L + D

LEADERSHIP+DESIGN

The Monthly Recharge - November 2014, Experience Design

Designing Learning for School Leaders, by Carla Silver

Using Experience Design to Drive Institutional Change, by Matt Glendinning

Designing the Future, by Brett Jacobsen

About L+D

Leadership+Design is a nonprofit organization and educational collaborative dedicated to creating a new culture of school leaders - empathetic, creative, collaborative and adaptable solution-makers who can make a positive difference in a rapidly changing world.

- *We support creative and innovative school leadership at the individual and organizational level.*

Designing Learning for School Leaders

Carla Robbins Silver, Executive Director

Dear Friends AND Designers:

 The design industry is vast and wonderful. In his book, *Design: Creation of Artifacts in Society*, Karl Ulrich, professor at Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, includes an ever-growing list of careers and opportunities in design. They range form the more traditional and known careers - architecture design, product design, fashion design, interior design - to possibilities that might surprise you - game design, food design,

- *We serve school leaders at all points in their careers - from teacher leaders to heads of school as well as student leaders.*
- *We help schools design strategies for change, growth, and innovation.*
- *We bring creativity, collaboration & co-creation, empathy, a "yes, and..." mindset, and experiential learning to all of our work.*

Follow us on:

Leadership+Design Collaboration Cards

Order your deck today.

news design, lighting and sound design, information design and experience design. Whenever I read this list, I get excited - like jump-out-of-my-seat excited. I think about the children in all of our schools solving complex problems, and I think about my own children, and imagine them pursuing these careers as designers.

Design is, according to Ulrich, "conceiving and giving form to artifacts that solve problems." An artifact might be a product like an ice cream scoop, a space like a classroom, or an experience like a perfectly curated meal. Each of these artifacts addresses a human need. In the first artifact example, the need is how to get something delicious, cold and hard out of a container, preferably in an aesthetically pleasing way. If you have ever tried to get ice cream out of the carton with a spoon, you know that it just doesn't work; it's messy and the spoon always bends. It's a horribly unsatisfying experience. A more solid and hefty tool like the one below that Ulrich designed is necessary to get the job done and to produce a perfect scoop of ice cream worthy of serving to your dinner guests. And it feels really good too!

The Belle-V Ice Cream Scoop, Designed by Karl Ulrich

 More simply put, design is seeking and creating solutions that meet human needs. One of the primary goals of Leadership+Design is to ensure that every school leader, from head of school, to administrative team member, to board member, to teacher, to student, builds the capacity to identify and solve ambiguous challenges in their world and to meet the ever-evolving needs in their communities. I am personally passionate about empowering school leaders to see themselves as designers - designers of experiences for students, teachers, and even of their own leadership practices.

So, if you are reading this newsletter, you are now officially a designer.

Much of my work consists largely of designing professional learning experiences for school leaders. At the heart of experience design is the idea of transformation. A person arrives at an experience one way and leaves somehow transformed - physically, emotionally, intellectually or spiritually. They have gained new skills, adopted new mindsets, or new understandings. They have needs met - perhaps some they didn't even know they had - and they have experienced growth. In fact, I am writing this
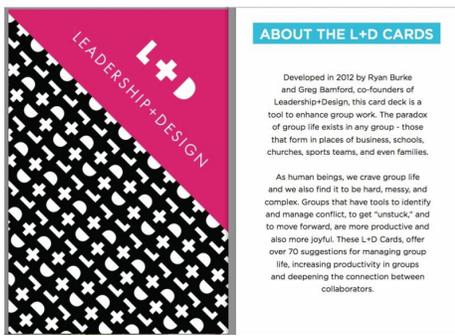
This card deck is a tool to enhance group work. The paradox of group life exists in any group - those that form in places of business, schools, churches, sports teams and even families.

As human beings, we crave group life and we also find it to be hard, messy and complex. Groups that have tools to identify and manage conflict, to get "unstuck" and to move forward, are more productive and also more joyful.

These playful L+D Cards offer over 70 suggestions for managing group life, increasing productivity in groups and deepening the connection between collaborators.

$25.00 per deck + Shipping and Handling. Click on the icon below to place your order.

BUY NOW

L+D Board of Directors

Lee Burns
Head of School
The McCallie School
Chattanooga, TN

Sandy Drew, President
Development Consultant
Sonoma, CA

---

column our annual Santa Fe Seminar. Each one of the participants has come with a need that they hope to have filled. Some come for reconnection and renewal, some come to recommit to their work, and some come to reflect on what is next for them in their professional and even personal lives. My goal is to meet those needs and more through an intentionally designed experience.

In designing an experience, I usually start with the big picture in mind and try to consider a holistic view of how the needs of participants can be met. The experience actually begins from the moment a participant learns about the event and ends only when some transformation has occurred (which might be days, months or even years after the event) The experience design is broken down into five distinct stages attract, enter, engage, exit and extend.

<u>Attract:</u> How can I interest participants in the event before they even arrive? What should they do, watch, consider or experience that will get them excited and mentally prepared for an event?
<u>Enter:</u> What happens as participants enter a space? How do I want them to feel as they arrive?
<u>Engage:</u> While they are at the event, what are the experiences that will that lead to transformation? How will participants engage with their learning and with each other?
<u>Exit:</u> How do I want the participants to feel at the end of the event? How do we end? How do they physically and mentally exit the space? What will the participants leave with?
<u>Extend:</u> What is the long-term transformation that I want them to have? How do I follow-up with the participants and build on the experience? How can I extend the transformation beyond the experience itself?

Consider how you, in your work, are a designer of experiences. For whom are you designing and what are the unmet needs you are trying to fulfill? What are the stages that you can consider as you design these experiences? What is the transformation you wish to see?

In this month's newsletter, Matt Glendinning, Head of School of Moses Brown, and Brett Jacobsen, Head of School of Mount Vernon Presbyterian School, share their work as masterful "lead designers" of their schools. Both Matt and Brett have adopted principles, mindsets, habits and practices of designers to solve ambiguous challenges in their schools and to enable transformation to occur. Thanks to both of them for their contributions.

If you have a story about your work as an experience designer in your school, I'd love to hear about it. So, email me at carla@leadershipanddesign.org.

Warmly,

Carla Silver
Executive Director
Leadership+Design

P.S. Registration is now open for Trailblazer: The Innovative Leadership Conference at Watershed School in Boulder, Co, June

22-25, 2015. Learn more and register.

Using Experience Design to Drive Institutional Change

Matt Glendinning, Head of School, Moses Brown School

When I was a classroom teacher, charged with shaping the minds and character of children, just about everything I understood and valued about learning was contained in the famous aphorism attributed to Confucius: *I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand*. No surprise, then, that I gravitated toward experiential learning - projects, travel, etc. - which works by engaging students' heads, hands and hearts.
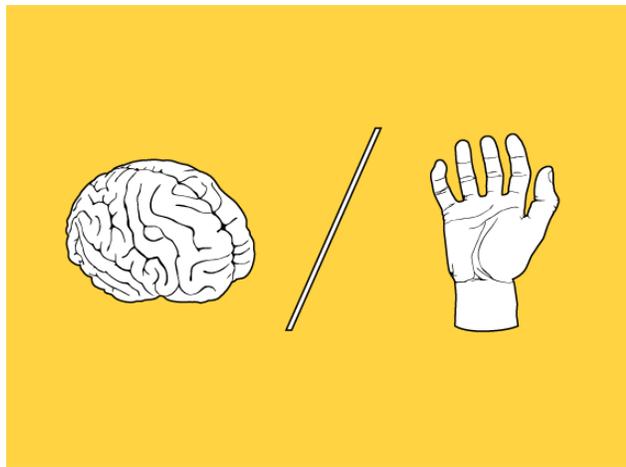
Now a Head of School charged with shaping a vision for 21st century education, why should things be any different. Confucius' timeless mantra has guided me toward a powerful leadership strategy called Experience Design, which works by curating human interactions and experiences.

The need for Experience Design emerges from a harsh reality: in a world hyper-saturated with words, images and information, most organizations struggle to stand out. If you're a Head of School, regardless of your communicative talents, there's probably little you can say that will truly differentiate your school from other excellent ones nearby.

But, help your constituents to live, touch, feel, understand and enjoy participation in your school, and you'll create a band of rabidly passionate ambassadors who'll do your talking for you. That's the essence of Experience Design. When 70% or more of inquiries to independent schools come from word of mouth references, deliberately choreographing people's experiences can make a critical difference.

Experience Design is a human-centered management strategy that focuses on actively engaging people and helping them satisfy fundamental needs, like the desire to learn, to feel purposeful, to make meaning, and to have fun.

As Michael Westcott, former President of the Design Management Institute in Boston says, it's about forging relationships: "Our work centers around *what builds trust* - whether it's a well-designed customer service experience, a more effective connection with a doctor, a well-spent moment connecting on a smart phone, a more inspiring educational experience, a more engaging or efficient use of a toaster, or an entertaining travel experience. . . . Many products are becoming services, and experiences are becoming products that differentiate brands." (dmi:review, v. 24:3, fall 2013, p. 2)

Long a staple of the design world, this approach to leadership is just beginning to make an appearance on the educational scene, where it has huge potential. Below are a few of the driving questions we've tackled in recent years at Moses Brown, and some examples of how 'thinking like a designer' has energized our school's culture.

How can we build awareness and momentum around a new strategic plan?

We began by re-imagining the whole concept of 'strategic plan,' seeing it less as a list of goals and more a set of shared, memorable experiences. The planning process included more than 40 creative visioning sessions called Discernment Dialogues, heavily imbued with the methods of design thinking. And the resulting plan, in addition to the traditional printed booklet, took on a variety of interactive forms such as an e-book for iPads, museum exhibit, theatrical presentation, TEDx conference, and Challenge Day, when every student worked to solve one of 65 different real-world problems (project-based learning is a pillar of our plan). Most recently - now one year into implementing our vision - we published an annual report in the form of a comic book. These novel, indeed surprising, formats provide delightful and informative experiences for all in our community, students included (and if you know a better way to get kids to read an annual report, I'd like to hear it!).

How could we raise the school's profile and position it as a leader in education?

We try to design events that explore the future (both near- and long-term) and use a process that provides value for participants. This fall, for example, we hosted a debate focused on the future of education in our state, featuring the three candidates for mayor of Providence. All the questions were devised and posed by our students, in partnership with peers from a public school nearby. Attracting more than 500 audience members, the event was featured on television, public radio and the front page of the local newspaper, all because we dared to assert that students have something to contribute to the content and tone of civic dialogue.

We also convene a bi-annual 'think tank' called the MB 2030 Forum - a group of about three dozen people from many different fields charged with helping us imagine the world in the year 2030 and what elementary and secondary schools need to do to prepare children for that world. Having met for four weekend summits to date, the Forum has generated some creative thinking that shaped our strategic plan in significant ways. And participants felt that they were treated to a highly rewarding,

engaging and memorable experience.

What's the best way to showcase the school for prospective families?

We re-invented our fall admissions open house, combining it with Homecoming so that visitors could experience the richness of MB's culture instead of visiting when the campus feels like a ghost town. Called *MB UpClose* and attended by over 1,000 people, the carnival-like event features an outdoor main stage for performing arts, demonstrations of great teaching, open labs and studios, free lunch, home sports games, and best of all, hundreds of interactions between current and prospective families. Admissions applications spiked 33% immediately after our first *UpClose* event.

How can we attract and hire the most creative, passionate teachers and staff?

Think about it: does the traditional format for finalists' on-campus visits - a series of 30 minute interviews, lunch with students or department members, and teaching a sample lesson - successfully identify the attributes you most want in a new hire? As importantly, does it leave candidates wildly enthusiastic to work at your school? Fearing that the answer to both questions might be 'no,' we've been experimenting with revamping the campus visit, designing experiences that elicit creativity, passion and teamwork. Candidates for Director of Communications & Community Engagement, for example, spent 90 minutes with the Head of Upper School brainstorming new formats for Parent Back-to-School Night and another 90 minutes with me designing the announcement of a recent major gift (both actual, current projects). We are exploring similar ways to engage teaching candidates in authentic, real-world collaboration with students, parents and colleagues.

The key to good Experience Design is to recognize that institutions say as much (or more) about themselves through everyday human interactions as they do through print or online media. Our informal motto at Moses Brown, therefore, is "show, don't tell," and Experience Design has become a critical tool for engaging our constituents actively and playfully, helping them see, feel and live the school's values. I hope Confucius would approve!

Designing the Future: Head of School as Lead Designer

Brett Jacbobsen, Head of School, Mount Vernon Presbyterian School

Connecting with someone in my personal learning network, I noticed her title was Chief Learning Designer. Don't be surprised if you see this title pop up in my community. In the meantime, it caused me to reflect on my role as "lead designer." I am not sure I am offering any recommendations, but merely sharing a set of leadership lenses as I see them to help navigate the fog of the

21st century challenges and opportunities.

As school leaders we are the designers of experiences--experiences for students, faculty, parents, and the community as a whole. What does this mean and how do we develop the mindsets, skillets, habits, and practices of designers to enhance teaching, learning, and leading at our schools.

Designing something exceptional requires identifying and articulating a meaningful, compelling mission and a bold, directional vision. It's not just about utility (plan, process, and methodology), but equally, if not more important, design is about significance (thinking differently, creating value, making a dent). Your mission should be a nonnegotiable imperative. How many in your community know it, understand it, live it?

As a result, lead learning designers must assist in answering the essential questions about their community: Why? What? How? Attempting to answer these significant questions, Greg McKeown's work, *Essentialism,* challenges my core as a designer: "Essentialism is about making the wisest possible investment of your time and energy in order to operate at our highest point of contribution." This exercise refines the meaning, tests the assumptions,and widens the options. A number of programs, events, and exercises have existed at our schools for decades because this is what we believe schools do. Look at the familiar as if you have never seen it before. As Jim Collins would advocate, conduct an autopsy without blame on the most sacred items. Understanding your highest point of contribution as a school in a transformative world is critical for students to innovate now, collaborate now, and create now. As an educational leader, I get one shot at impacting a generation of students.

Posture is the secret sauce to this journey. What norms has your school identified in order to cultivate a culture of innovation? This cannot be an area of ambiguity. Once identified, commit to them daily, discuss them consistently, test their meaning periodically. What if you gave out a "Mistake of the Year Award" at the end of the year faculty meeting? It would demonstrate how serious you are about risk taking in your community, allowing teachers and students to experiment.

Norms birth common language. Do not underestimate the power of common language. I stumbled into it during my leadership career and have discovered its impact in a community. Regardless of how an organization completes the design question, "How

might we?" - "how might we" tells a story of how an organization is going to live, breathe, create, function, and act. While "how might we" infers access, opportunity, and infinite possibility, culture will strangle strategy every day of the week. Design purpose, principles, and product around common language. It creates clarity, builds momentum, and deepens institutional direction.

However, what got us here won't get us there. In order to transform an organization, lead designers must be plugged in. In the 21st century, we have to be futurists. This is a tall order. Not sure there is a MOOC, Kahn lesson, or executive leadership program available for us. Being aware of the major disruptions and drivers of change around the world give us a platform to onboard our students now. As the Institute for the Future says, "New technologies, work patterns, and practices are disrupting how we learn, where we learn, and what we need to learn." The flow of learning is no longer limited to time or setting. Lead your community to consider adapting current practices or adopting new methodologies or even disrupting the pervasive educational paradigm.

Ultimately, as a lead designer, I cannot be interested in red tape, fixed mindsets, 20th century expectations, and blending in. I have to cultivate a community of solution seekers, creative thinkers, collaborators, and innovators. Students don't have time for adults to catch up. They deserve it now. Let's give it to them.