportunity to align their offerings to support what teachers in the classroom really need. They would also have to pass through security and liability screenings and specify whether they can

offer important resources like in-school-visits or transportation.

» The software database could also act as a way to pull individual volunteers together to offer their resources. They could describe what they offer, pass security clearances and be paired with students to tutor.

» The school would have a place to present its mission and philosophy to volunteers to assure they are always aligned with their goals.

» Teachers could provide descriptions of their curricula so that volunteers can provide extra help in context.



Teachers often don't have time to, and aren't measured on providing enrichment for students that are excelling

What Can Be Done: Near Term

- » Use existing media to help schools reach out to community members. Redesign existing web sites, newspapers and announcements to encourage community resources to specify their offerings for meeting the needs of individual students through one-on-one education programs.
- » Encourage community resources to reposition their offerings as fun privileges for chosen students, whether extra help or enrichment. The 826 Valencia program uses themes such as being a "Pirate Supply Store" or a "Super Hero Store" to add a fun facade its the tutoring centers. See www.826Valencia.org

What Can Be Done: Long Term

- » Fund a web group to create a national, unified system for local schools to plug into, so that one design supports all of the schools. This way national organizations can reach out to individual schools as well. Announce the service to schools and community organizations and offer incentives for the first wave of volunteers.

Questions to Consider

- » How do we validate the educational value of the individual programs that offer their services to the schools before aligning them to students?
- » How do we make the programs accessible to students during and after school?

Teachers and schools are not able to address the individual needs of each student, though they are often best placed to identify them. Many community organizations already exist to provide tutoring, activities and growth experiences outside of the classroom. This online service would give the teacher a tool to refer students to these services.

Additionally, with No Child Left Behind, most school resources are directed to students who are failing. This solution would provide a way for teachers to provide extra learning opportunities to the students who are excelling.

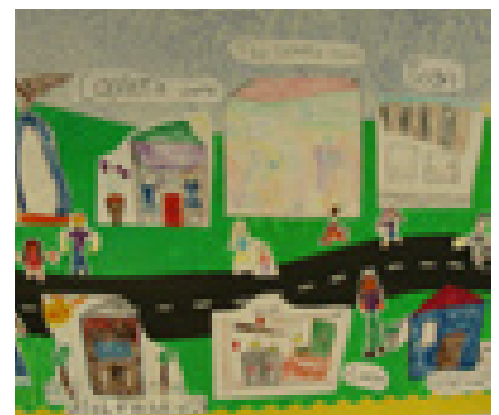
Schools take this burden upon themselves now by networking through friends and family to find resources. There are few electronic systems supporting this now.

Programs to Reference

- » Mothers clubs often have tools to connect parents to resources in the community, whether it is available as an online database or with a community liaison.
- » Often schools bring in community volunteers. While this program is about using resources outside of the school, looking at what kind of resources schools bring in will help reveal gaps in what is taught in school.



"Reading, reading, reading, math. It's all lessons all day. I just don't have enough help in the classroom to be able to spend time with the individual students that need help."
- Teacher, Oakland, California



"Outside resources could show students the resources that are in their own community. It makes the lessons more real."
- Teacher, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Teacher Pathways

Challenging and engaging teachers throughout their careers

A formal system within the public schools that offers multiple, equally viable career paths for teachers to support their varied talents and aspirations. It must offer structured, transparent and transferable support along those paths from the school district and the school leaders. It would include tools, programs, and coaching relationships that offer feedback and guide teachers through their entire career.

Features and Interactions

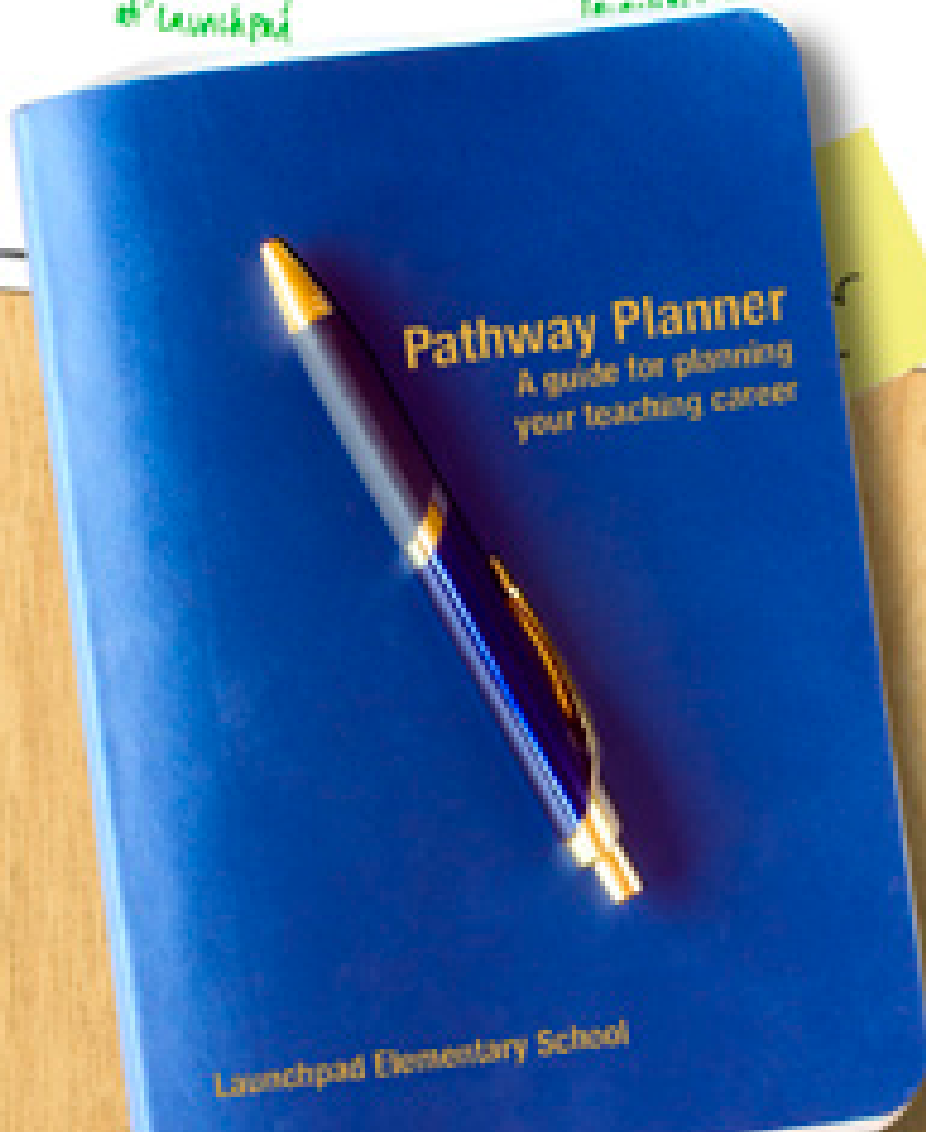
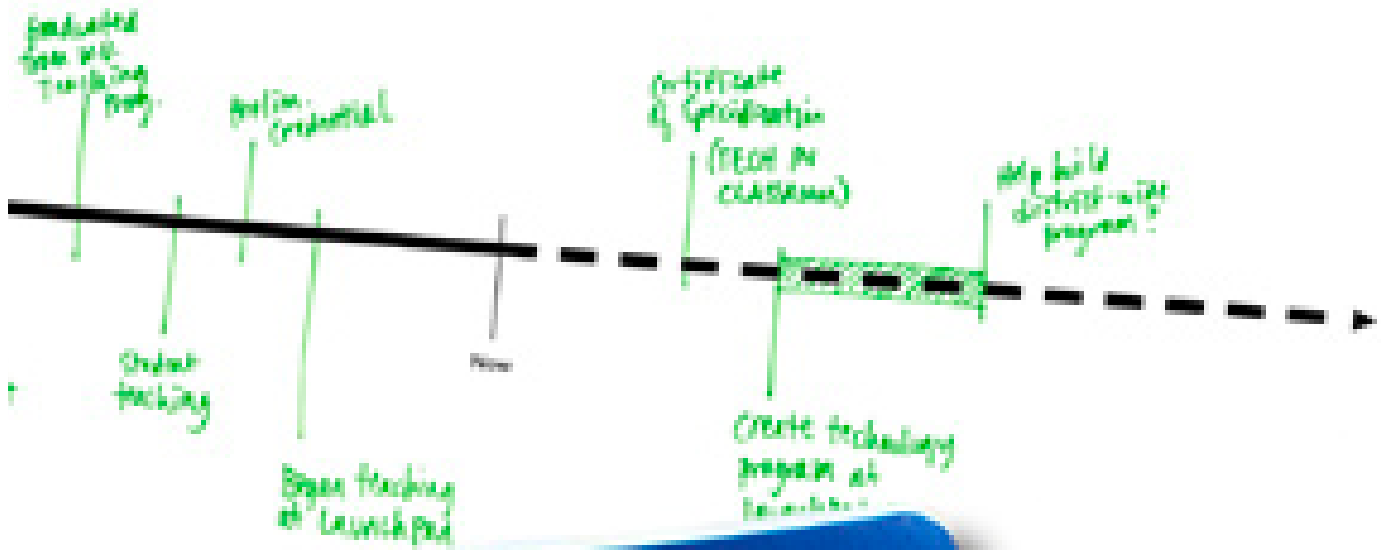
- » Restructure schools to use teacher expertise to improve the quality of education. Create room for additional teachers whose task it is to improve the abilities of all other teachers in the school. New teachers improve more rapidly because they have expert teachers as mentors.
- » Teachers excel because they have clear paths for growth that build on their own areas of interest.
- » Great teachers stay engaged because they see they will be rewarded for their skills.
- » School management is a growth path only for those who want to excel at operations.
- » Summer programs are established to offer opportunities for teachers to increase their

knowledge of a variety of areas, supporting their career path. Summer internships with corporations, community service and government positions and principal-in-training opportunities are a few of the options.

- » Connection to industry also serves to offer new challenges and expansion of interests for teachers throughout their career. Therefore teachers are encouraged to seek out “internships” in corporations during their summer breaks in order to learn real world applications of the things that they teach.

Worksheet 2.3 Past, present and future

What patterns does your past reveal about your future?
What are some ideas you have about what you could do or accomplish
in the future? Use this worksheet to explore some different ideas.
We can use the worksheet in your conversations with your class.



Teachers require paths to success that align with their passions

What Can Be Done: Near Term

- » For a school, try pairing up teachers as “buddies”. For this year, and ask them to track the kinds of things that they ask each other for advice about.
- » Reward experienced teachers for their time spent mentoring younger teachers.
- » Develop career growth plans with all teachers so that they feel there is value in becoming a committed teacher.
- » Create positions in schools for master teachers.

What Can Be Done: Long Term

- » Treat teachers like other professional workers and define clear achievement plans over their careers. Create positions in schools for “management” type positions where master teachers advise younger teachers.

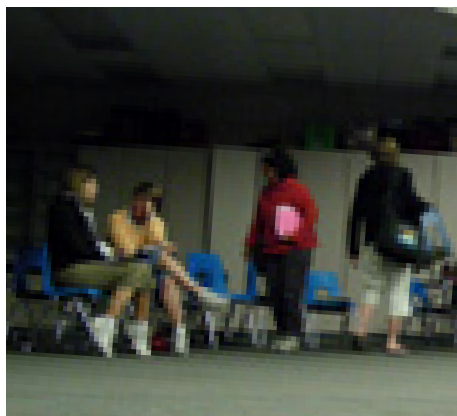
Questions to Consider

- » How could the burden of the cost be taken away from the schools?
- » Could the unions become a channel for coaching?
- » How might this map to compensation? How to make teaching compensation equal to administration?
- » How could master teachers become an accepted and expected part of the culture of teaching?

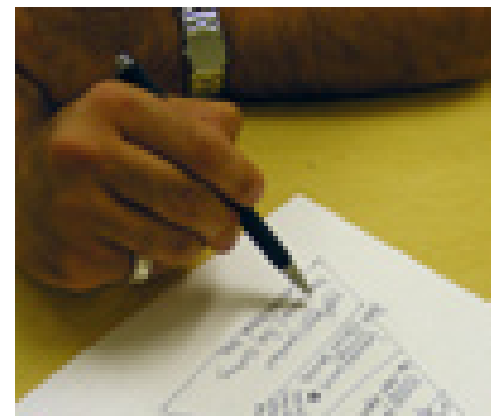
There are limited growth opportunities for ambitious teachers, currently. Those with leadership skills are drawn out of the classroom to become administrators, but their skills and interests do not necessarily align with the requirements of a principal or superintendent, particularly the operational tasks. Educators who become administrators sometimes find themselves needing to exercise business and management skills they did not study and are left with little time for the teaching and learning tasks that they are passionate about.

Programs to Reference

- » New Mexico has implemented a Master Teacher level to reward teachers who pursue the highest academic achievements, though this does not come with a leadership/mentorship aspect to their current job.
- » Several schools in Ohio have made space in their budget and teaching curriculum for Master Teachers who have the job of observing and guiding newer teachers. This has been successful in rewarding the stellar teachers as well as supporting the newer teachers.
- » Many professional careers have paths and tracking.
- » University faculty have strict tiered levels (associate professor, professor, full professor...). Criteria for these positions are clear, and are often evaluated through peer review.



"I don't have time to focus on the curriculum things that I love, I have to spend too much time running PR for the community, managing the budgets and worrying about the school board."
– Superintendent, Northern California



"I love teaching. But I don't know if I'll be doing it for too much longer. It's too hard to live on a teacher's salary here, so I may have to try a different field."
– Teacher, Hayward, California



Connecting Schools

Providing structures to facilitate school-community connection

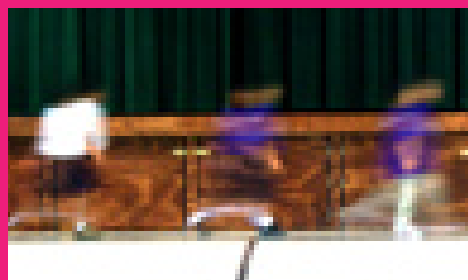
Most often by accident than by design, many schools are sending isolating signals. The need for security has resulted in grim, jail-like buildings that actively exclude the community. In addition, the concern over child-predators has created high barriers of paperwork to be dealt with before adults can help in the classroom. While these protective systems are valuable, they can also be launching points for better design solutions that work alongside security to build connections between the community and the school – integrating the child’s world with her primary place of learning.

We see this connection happening through different levels of interaction and emotion. Each level has value, but produces different effects when enacted in the world. Ideally, schools would strive toward the richest levels to create lasting, fulfilling connections.

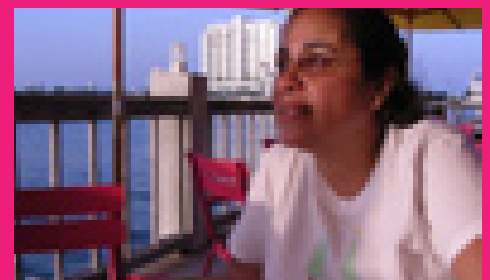
Levels of Interaction:



“Especially in the early years, if there could be more spaces in the school where parents are allowed—not just volunteers. Why not have more places for parents?”
– Parent, Canton, Ohio




“I help families with whatever they need: clothes, rent, immigration, food. I am a bridge between the parents and the school. It is worth it because it is impossible to do your job as a teacher if the children are not supported at home.”
– Family Resource Coordinator,
Albuquerque, New Mexico



“I don't pay for something if someone else [in the community] can. Partnership always spreads the cost burden.”
– Community Leader, Miami, Florida

Scenario



*What if schools became
welcoming and vibrant hubs
of the community?*

The following scenario shows some ways
in which this might happen.

Scenario

Schools are open to conversation with the community

Gabriel, 33, a doctor, has just moved to a new neighborhood. He is looking for a place to sit and connect his laptop to the internet. Before heading to the local coffee shop he remembers the postcard he received from a local public school stating that they are now offering many services to their community, including free wireless. He finds he can log on from home and learns a bit about his neighborhood school. The next time he is out he walks by to check it out.

He immediately sees that this school is different than the ones he grew up with.

This one has an open yard in front with benches and tables. Several people are already sitting there working or playing with young children.





Scenario

Schools have services to offer to the community

Gabriel is surprised by the school's vibrancy on a Saturday. There are families coming in and out of the medical clinic. Young children are visiting the school's library because the hours have been extended. There is even a large family picnic happening in a pavilion at the far end of the grounds.

The community relies on the school as a resource and they feel connected to it.

On the wall, Gabriel sees a notice about ESL classes that are being offered in the evenings and looks forward to telling his mother about them. Maybe she would even take the computer class held in the school's computer lab. And they will both attend a lecture on managing a budget, to be given by the school's principal.





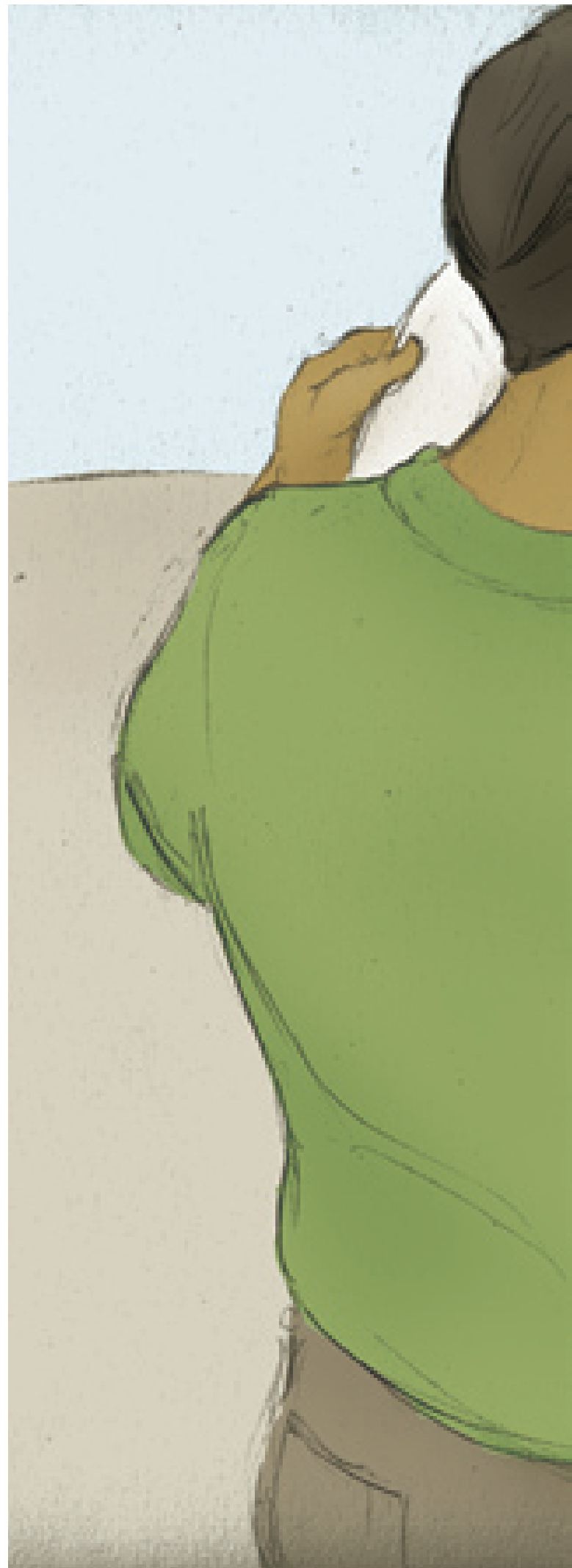
Scenario

School business is transparent

Mrs. Domingo, principal of Villa Elementary School, values her chance to reach out and share her school's goals and decisions to the community.

She uses a website and a column in the local newspaper to talk to the community about the philosophy she takes in running Villa.

She also find that now that she has a chance to explain the budget, hiring and policies in clear, jargon-free terms, fewer people stop her in the market to question her decisions.





Scenario

Schools inspire people to contribute

The liaison to the community makes time in her busy schedule to ask for help from the community. She solicits requests from the teachers and other staff. She knows that this benefits her students, benefits the people around her, and positions her school as an essential part of the community. This is important when voting time rolls around.

The school's website acts as a portal to a database that matches school needs with volunteers in the community.

She imagines these opportunities in three ways: those that directly help to educate the students, those that help her maintain the school, and those that bring people together in the community so that they feel more connected to the school.





Scenario

Community members connect

Gabriel sees the school's website every time he connects to the free wireless internet. After several months of using the school as a place for learning, connecting with neighbors and working in the garden to relax, he realizes that he can help out in the classroom with a lesson on nutrition. He will combine it with a tour of the school's garden that he has grown to love.

On any given day he can see many other people from the community giving their time and expertise to the school and its many services.

He feels strongly connected to this little school even though it will be several years before he has children of his own.

But he looks forward to them attending Villa and working alongside him in the garden.





Solutions



for connecting schools

Welcoming Architecture

Sending inviting signals to the community

The architecture of a school should project an open and welcoming environment, one that seeks to create connections to its community. It must still offer an inner structure that is safe and secure and accessible only to students and authorized adults, while an outer area buffers that inner security and is used by the public after school hours.

Features and Interactions

» The school is structured as three concentric rings. The innermost ring is the most secure, where students and teachers are located. The middle ring is designed for use by the public, but only after school hours. The outer ring is a public park area that surrounds the school, offering spaces for community gatherings and activities.

» The building itself is designed with children's comfort in mind. Lighting and materials are soft to dampen sound and make the building feel warm. Hallways are softened with greenery and artwork from students. Windows and doors are built for access by young children.

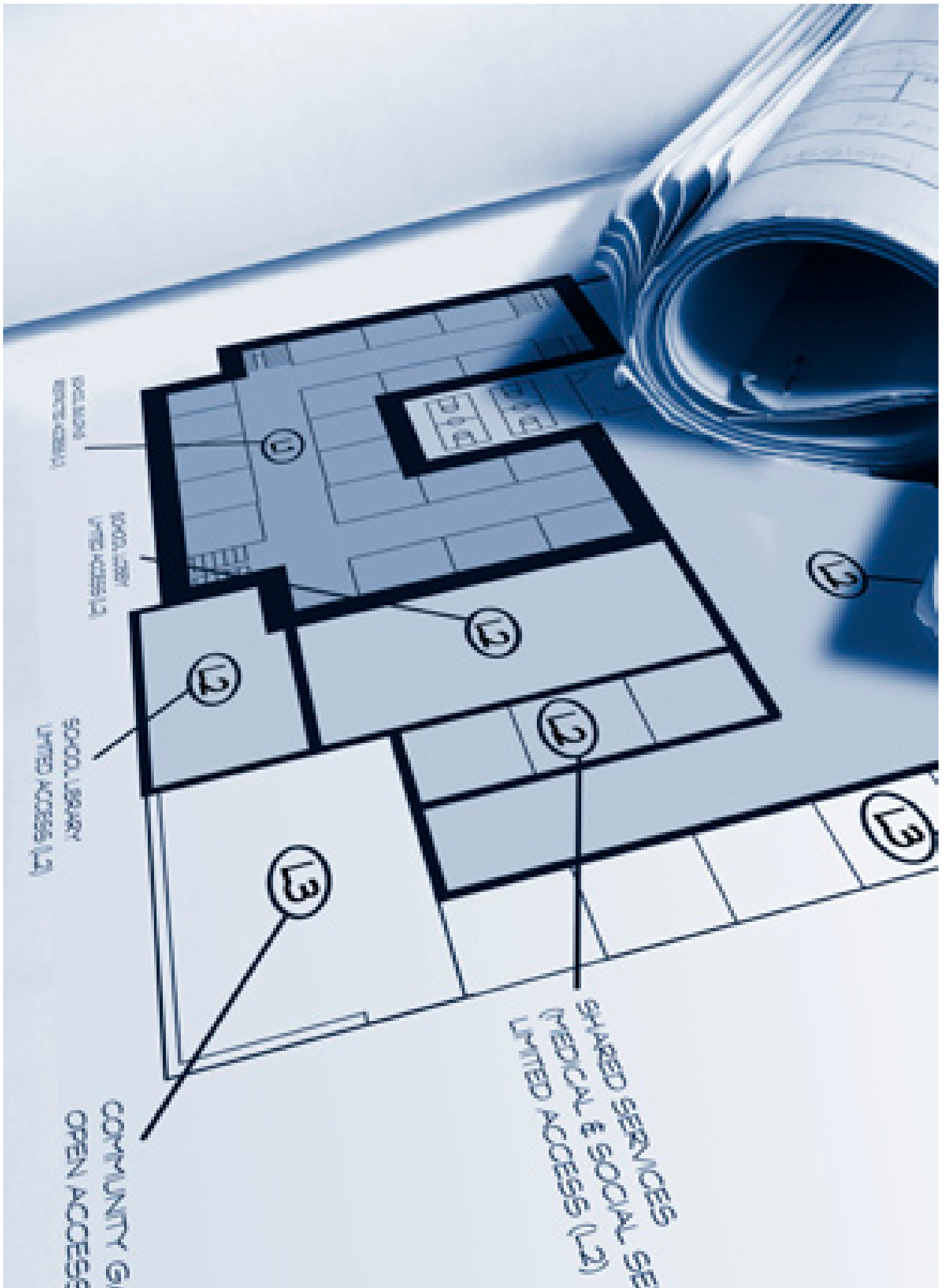
» Public WiFi access is available to the greater community, but they are presented with the school's

information site first, with mission statement, communication from the principal and volunteer opportunities

» The auditorium or other large area becomes a space for celebrations and meetings. A dedicated liaison, a non-education based role sponsored by the city, manages contracts with families and community service groups along with the contracts with businesses.

» A public vegetable garden allows people from the community to get their hands dirty and grow something, which is rewarding for their mental and physical well-being. People come together and work together, forming social connections. They feel more connected to the school as a result. Students

can learn about science through the plants.



Schools have become bland, even harsh environments for outsiders

What Can Be Done: Near Term

- » Pilot architecture solutions with schools that are currently being rebuilt.
- » Begin with small steps: adding sheltered seating areas and tables for work.
- » Open the school's library after school, then on weekends.
- » Encourage information access by providing free wireless internet access.
- » Create a website that describes the school's mission and goals. Invite the community to learn more.
- » Design security devices so that only the most central school areas are secured, while other, less controlled areas are open to the public.
- » Change legal permissions so that school spaces can be open to public groups but cannot be held liable for the group's activities.

What Can Be Done: Long Term

- » Schools hire Operations Experts as leaders in order to optimize the management of the school employment, public relations, fundraising and facilities systems.
- » Architects are encouraged to research the value of bringing community resources into the school and finding ways to balance that connection to the community with the safety needed within the school architecture.

Questions to Consider

- » How do we find ideal ways to balance security areas in ways that are completely safe for children but open and welcoming to the public?
- » What are the guidelines that determine the types of businesses that can rent space at the school: only those that are most beneficial to a school community?
- » How to set liability and insurance contracts so that schools cannot be held responsible for accidents that happen while public groups are using school spaces after hours?

Communities are rich resources for schools, but schools are often difficult to permeate, which can turn off volunteers, taxpayers and parents. In order to fully take advantage of the available time and knowledge from people outside of the school, we should make the schools as welcoming as possible, so as to draw in those resources.

Programs to Reference

- » Contemporary hospital design seeks to balance the “hard” needs of patients and staff (eg: health and safety) with softer emotional needs.
- » Places like Starbucks have had massive engagement and success by creating a comfortable gathering spot for people, a “third place.”
- » Office parks will often have different levels of access available. For instance, lobby and auditorium spaces might be open to the public, while work spaces and conference rooms are often through a layer of security, such as keys or electronic fobs.



“These are the schools we’re sending them to [shows photograph of a school with a chain link fence and concrete buildings], the Hannibal Lecter School... There’s obviously a notion here that if you let the inmates of the school out, they’ll snatch a motorist off the streets.”
– James Howard Kunstler, TED Conference Speech



“We have a lot of families who have just moved to the area. We found that if we gave them a place to gather, they would meet each other and help each other and feel more comfortable.”
– Parent Coordinator, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Embedded Services

Essential services conveniently available on school grounds

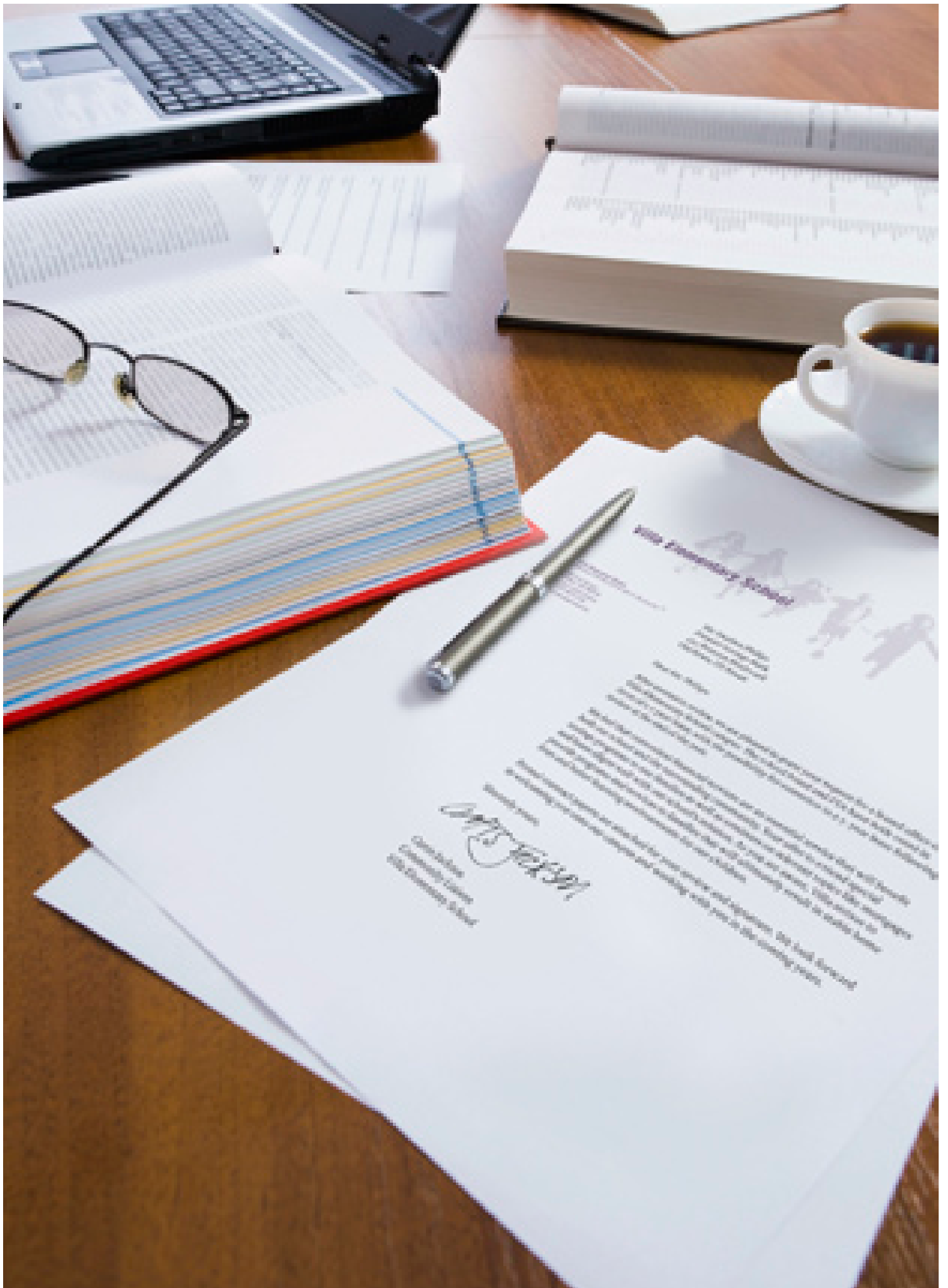
Schools know that they must take care of the most basic needs of their students first, before learning can begin. Let's extend that to the basic needs of the community, so that individuals have the ability to help with the higher level of needs of the school. Extrapolating the beliefs of SPARK New Mexico's Joining Hands Network, schools would offer the social services needed to raise healthy children in a healthy and enriched community.

Features and Interactions

» Schools would have spaces and resources dedicated to offering needed services to their community members:

- Family clinic (doctors and dentists)
- Social Services Counselors
- Computer Lab
- Public WiFi
- ESL
- Parenting Advice
- Library is open on weekends and after school
- Spaces for celebrations, family and cultural events, community service groups
- Lectures and other learning opportunities for the community at large

» A community liaison position oversees the managing of these services. This position can be a support staff person from the municipality, who is located at the school, this way bridging the needs of both parties. Eventually, it would be a larger goal to promote teachers in to this position and combine it with policy and public relations outreach. This would be a leadership position in which the connection to the community would be valued and beneficial to the school.



Community Schools in Albuquerque offer classes to parents. They improve their child's education by learning English, become more involved with the school, and spend more time with their children.

What Can Be Done: Near Term

- » Offer classes to the greater community to improve the community's connection with the school.
- » Partner with local educational groups or find community volunteers to run courses for parents in the evenings, or during the school day while kids are being taken care of.
- » Open the school library to the public after school and weekends to encourage more reading and more access to the school.
- » Work around liability concerns with clear contracts and deposits, so that community groups and families can rent the school spaces on weekends.

What Can Be Done: Long Term

- » Schools become Community Centers. Social services are offered through public schools. Municipalities should combine funding for school renovations with funding for community centers in order to merge the two purposes.
- » Schools provide all of the basic social services for families in need. Government organizations set up and support every school in providing basic services.
- » The community liaison position could pay for itself through revenue of supporting the services at the school. Rent from businesses and events using the space as well as funding from the government to offer the services on site.

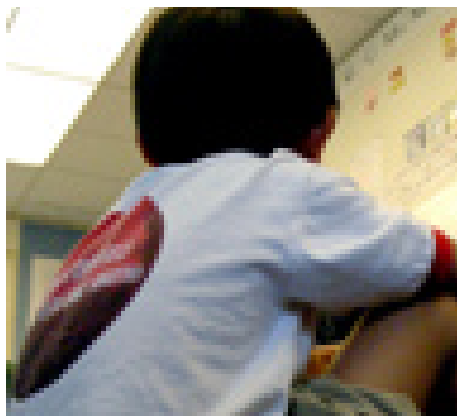
Questions to Consider

- » What are the most fundamental services that families need?
- » How can governments work with schools to provide service centers?
- » What other organizations might be willing to facilitate next steps so it doesn't become the core responsibility of the school to organize the services?
- » What current rules about what can happen on school grounds would need to be broken or rewritten?

Schools are the center of every community. Most people in a community touch the school at some point, therefore, offering social services that provide help for children and the community make the school and the community stronger together. The infrastructure of the school is already there; bringing in the resources is the next step.

Programs to Reference

- » HeadStart currently offers this to families of young children, but the services stop when the children reach elementary school, whether the family is ready or not.
- » Community Schools in Albuquerque offer classes to parents, who are able to improve their child's education by learning English, becoming more involved with the school, and spending more time with their children.
- » Native American Reservation schools in New Mexico offer a wealth of services to their community members because they are often the only resources in the rural communities.
- » Community Centers are public buildings that rent out their spaces for different purposes, bringing people together from across the community.
- » Large companies, such as Yahoo! and Oracle, offer services such as dry cleaning, car washing, flower delivery, gym facilities, and day care, to employees in their large corporate headquarters.



"It is difficult for a child to learn when they are coming to school hungry or unhealthy."
–Teacher, Oakland, California



"It feels really good when we can offer things to our community. We become a community school and we build partnerships."
–Principal, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Community Dialogue Website

Facilitates transparent communication between school and community

A national website that is localized and customized for each community, presented in a clear and accessible way as a gateway for people to engage with the school. It symbolizes transparency and openness, demonstrating that schools are welcoming and a vital part of the community. This transparency will build trust and invite conversation and contribution.

Features and Interactions

- » A school website that presents the philosophy and goals of the school, describes the decisions and budgeting and offers a supporting database that connects requests from schools with offerings from the community.
- » The principal, community liaison or public relations person present the major decisions of the school to the community in a clear and conversational way—translating them from the normal policy-driven communication style of official business.
- » The liaison encourages teachers to post questions and ideas about projects to the community so that experts in the community can answer questions and expand on lesson ideas.

- » Teachers post stories of students and their work in order to allow the community to see the wonderful things that are happening in school.
- » Teachers post requests for people to come talk to classes, giving lessons on their jobs and community, or teaching fun, practical skills in order to offer holistic education in a time where education is becoming more and more narrow. Also, they post ideas for projects and curricula, soliciting ideas and answers from the community experts.
- » Teachers and administrators can post requests for supplies to be purchased and for volunteer opportunities throughout the school.
- » A community liaison can act as a conduit for gathering input from people in the community who

do not use computers, entering in their information and connecting them with potential opportunities for volunteering.

- » Once a volunteer is signed up on the system, the website takes them through the process of contributing to the classroom. They must pass a security clearance before entering the classroom. They can also read up on the state requirements for each class and the classroom curriculum in order to prepare their lessons to the students. Advice on teaching to different age groups is also available.



School administrators regret that they need to spend a lot of time defending their decisions to the public

What Can Be Done: Near Term

- » Schools host a volunteer fair where the school invites people to come to the school to share what they can do.
- » Systematize the process of recruiting volunteers. Post opportunities for volunteering at the school and in the classrooms on the school's website and in the newspaper.
- » Ask parents to fill in a survey about the things they know and do, and things they would be interested in contributing. Ask if they would share their skills with other classes as well. Compile that into a spreadsheet. This is an early and easy database.

What Can Be Done: Long Term

- » Communities see education as the responsibility of everyone. It is expected that community members spend time volunteering in schools.
- » There is one website which everyone in the United States uses to learn ways to participate in public education. A non-profit organization could build the website and host it. All schools should have access to it through that organization. Schools can customize their pages.

Questions to Consider

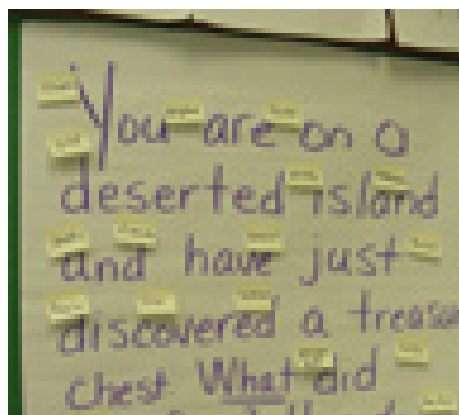
- » How can we easily collect contributions from people who do not have access to a computer?
- » How can we make sure that all volunteers pass the right security clearances?

There are a wealth of resources available in most communities, but bringing them into the school requires confronting many hurdles. Creating a systematized structure for connecting community resources with teacher needs simplifies the process for everyone, resulting in an engaged community and a richer school.

Schools today do this 'by hand'. Teachers and administrators use word of mouth and face-to-face solicitation to find the resources they need.

Programs to Reference

- » Some national websites have begun to work toward this solution: SchoolMatters.org and Gradeschools.net
- » Kiva.org is a website that connects small entrepreneurs in the developing world with individuals who are willing to lend money as a social investment. It has been very successful in connecting people who want to do good with their money.



"There are so many things I need to do to tie to the state curriculum that I don't have time to be creative with the other things my kids should be learning."
– Teacher, Miami, Florida



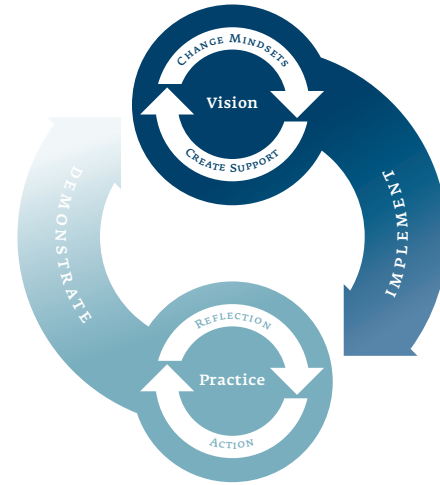
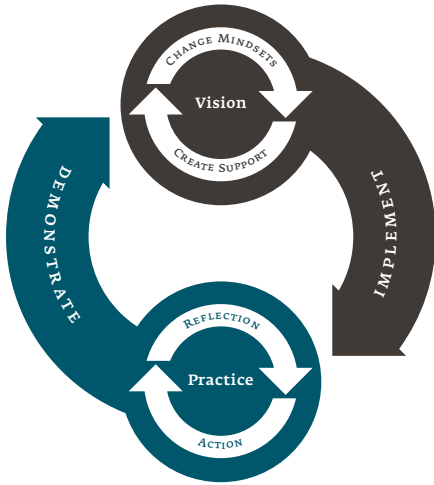
"We had been counting newsletters and numbers of meetings; we never asked if we were doing any good or if we were helpful. We were on 'send' all the time."
– School Board Member, Montgomery, Virginia

A Model for Scaling Solutions



In our research we observed several movements toward change in schools. This model describes the two key ways in which we saw those changes happening, depending on the type of leader, the scope of the challenges, and the resources at hand. From this, we developed a framework to show how Top Down and Bottom Up change influence each other and work together to create significant changes in a complex system. We have used that framework to explore opportunities for scaling the solutions that we've described in this book.

A Model For Scaling Solutions



Top Down Influence

Top down change begins with a vision, and when it is effective the focus is first on changing mindsets and creating support so that the vision can be implemented. For education this is often about setting permissions so that others in the system may also change. After permission has been established and supported, the people on the ground can take action, and in a healthy system they have time for reflection and iteration, and their demonstration informs and improves the original vision.

We observed this type of change through SPARK Miami's connection with the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation. With a dynamic leader who is well connected to the community, David Lawrence, the Miami-Dade district has shifted its attitude toward early childhood education, now voting for initiatives that support quality education for all children. Because the foundation has been able to change the mindset of their community they have the permission and support needed from the community to implement solutions in many areas of early education.

Bottom Up Influence

The second form of change is bottom up, and it begins with ideas put into practice. This type of change is more common and more agile because it does not depend on the influence of people in positions of power in order to be set in motion. These ideas start small; one passionate group of people can have an idea and take action. That group reflects and iterates in order to refine. After proving the success of their idea, they can scale their solution by demonstrating its benefits to people of influence in order to create support and change minds. Once they have created support other groups will have permission and resources to implement and take action.

The SPARK Ohio group, through the Sisters of Charity of Canton, Ohio, has taken this approach to improving early childhood education in the state of Ohio. They began a Parent Partners program in two cities, with the resources to serve a portion of the population. Over several years they measured and recorded the improvement in school readiness for children whose caregivers participated in the program. With those proven successes they won the attention of the state board of education as well as other cities around them. Now their solution is scaling in two directions, first through the other cities that will work with the Sisters of Charity to support their own Parent Partner programs, as well as through informing and influencing the state legislature on the importance of this program on preparing children for school.

Start with a Vision: National Support for Economy of Scale

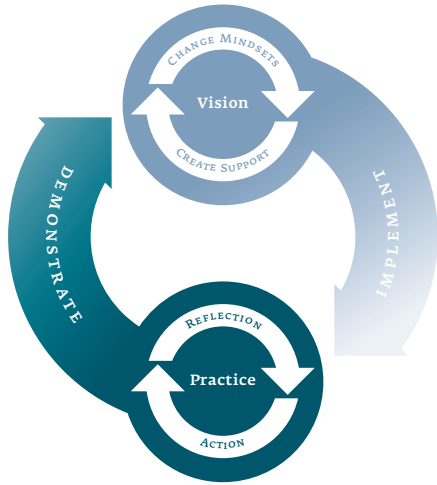
As we think about the solutions proposed in this book we can map their process of implementation onto the diagram for scaling solutions. There are three solutions that would benefit most from private or public national support. These ideas would be implemented most successfully if one entity took on creating a nationwide solution that could be localized by the individual schools or municipalities. This would save a great deal of implementation resources if individual groups were able to avoid spending time and money replicating efforts.

These nation-wide solutions include:

- » Zero8 Toy Accreditation
- » Parent Relationship Software
- » Community in Education Database

We see exceptional opportunities for foundations such as the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to support these types of solutions through:

- » Demonstration: provide tools for people on the ground to measure, record and prove the value of their solutions. Give them a voice and a chance to present their ideas to people of influence.
- » Fund Design and Development: create the nationwide systems that will be implemented individually across the country.
- » Offer expertise: advise smaller groups on navigating the system of change, from creating a vision and gathering support to taking action and demonstrating success.



Begin with Practice: National Support for Government Influence

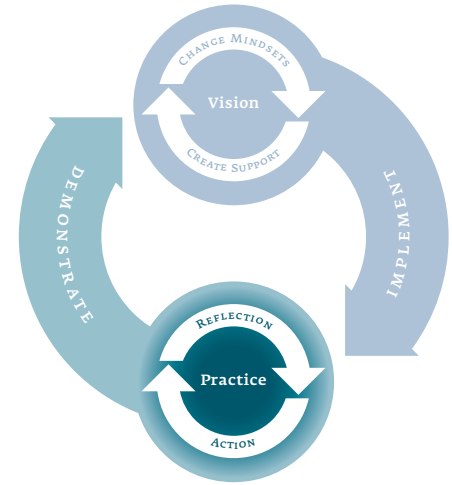
There is a set of solutions that would be most effective if there was national support from government legislation, because the solutions require a change in approach, mindset and financial support. Schools will need a level of permission from leadership to make the large-scale changes to move toward the solution’s vision of the future. But government will not be likely to offer support at a national level until they can be sure that the solutions have been proven to demonstrate success. For this reason, scaling these solutions will require brave experimenters to begin with practice in order to demonstrate success to the government. Fortunately, there are examples of several of these solutions already in place in innovative school districts across the country. We have observed Ohio’s Parent Partners, Miami’s Demonstration Schools and New Mexico’s teacher career paths already making strides toward proving that these ideas offer pathways to success for early education.

The solutions that require demonstration before garnering national support are:

- » Zero8 Coaches
- » Launch Pad Schools
- » Go-U Prescriptions
- » Teacher Pathways

We see opportunities for foundations such as the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to continue to support scalable solutions from the ground up:

- » Support Practice: discover and fund innovative approaches to improving quality in early childhood education.
- » Support Demonstration: provide tools for people on the ground to measure, record and prove the value of their solutions.
- » Inform and Influence Policy: create opportunities for policy makers and people of influence to learn about and understand the solutions that work to improve early childhood education.



Begin with Practice: Local Support for Community Change

There are some solutions that can be implemented and managed by their community and do not need to scale across the country. These solutions directly benefit their community, therefore strategies for investing should be tailored to and directed toward the people of influence in their community so that the community members take responsibility for improving education. These processes for implementation can remain in the action and reflection space in order to create change.

The solutions that communities can implement on their own are:

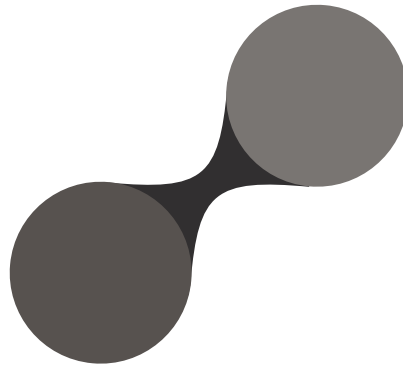
- » Community Services in Schools
- » Welcoming Open Architecture
- » Schools as Vibrant Hubs

National foundations such as the W.K. Kellogg Foundation can play a significant role here in helping innovative community members make a compelling presentation to motivate their peers and leaders:

- » Support individual, Ready Communities: while the solutions will directly benefit the communities, most do not have the resources to implement them and need outside funding and guidance.
- » Collect Best Practices: a national resource is needed to help the individual movements implement these ideas in the most effective way.
- » Converge and Network Resources: helping to connect the community needs together would make the individual community efforts stronger.

Design Principles

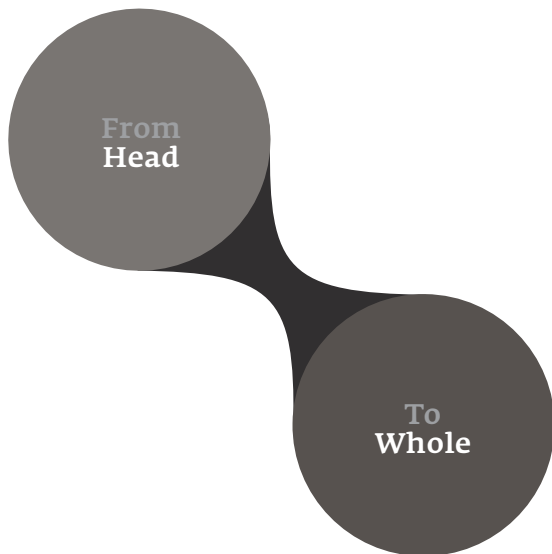
Realigning the System



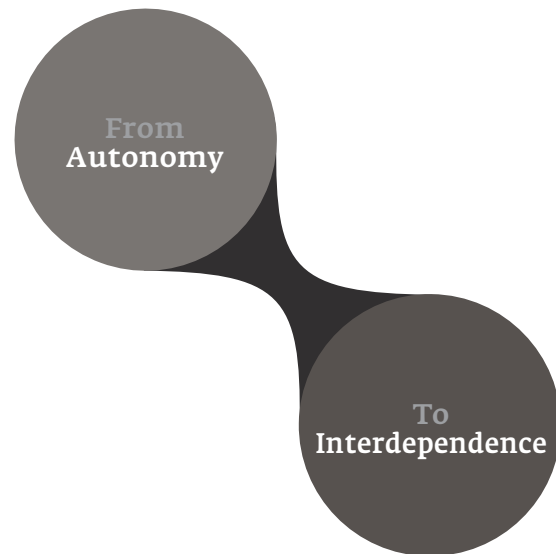
This section is designed as a series of jumping-off points for brainstorming for large scale change. Here, we frame up the big challenges, by examining the misalignments that exist between the education system, and the state of contemporary society. Schools today are designed for yesterday. What if we focused on the reality of children, caregivers and teachers of today, and designed public schools in a user-centered way?

We used eight design principles to inspire and focus our solutions. We believe they will be useful to other innovators who work on creative solutions in the school system.

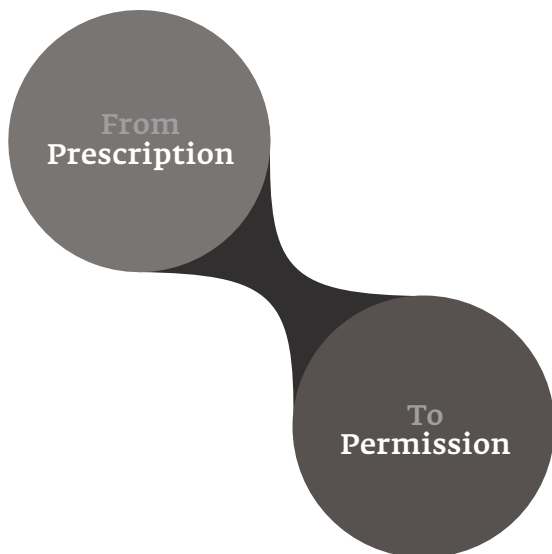
Design Principles



Because academic skills are easier to measure, they are currently over-emphasized in early education, when whole child learning is most important. Educators know the value of play, and we imagine solutions that allow children to learn the range of skills that are essential for development.



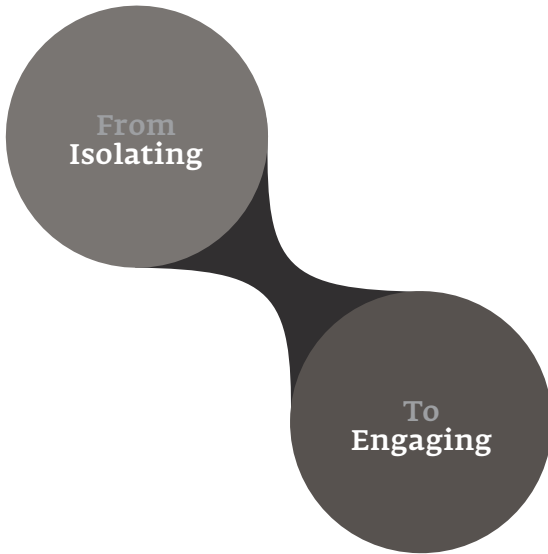
Classroom structures often place teachers in a position of isolation from their peers and parents. Schools are structured in the same way, preventing rich connections with community leaders, experts and volunteers. Our solutions seek to create interdependence that builds on the talents of all of the people invested in the system.



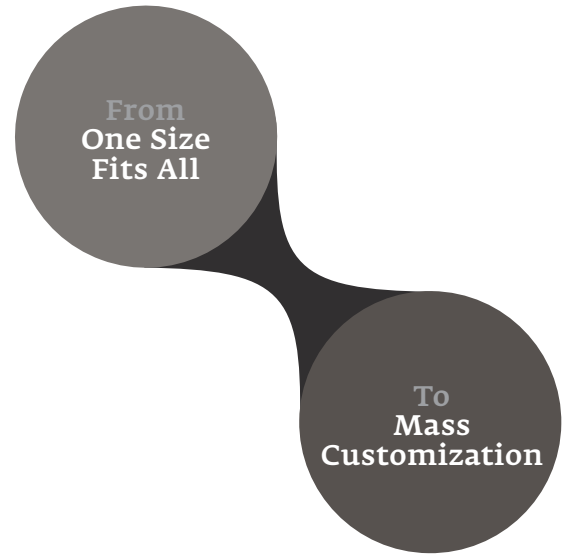
Education seems dominated by top-down prescription in order to control quality, but this removes the ability for good teachers to use their creative skills. We look for solutions that create structure and support teachers but leave room for freedom and interpretation.



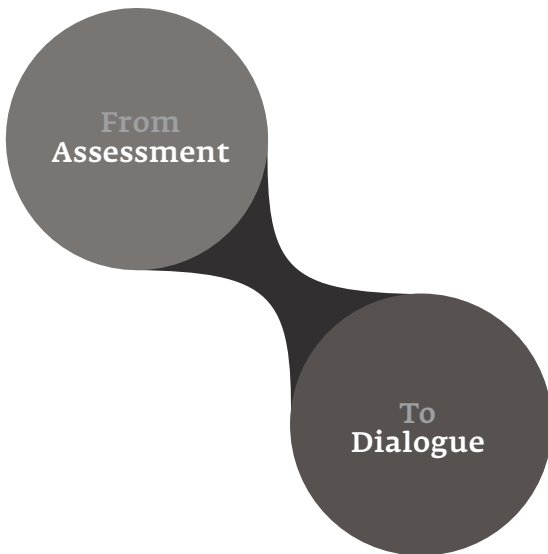
School structures are designed to do the good work of providing education for children, but the operations of a school, its facilities and employees needs burden school administrators most of whom are often not trained in running a business. We seek solutions that focus on assuring that schools run well so that educators have energy to focus on education.



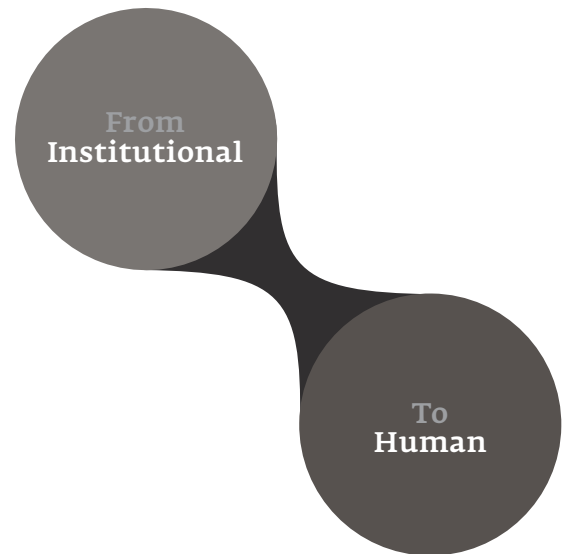
Schools are set up to protect children, effectively isolating them from their surroundings and preventing the community from approaching and engaging in the school. We see a future where schools invite parents and community members to support and participate in education.



Teachers know that every child learns differently, but the current school system is set up to provide every child with the same learning experience, and instructors have little time or resources to reach children as individuals. We imagine a future with tools and systems for teachers that allow them to reach students where they are.



The most significant assessments in school systems occur as a one-way conversation. We imagine a way to administer tests that support learning in children and offer timely feedback for teachers on how to address the specific needs of their students.



Schools are viewed by much of the public as impermeable institutions rather than a collection of individuals working toward education. We look for ways to emphasize the humanity and passion of the school employees in designing solutions for connecting people inside and outside the school.

Design Principles

What if the education system could make a leap toward meeting the needs of tomorrow?



To move toward the ideal future for early childhood education, change is paramount: change in mentality and change in action. We identified these shifts based on our research into the reality of children, caregivers, teachers and school leaders of today. What if we could redesign public schools based on the major paradigm shifts upcoming in our society?

Early childhood education is often seen as babysitting. Day care workers are paid an average of \$9 an hour, an extremely small amount considering the developmental importance of this young age. Companies invest in education through universities, and occasionally high schools, but are quite removed from the connection to early care and learning. And yet, developmental research has shown that the early years are some of the most important in setting up the possibilities for a child – language development, etc. This is where the achievement gap begins...

Here are some big ideas that came up in our process. Big questions that challenged our existing system. Some that would be really hard to design for based in our current reality. These questions contain both ideas for the future and provocations to the status quo. Each represents a large investigation, with many possible solutions to be created under each in order to begin to produce systemic change. We have included them in this document as prompts for the future... challenges to investigate further and as an aid in brainstorming.

Challenges: Engaging Parents

How might we align school hours and semesters to support parents' working hours?

Instead of starting very early and finishing at 3pm, the school day begins at 9am and lasts until 5:30pm. This extra time is dedicated to "whole child" activities: art, music, sport and so forth. The school now runs more evenly throughout the year. Kids' vacation becomes flexible: as with their parents' jobs, they are allotted a certain number of days that they can use as they wish.

Benefits:

- » More time for play during the day, because students have more time in school
- » Parents don't have the long summer period during which they need to arrange childcare.
- » Continuity from grade-to-grade: kids don't forget everything during the summer
- » Teachers are seen more as professionals, because their job now more resembles a normal year-round job.

How might we encourage new parents to become early care and learning providers, rather than rushing back to work outside the home?

Today's professional new parents are stuck in a quandary: they have worked hard on their careers, and so feel that they're missing out if they stay at home. However, if they rush back to work, they feel that they're missing out on vital time with their child.

What if we encouraged experienced parents to become entrepreneurial, becoming accredited as early education providers, taking positions to care for and educate their own and other children? This accreditation would come from the school system, thereby forging new connections between schools and early education providers, as well as seeding the appropriate early care and education thinking.

Challenges: Empowering Teachers

How might we realign school testing to afford the holistic learning needed to train future knowledge workers?

The current testing regime reinforces an outdated focus on narrow, linear thinking, rather than allowing room in the standards for development of problem-solving skills alongside reading and math skills. What if government standards respected holistic skills and provided time for rigid and flexible thinking to develop together?

Teachers would use their skills to encourage creative problem solving and the ability and desire to learn new things. They would be valued for teaching children academic and social skills, collaboration, leadership and conflict resolution.

How might we rethink the elaborate testing of children and focus resources on creating great teachers?

How might we remove the burden of testing from young children while evaluating and supporting teacher success?

Resources for improvement of schools should go toward mentoring and collaboration for teachers. Instead of measuring schools' performance by testing the kids, and thus putting them under pressure and not accounting for the differences in the levels in which kids enter school, why not test the value of what teachers are required to deliver? Treat them like other professionals who are evaluated and incentivized based on their performance. Focus on making sure that teachers can do the right thing to support student learning, not that students can take tests.

Challenges: Connecting Schools

How might we reframe early care and education as an issue that benefits everyone when it is supported?

How might we create a healthy, interdependent system where everyone in the community participates in the education of children?

What if there was a coordinated effort to make the general public see the value of education, and to consider it to be something worth investing in?

How might we assure that schools are run efficiently and well, allowing educators to concentrate on education?

The burden of the complexity of operating a school structure prevents school leaders from taking on new ways of partnering with community resources and taking on new initiatives in education. What if, instead of running their own buildings and operations, school systems can partner with professional managers? Or could schools be required to hire MBAs to fill Chief Operation

Appendix: Our Process

IDEO, in collaboration with the Kellogg Foundation and its many community connections, has envisioned new possibilities for school readiness, and a set of ideas for how to bridge those possibilities to today. Through our human-centered approach, we sought to understand the challenges individual people face in many dimensions of early care and education. We based our solutions on our insights gained through this view into the system.

This section describes how we arrived at these solutions.

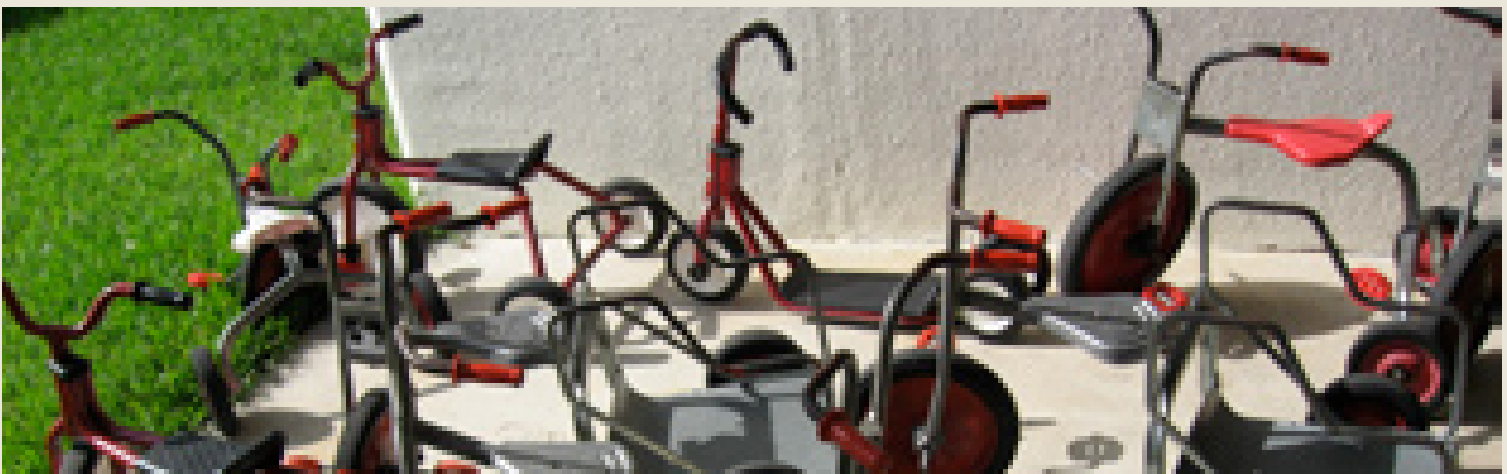
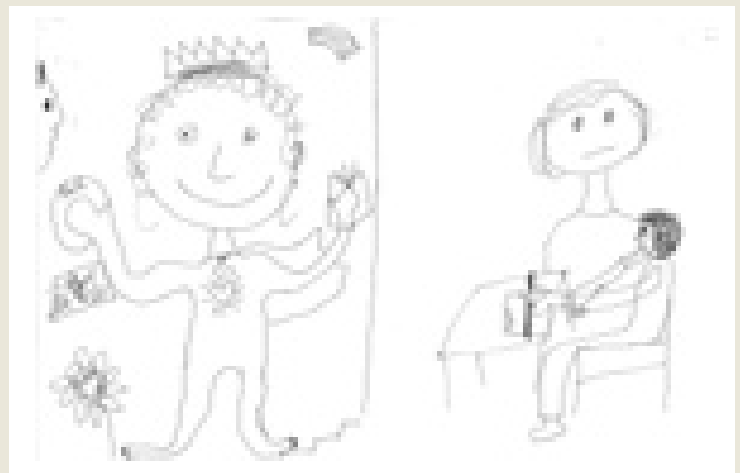
Introduction

IDEO is recommending taking tangible steps toward tomorrow in the impact areas highlighted by our observations and conversations with individuals in the school readiness effort. The solutions focus on three areas: engaging parents, empowering teachers, and connecting schools.

To get to the solutions within our three impact areas, the team followed IDEO's human-centered design process. Essential aspects of this process include:

- » Gaining inspiration from first-hand exposure to users
- » Framing opportunity areas based on insights gained
- » Generating solutions that continually evolve through user feedback.

Human-centered research, particularly in the beginning of a project (but also infused throughout development), helps us better understand the needs and experiences of people who are part of the system – parents, teachers, administrators, etc – so that we can look at the situation in empathetic ways. Understanding people helps us ask better questions, which in turn help us generate more relevant and appropriate solutions. In our process, validation happens later. We begin with an open mind, seeking inspiration.





Initial immersion: Being inspired by the school ecosystem

To get inspired we learn from people who live in the space we are trying to understand. We observe and speak to them within their context so we can understand their motivations, needs, aspirations and challenges. We uncover tangible things we would not learn from secondary sources or quantitative data.

So, who are the people in the system of early childhood education? Not surprisingly, an extended and diverse group of people make up this world, from high-level policy-makers to the students who are experiencing formal education for the first time. Almost everyone has stories, experiences or emotions around school. In order to help us understand who our stakeholders are, we created a map of the ecosystem that surrounds the child, and sought to meet with a variety of stakeholders in order to find key opportunities for design.

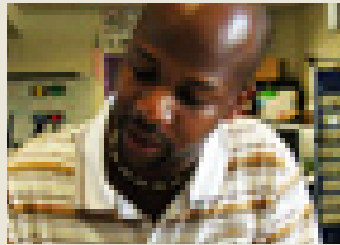


We met with over fifty individuals in different parts of the country: the Bay Area, Georgia, Florida, Ohio, and Michigan. And we collaborated with individuals making changes in other parts of the country.

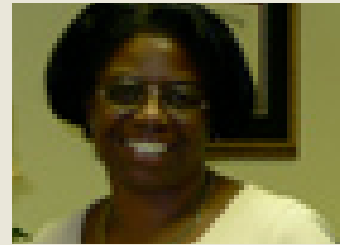
We made sure to meet with people who live and work in a range of communities and schools. We visited public and private schools in different socio-economic and cultural contexts. We engaged in a number of techniques in our early observations, including classroom shadowing, in-context interviews, guided tours of school facilities, and interactive exercises.



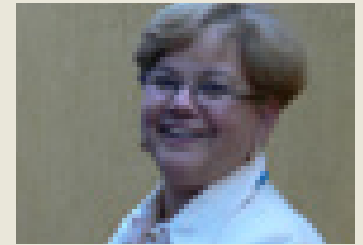
Kindergarten Teacher
Los Gatos, CA



Second Grade Teacher
Hayward, CA



Principal
Miami, FL



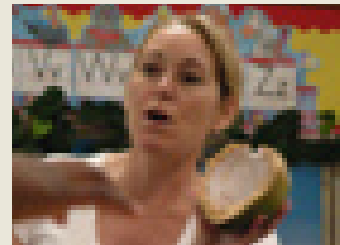
Director of Early Childhood School
Miami, FL



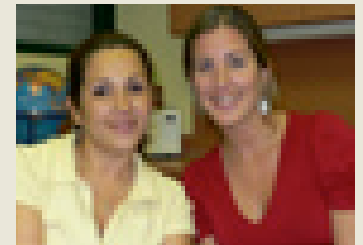
Head Start Director
Battle Creek, MI



Directors, Domestic Violence Shelter
Battle Creek, MI



Second Grade Teacher
Miami, FL



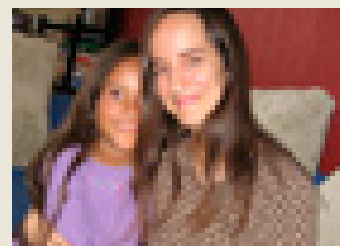
Teachers, Demonstration School
Miami, FL



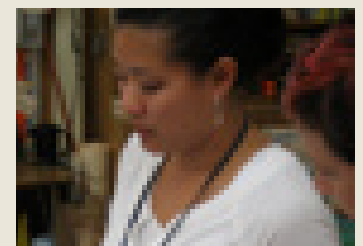
Superintendent
Northern California School District



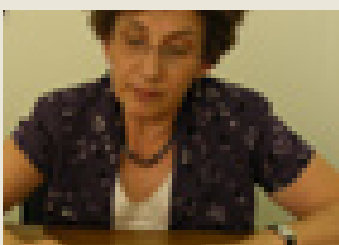
Early Childhood Center, RCMA
Miami, FL



Home Schooling Parent
Beaver Falls, OH



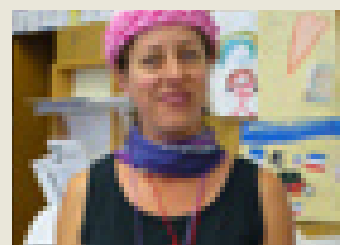
First Grade Teacher
Oakland, CA



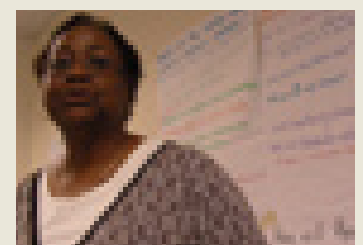
Executive Director, Early Childhood Resource Center, Canton, OH



Parent Partner
Canton, OH



Second Grade Teacher
Oakland, CA



District Administrator
Miami, FL

Another immersion: Inspiration from SPARK community leaders

We also glimpsed the network of organizations working on school readiness. Reports from WKCF informed us of the programs implemented by the SPARK grantees in Mississippi, Hawaii, D.C., North Carolina, New Mexico, Florida, Georgia and Ohio. We leveraged this information to help us build our next set of interviews, focusing on the experience of people involved in the SPARK initiative.

To deepen our understanding of school readiness through the successes and experiences of national experts, our team met with some of the SPARK grantees to see their work in context. We visited Georgia, Ohio and Miami to meet with dozens of SPARK stakeholders.

We used many of the techniques from the initial observations to evoke the needs of a very diverse group, be they migrant workers and their children, new teachers, or civic leaders. We also brought along postcards to involve people we weren't going to be able to interview.

SPARK individuals shared their achievements with us. We observed successes while probing for needs & opportunities, explicit or latent.



SPARK Meeting, Canton, OH



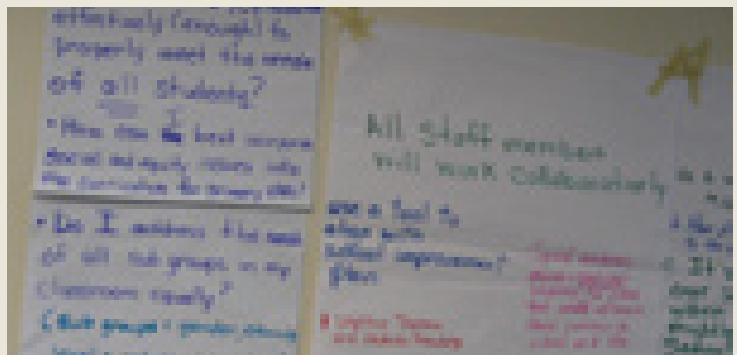
La Escualita , Atlanta, GA



La Escualita , Atlanta, GA



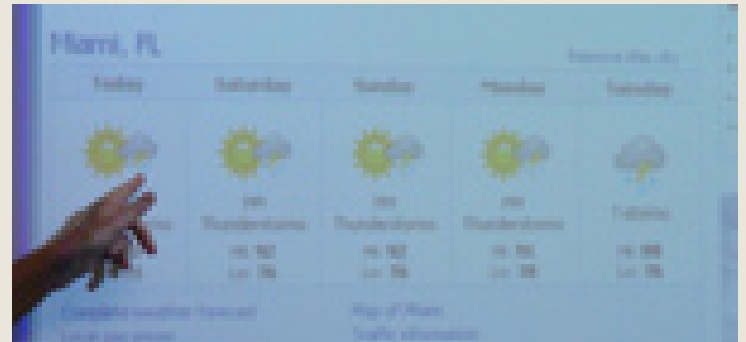
Demonstration School Teachers, Greynolds Park, FL



HEAT Teacher Training, Miami, FL



RCMA Migrant Camp, Miami, FL



First Grade Weather Lesson, Miami, FL



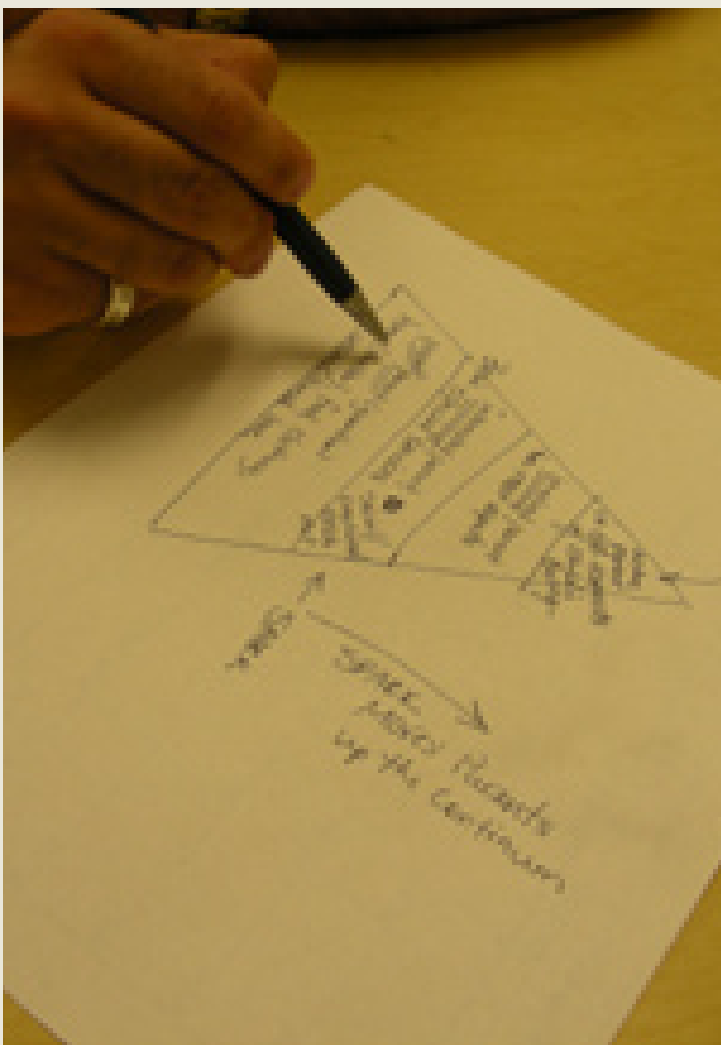
Maya Angelou School, Miami, FL



ECE Resource Center, Canton, OH



Superintendent, Minerva, OH



Mapping children's needs, Canton, OH



Scottsdale Childcare Center, Atlanta, GA



United Way Learning Lab, Miami, FL

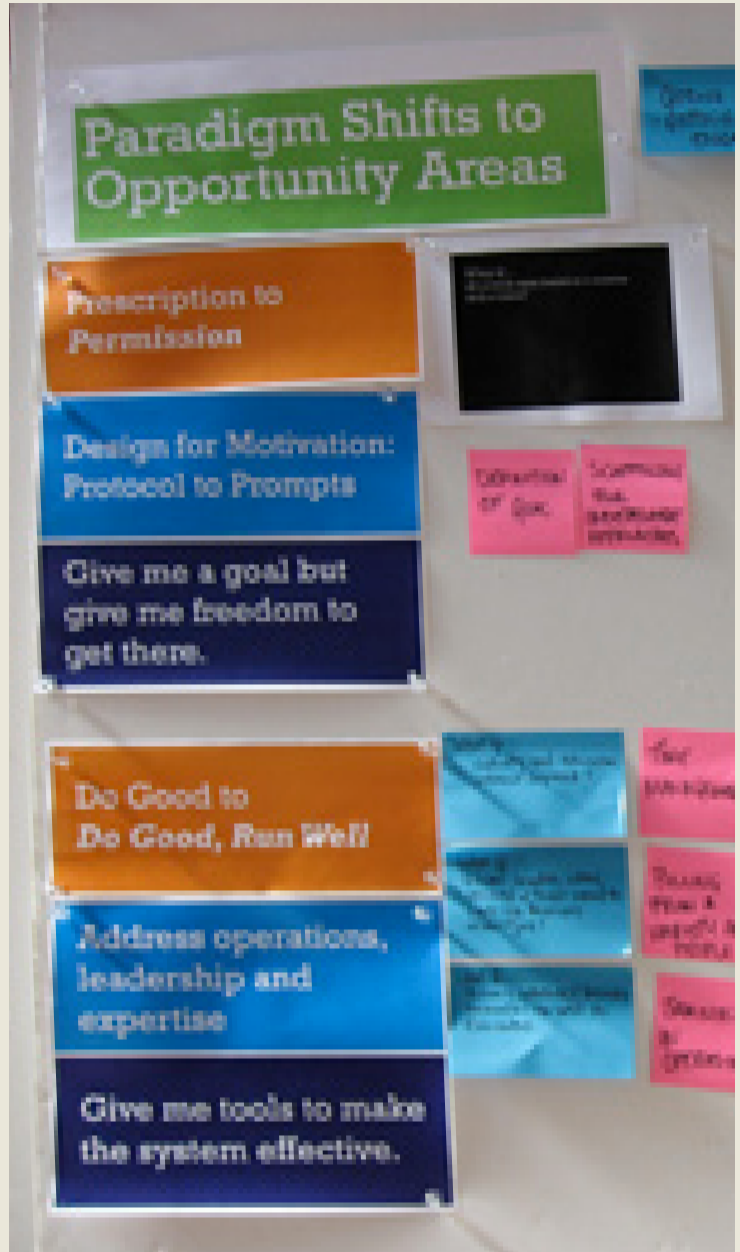
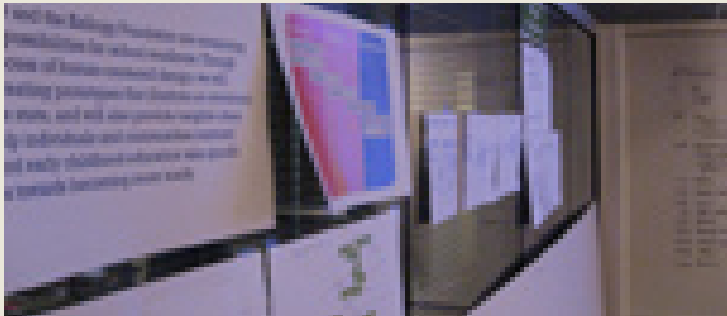
Synthesis and opportunity areas

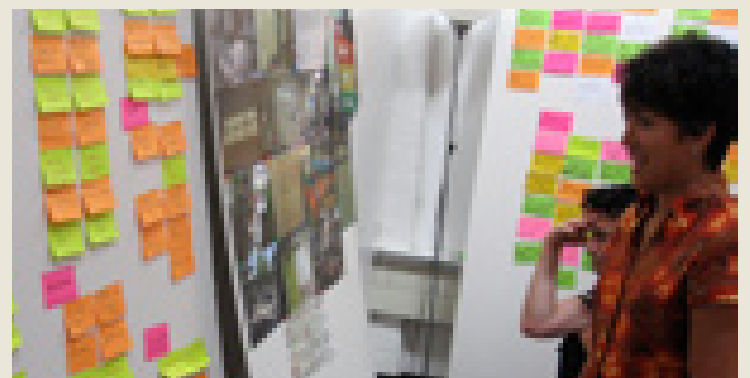
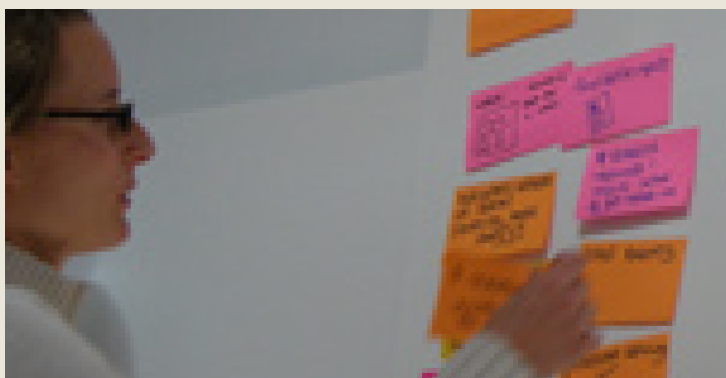
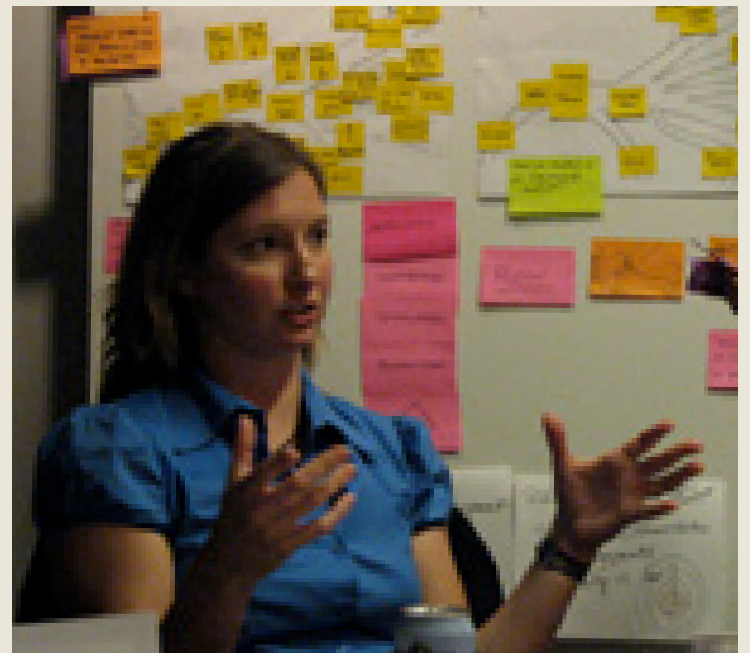
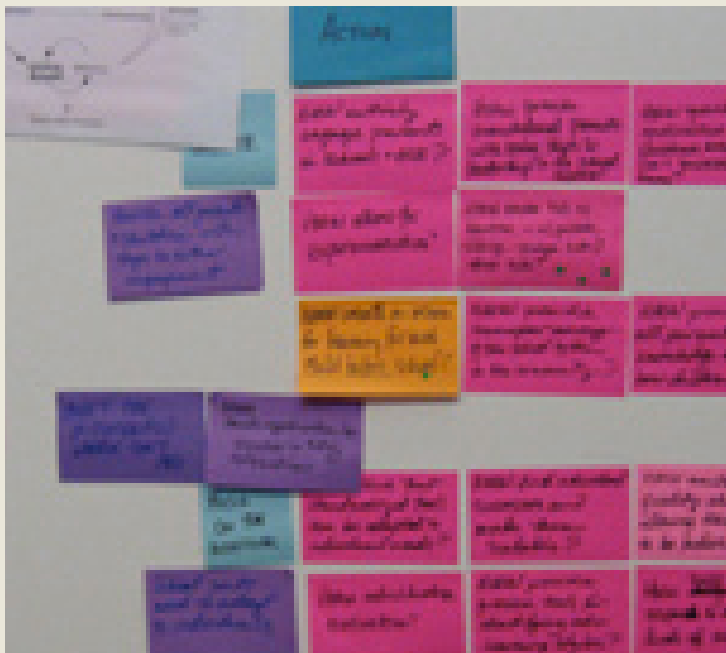
With our initial research completed, we regrouped to make sense of what we learned. We engaged in an organic process of synthesis— making sense of the rich information we had collected to transform it into meaningful insights for design. We extracted stories, principles and paradigms from our research to underpin our design solutions moving forward.

We were able to include people from WKKF and their partner organizations whose field experience enriched our work as we collaborated to extract themes.

As an extended team, we turned information into meaningful frameworks that highlighted patterns in the research findings.

We identified early opportunity spaces and expressed them as generative “How Might We” questions, such as, “How might we lead parents toward participation in schools?”, and “What if...” prompts, such as “What if schools were a vibrant hub of community life?” to capture some of the early ideas inspired by the research.





Ideation: Developing concepts

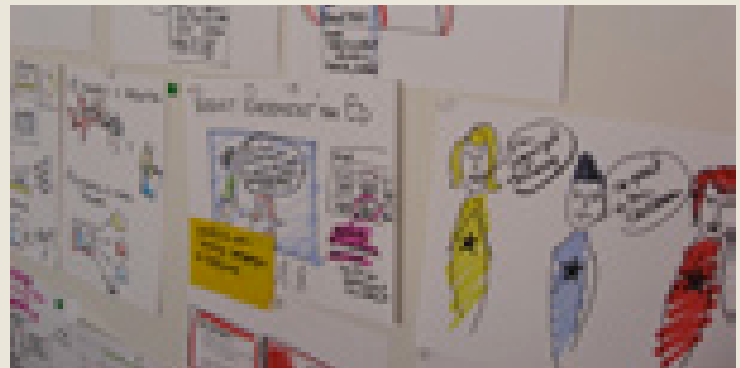
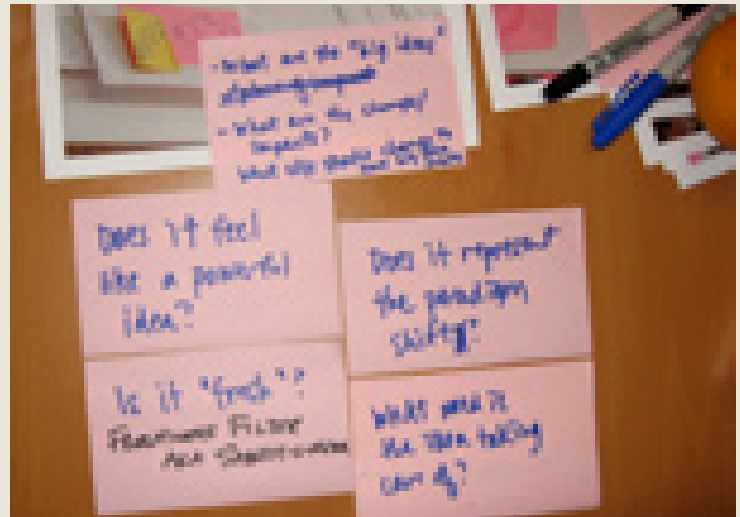
Observations and synthesis ground us. The ideation phase of our process lets us get generative: no idea is too wild and crazy during brainstorming. We try out our ideas by prototyping them and gathering user feedback, and then follow that with a round of iteration.

We were able to engage the SPARK stakeholders in an idea-generating session during their meetings with WKKF in Miami. We challenged the participants in Miami to imagine a very different future. We asked some big “What if” questions to help us picture it.

In teams, SPARK participants brainstormed scenarios for these futures, and imagined plans to get there.

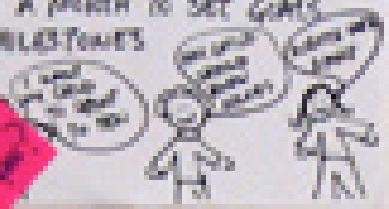
Returning to IDEO, we built on the SPARK stakeholder concepts as we continued to ideate.

As a team, we selected a number of ideas that responded most to observed needs and tangible action to build out into larger concepts.



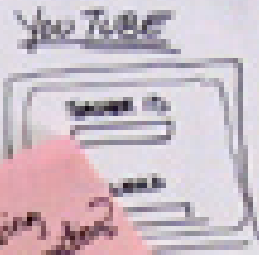


PARENTS + TEACHERS MEET AT BEGINNING OF YEAR + THEN OVER A MONTH TO SET GOALS + MILESTONES



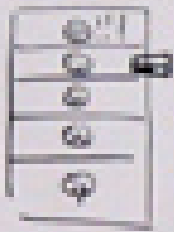
Handwritten note: "Handwritten note about how parents meet at beginning of year + then over a month to set goals + milestones"

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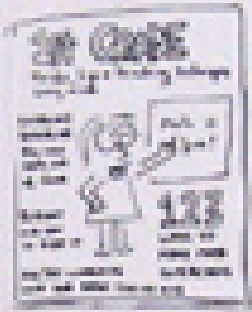
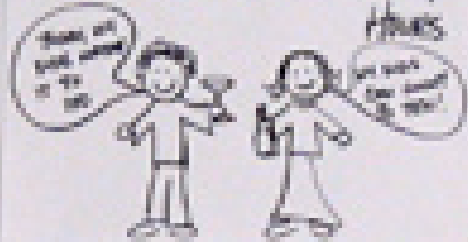


Focus on whole class
Collect videos
+ video cameras

END OF DAY, KIDS RATE THE DAY

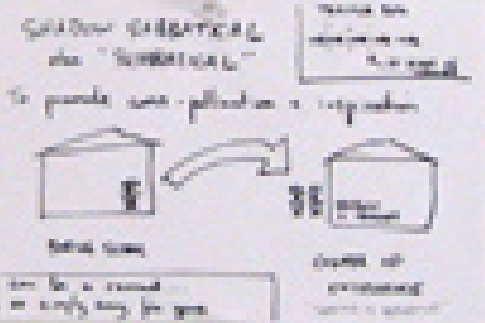


REGULAR TEACHER HAPPY HOURS



Handwritten note: "Handwritten note about how parents meet at beginning of year + then over a month to set goals + milestones"

MONTHLY OPEN HOUSES
- COLLECT INPUT FOR TEACHER, SUPERINTENDENT, COMMUNITY THROUGH CLASSROOM



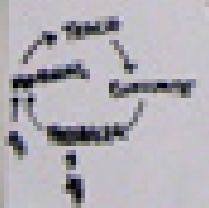
WINDOW FOR PARENT INTO CLASSROOM



Handwritten note: "Handwritten note about how parents meet at beginning of year + then over a month to set goals + milestones"

EDUCATION INSPIRATION WEEK
SUGGESTIONS FROM CLASSROOM
TEACHER
ORIGINS
WATER
FRESH
Article on another school's latest creative alignment programs

NTLB - FEDERAL MANDATE
FOCUS ON TEACHER REFINANCE + EVALUATION + FEEDBACK + MENTORSHIP ONLY



STANDARD INTERPRETATION
1. GOAL TO 100
2. 100% PROGRESS
3. 100% SUCCESS

COMPARISON WEBSITE
BASED ON STANDARD ASSESSMENTS
BUT FEATURING

Prototyping: Making ideas tangible in order to evolve them

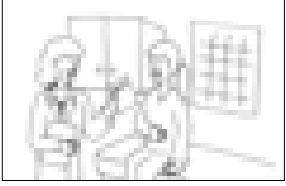
Prototyping allows us to make our ideas real and tangible, even when the ideas may not have a physical form. We have many methods for prototyping ideas early... and in this case we found that since our ideas were situations that happened over time, creating a narrative which explains the idea in use – a storyboarded scenario – would be a great tool to help us communicate early ideas.

We shared these ideas with participants in New Mexico in order to invite feedback from the people who would be actual “users” of the ideas – parents, teachers, and administrators, school and community leaders and members of local foundations.

Scenario:

Reaching out to parents-to-be

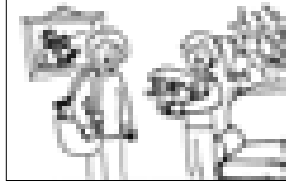
Teresa is headed to one of her first prenatal appointments. Her doctor hands her an introductory flyer and explains to Teresa that Zeng is a program that provides parent coaches to all parents, helping them learn about their child's development. Dr. Jordan has done the program twice herself with her two children and highly recommends it. Teresa has seen advertising around the city about this program, but never took the time to learn more about it. She's still somewhat overwhelmed about having a baby, she can't begin to think about school for her child... and really, when does she have time to take classes, anyway. Isn't parenting something that you just figure out along the way?



Scenario:

Building A Strong Relationship

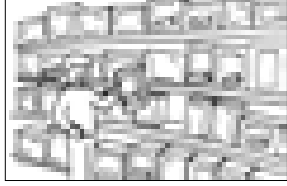
After observing how much her baby learns every day and wanting to know more about it, Teresa remembers to apply for the Zeng program when she sees an ad on the formula packaging. She begins meeting with her coach when her son, Sam, is a month old. The first meeting takes place in the doctor's office so that her doctor can make the introduction, but soon after they meet at Teresa's home so that the coach can help Teresa create a safe and learning-rich environment. The time together gives Teresa and Sam a chance to learn from their coach. One of the first things that she learns is the importance of talking to her child even before he can speak. Teresa appreciates the patience and respect that her coach has for Sam and for her when she has questions.



Scenario:

Toys For Learning


Michael also has a young son, and he knows a bit about the coaches that are available. But he prefers to figure things out on his own. He knows that he can reach out to get help, but he's not sure how to do it. He keeps seeing ads for the program, but he's not sure if he should. He decides that Zeng, that program he has heard about for parents, is also here in the store. Zeng has labeled a selection of toys with an approval rating and additional activities that parents can do with their children. Michael makes a selection and feels confident that he has chosen well for his son.



Scenario:

Reaching Out To Parents

When Teresa and Michael's boys reach kindergarten, both parents know how important it is to be involved in the classroom. But neither parent in the class, Rosa, is as comfortable with the role of classroom parent. In fact she hated school when she was young and it still makes her uncomfortable today. Her daughter will have to go to school, but Rosa will have little to do with it. Which is why Rosa is a bit surprised when the teacher sends her a message on her cell phone. The message is simple: "Hello parents, we are reading stories about stars in class. Be sure to look at the night sky with your child tonight!" This is not the type of message Rosa expected from the teacher and she is relieved that she can help her daughter without going to the school. She begins to see that her daughter can learn at home and Rosa can help.




Scenario:

Recruiting into a desirable career

D'Marc is a bright high school student. Before he begins his senior year he receives a packet from a National Learning Association representative.

"Congratulations on your induction into the National Honors Society. Have you considered teaching? You will have the chance to inspire hundreds of young people, plus all the great benefits!"




Scenario:

Transition with Support

A few years later D'Marc is graduating from college with a degree in Education. In two months he will begin teaching at Barton's Demonstration School with 60 other new teachers. He can't wait to try out his skills under the guidance of a master teacher. He is ready to find creative ways to incorporate the state standards he has been learning and find time for enrichment for his first graders.


When he arrives he has a uniform and a ribbon for his classroom! And he finds a group of like-minded teachers who spend Wednesday evenings discussing their upcoming lesson plans over dinner at the school. They support each other when individual students have trouble in the classroom and when they need inspiration to face the strict teaching standards.



Scenario:

Entering the System

After two years of supported teaching at the Demonstration School, D'Marc is now ready to work on his own in the classroom. Fortunately, he has several tools at his disposal to help him face any school situation. The first is a networking website just for teachers that will allow him to share ideas and advice with a cohort, as well as other teachers across the country. Also the Co-U Prescriptions system allows him to easily find on community organizations for enrichment or remedial learning solutions for his students. Finally there is the opportunity to present back to the Demonstration School on a particular aspect of teaching that he has found to be successful in his first years on his own. He will earn an extra week of pay after the school year ends to have time to reflect on his experiences and prepare the presentation. It will be videotaped and distributed around the teacher network.



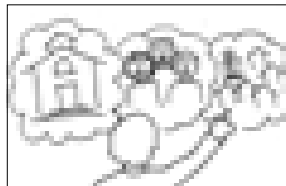
Scenario:

Teacher Pathways for Growth

After his first year of teaching, D'Marc begins to think about next steps for his career. He loves his classroom work but is ready for a new challenge, after all, the excitement of learning every day is why he was drawn to teaching in the first place. He attends the career coaching sessions at his school and finds that he has three ways to focus his career:

- Managing** (becoming a leader within the school)
- Learning Theory** (becoming a leader of other teachers)
- Connecting** (becoming a leader within the community)

Because he grew up in this community that he now teaches in, D'Marc is strongly connected here. He knows the people around him and knows that he could easily bring people together in creative ways if he takes on the Connecting role.

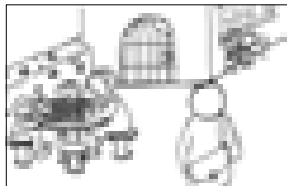


Scenario:

Schools are open and welcoming to the community

Cabrall, a doctor, has just moved to a new neighborhood. He is looking for a place to sit and connect his laptop to the internet. Before heading to the local coffee shop he remembers the postcard he received from his local public school stating that they are now offering many services to their community, including free wireless. He happily walks over to the school down to check it out.

He immediately sees that this school is different than the area he grew up with. This one has an open yard in front with benches and tables. Several people are already sitting there working or playing with young children.




Scenario:

Schools have services to offer to the community

Cabrall is surprised by the school's vibrancy on a Saturday. There are families coming in and out of the medical clinic, children are getting the care that they need. Young children are visiting the school's library because the hours have been extended. There is even a large family picnic happening in a pavilion at the far end of the grounds.


On the wall, Cabrall sees a notice about ESL classes that are being offered in the evenings and looks forward to telling his mother about them. Maybe she would even take the computer class held in the school's computer lab. And they will both attend a lecture on managing a budget by the school's principal.



Scenario:

Schools introduce themselves

The principal of Villa elementary school values her chance to reach out and communicate her school's goals and decisions to the community. She uses a website and a column in the local newspaper to talk to the community of the geography she lives in every day. She also finds that now that she has a chance to explain the budget, hiring and policies in clear, common terms, fewer people stop her in the market to question her decisions.

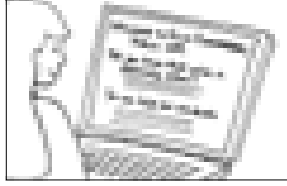


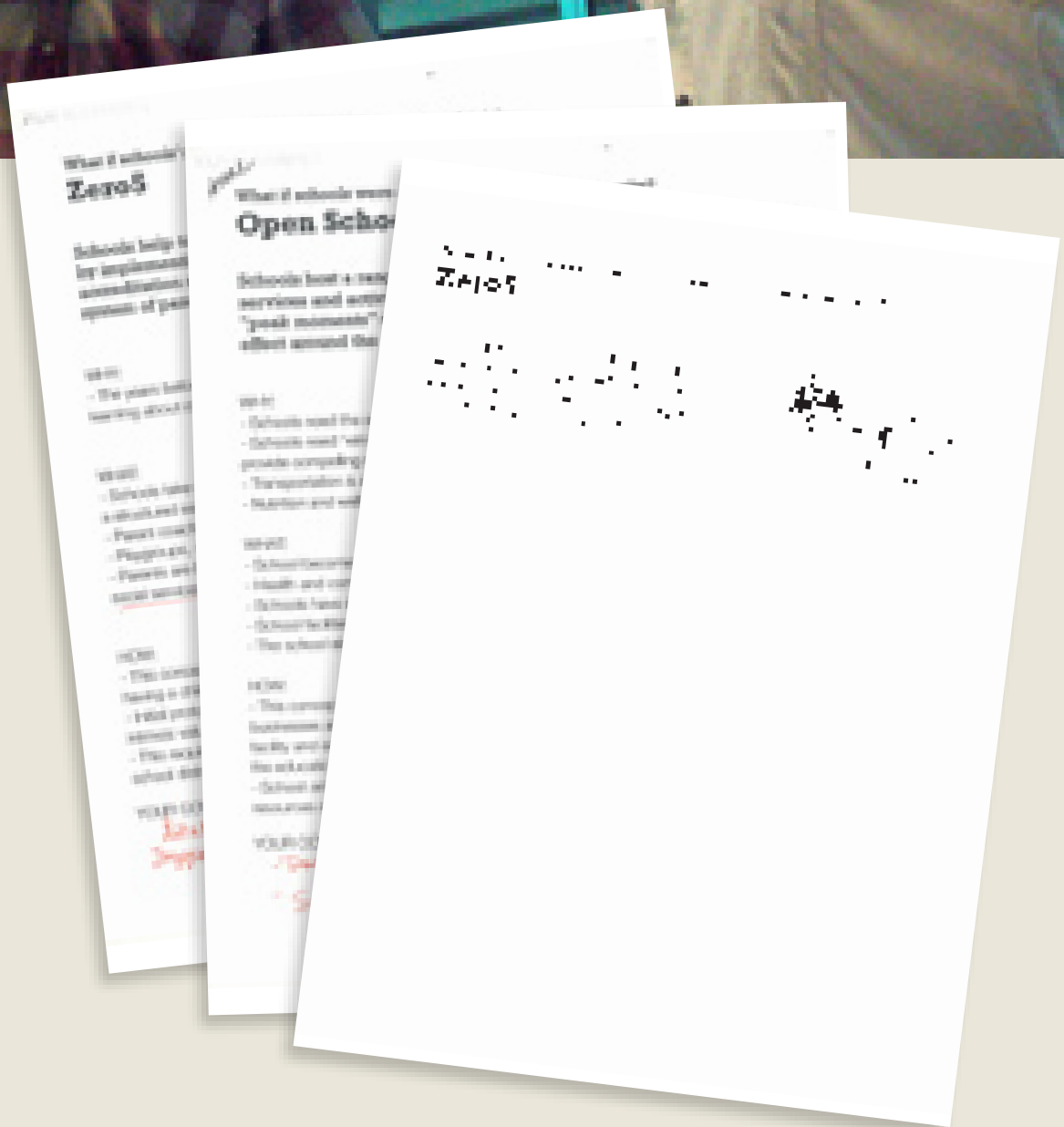
Scenario:

Schools bring people together

The principal makes time in her busy schedule to ask for help from the community. She solicits requests from the teachers and other staff. She knows that this benefits her students, but it also benefits the people around her, and positions her school as an essential and vital part of the community. This is important when voting time rolls around.

The school's website acts as a portal to a database that matches school needs with volunteers in the community. She imagines these opportunities in 3 ways: those that directly help to educate the students, those that help her maintain the school, and those that just bring people together in the community so that they feel more connected to the school.





Iteration: Incorporating feedback to evolve the concepts

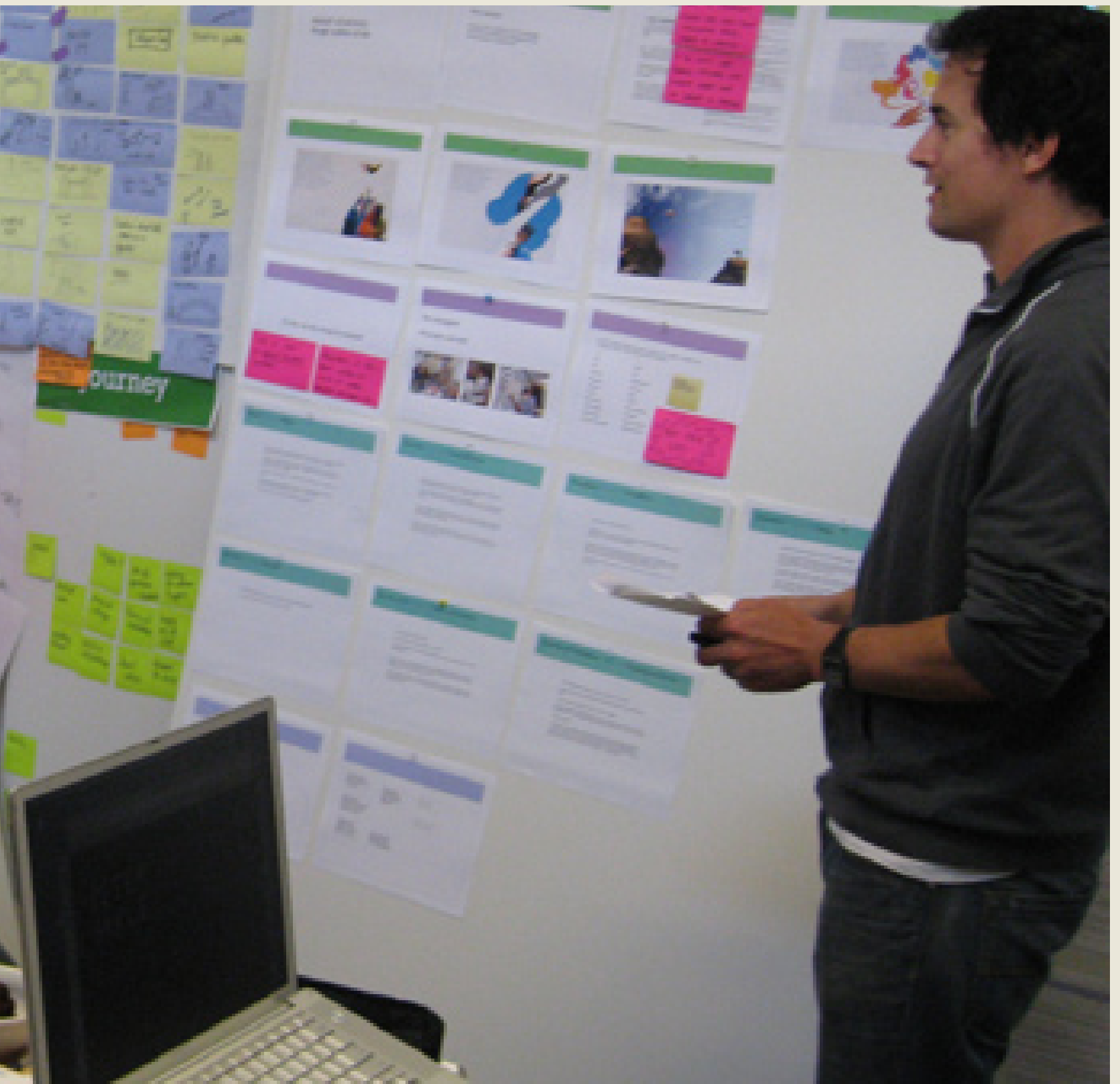
Based on the feedback from New Mexico, additional interviews in the Bay Area, and iterations with the Kellogg Foundation, we developed and evolved the concepts into the ideas that are present in this document.

We expect that these concepts will continue to evolve as various stakeholders try them out and modify them to suit their context. In order to get the word out, we've designed postcards providing a glimpse of the concepts. We imagine that Kellogg team members will take them out into the world and give them to partners, stakeholders, and others in early education. The cards will serve as teasers and invitations to connect with these ideas through this document.

This is how our process continues: experimentation. With early prototypes and concepts we invite people to try ideas in their context – in order to evolve the ideas, but also for the ideas to help evolve the system. This dance between action and reflection and the system in which it thrives is where the process of change happens.

We aim for the cycle of reflection and iteration to continue. We imagine that a diverse pool of passionate, creative and resourceful people in early education will be inspired to use these concepts as an impetus to try something new and





THANK YOU

This project was conducted in the summer of 2007.

Countless people generously shared their time and trusted us with their stories. In particular, we'd like to thank the SPARK stakeholders, schools, educators, parents and community leaders who welcomed us in New Mexico, Miami, Atlanta, and Ohio; and the organizers of the "Family Friend and Neighbor Caregivers" conference in Atlanta. We'd also like to thank all the SPARK participants who contributed to early concepting and in many other ways gave us a peek into their world. Our thanks go to the WKKF team members who introduced us to amazing members of the Battle Creek Community, came to Palo Alto to share in the synthesis process, and helped us ground and develop our concepts. We are also indebted to the SPARK resource organizations, in particular DCA and WRMA, for their expertise and support.

We were in turns humbled, awed, and inspired by the people we met on this project. There are amazing ideas and innovations being tried out every day, in classrooms all over the country. While the challenges to implementing them are often substantial, we hope that our vision of what the future of school readiness could be might inspire a teacher, a principal or community members to take another step towards it.

THANK YOU TO OUR EXTENDED PARTICIPANTS:

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Jenny Gonzalez
Betty Key
Dave Lawrence
Lourdes Nunez
Don Pemberton
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Redlands Christian Migrant
Maya Angelou School

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This work is based on the SPARK initiative, learn more at www.wkcf.org

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