



Breakout Session

Equity-Driven Design Thinking: Enhancing Traditional Human-Centered Design with an Equity Lens

Constance Parham, DC Public Schools Design Lab
Lizz Rene, DC Public Schools Equity Strategy and Programming





EQUITY

STRATEGY & PROGRAMMING



DCPS
design lab

AN INNOVATION HUB INCREASING
EXCELLENCE AND OPPORTUNITY IN DCPS

Welcome!

Use the chat to share your name, pronouns, and one learning or perspective you hope to take away after our hour together.



Lizz Rene

Manager, Equity

DCPS Office of School
Improvement and
Support



Constance Parham

Manager, Design

DCPS Office of School
Improvement and
Support

Our Goals

Essential Question: How might we apply an equity lens to enhance traditional design thinking?

Goal 1



Understand how EquityxDesign enhances traditional design by acknowledging the importance of designer and user identities – including race, class, and gender identities.

Goal 2



Use an equity lens to reflect on current strengths and growth areas within your classroom, school, or organization to identify areas to apply EquityxDesign practices.

Goal 3



Practice various equity-focused empathy tools to build a deeper understanding of yourself and your user.

Where We Are in the Day...

 We Are Here

11:45 – 11:55 AM

Welcome & Introduction

11:55 AM – 12:05 PM

EquityxDesign 101

12:05 – 12:25 PM

Applying the Equity Lens to your Classroom, School,
Organization to identify a priority area

12:25 – 12:40 PM

Planning for Empathy Phase

12:40 PM – 12:45 PM

Closing Reflections



Equity Strategy and Programming



Policy

Identity and
Mindsets

Practices

Culture

dcps.dc.gov/equity

Design Lab

- Fosters **communities of innovation** through cohort-based experiences
- Provides space for **iterative prototyping and testing**
- **Builds capacity** in school innovation and human-centered design
- Provides **concierge support and seed funding**



Today's Norms and Agreements

SIX CONDITIONS

- Focus on PERSONAL, local and immediate
 - ISOLATE race
- Normalize SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION & multiple perspectives
 - Monitor agreements, conditions and ESTABLISH PARAMETERS
- Use a "WORKING DEFINITION" for race
 - Examine the presence and role of "WHITENESS"

FOUR AGREEMENTS

- Stay ENGAGED
- Experience DISCOMFORT
 - Speak your TRUTH
- Expect/Accept NON-CLOSURE

In the chat

Share a norm or agreement you'd like to add – especially given the virtual space.

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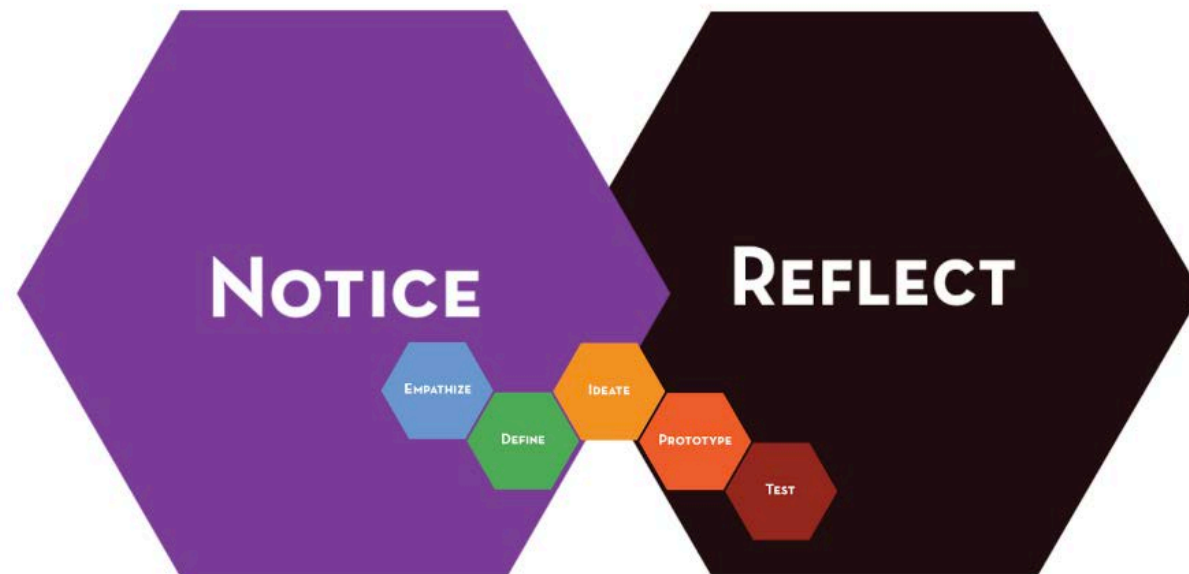
12:40 PM – 12:45 PM

Closing Reflections

Equity x Design

- Equity work benefits from an intentional approach to design and creativity
- Design work benefits from an intentional recognition of inequitable power relationships – otherwise it can reproduce them.

"Racism and inequity are products of design. They can be redesigned."
-Caroline Hill, Michelle Molitor, and Christine Ortiz



5 Design Principles

- **Design at the margins:** Solutions at the margins work for all.
- **Start with yourself:** Our identities create our lens for the world – we must be aware of this lens and the biases it brings
- **Cede power:** Examine where power needs to be ceded.
- **Make the invisible visible:** Making power dynamics and invisible structures visible allows us to reflect and repair.
- **Speak the future, design the future:** Replace our current hegemonic discourse.

Redesign at Anacostia High School



EQUITY

STRATEGY & PROGRAMMING

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Reflecting on Equity x Design

- What resonates most with you about the Equity x Design process?
- Have you experienced design processes that could have benefitted from Equity x Design principles? What might have been done differently to make the design process more equitable?

Use the chat or come off
mute to share your
reflections!

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Applying an Equity Lens to Design Thinking

“It stands to reason that any problem definition or solution created by biased individuals — which we all are — will perpetuate inequity if the process does not actively acknowledge and combat bias.”

Caroline Hill, Michelle Molitor, and Christine Ortiz

Notice & Reflect from an Equity Lens

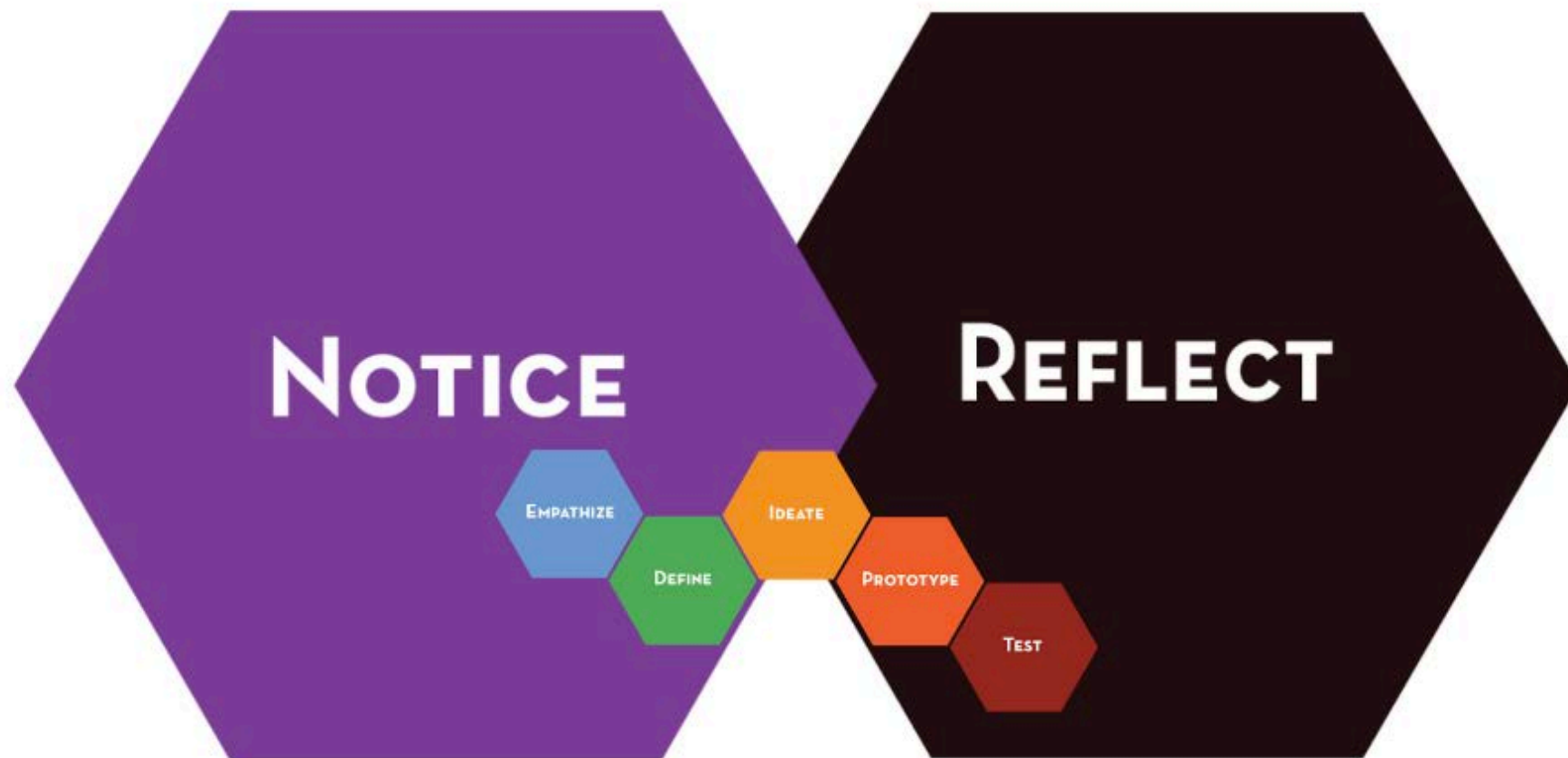


Policy

Identity and
Mindsets

Practices

Culture



"We can enhance the design thinking process with tools and frameworks that account for and make visible our individual biases; push us past the individual to the institutional, systemic, and historic inequity at play; and fight against hegemonic ideologies."

-Caroline Hill, Michelle Molitor, and Christine Ortiz



5 Design Principles

- **Design at the margins:** Solutions at the margins work for all.
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How do you notice and reflect?

Use the following sentence stems and design principles as tools to notice and reflect throughout each design cycle individually or collectively!

Policy

SENTENCE STEM: Collectively, we will establish and advocate for policies, protocols, and expectations that promote equity by... **ceding power**

Identity and Mindsets

SENTENCE STEM: Individually, I will reflect on my own identity, biases, privileges and experiences and how they impact my beliefs and actions by... **starting with myself and making the invisible, visible**

Practices

SENTENCE STEM: Individually, I will learn and apply culturally-responsive and affirming practices in my daily work and planning by... **speaking to the future**

Culture

SENTENCE STEM: Collectively, we will acknowledge the historical and current context of diverse stakeholders to create an inclusive professional and educational culture by... **designing at the margins**

WORD BANK

- Ceding power
- Starting with myself
- Making the invisible, visible
- Speaking to the future
- Designing at the margins

Each design principle is in **blue**.

Let's practice noticing and reflecting individually.

Planning for equity: Think about a design challenge rooted in equity. Take 2 minutes to use a sheet of paper and **answer one of the "BUT HOW" questions below.** But how do you plan to notice and reflect on identity and mindsets? **OR** But how do you plan to notice and reflect on practices?

Identity and Mindsets

SENTENCE STEM: Individually, I will reflect on my own identity, biases, privileges and experiences and how they impact my beliefs and actions by...**starting with myself and making the invisible, visible.**

BUT HOW? **Meta-Empathy Maps**

Practices

SENTENCE STEM: Individually, I will learn and apply culturally-responsive and affirming practices in my daily work and planning by...**speaking to the future.**

BUT HOW? **Defining and solving the problems in the right way**

Looking for a starting place? You can quickly review details about each **design principle** in the *Medium Article, "Racism and inequity are products of design. They can be redesigned."*

Let's practice noticing and reflecting collectively.

Planning for equity: Introduce yourselves and make connections! Then, share your design challenge with your small group. As a group, choose the challenge you'd like to explore together. Use a sheet of paper to **answer one "BUT HOW" below as a group**. But how do we plan to notice and reflect on policy? **OR** But how do we plan to notice and reflect on culture?

Policy

SENTENCE STEM: Collectively, we will establish and advocate for policies, protocols, and expectations that promote equity by... **ceding power**

BUT HOW? **Brainstorming and transformation cards**

Culture

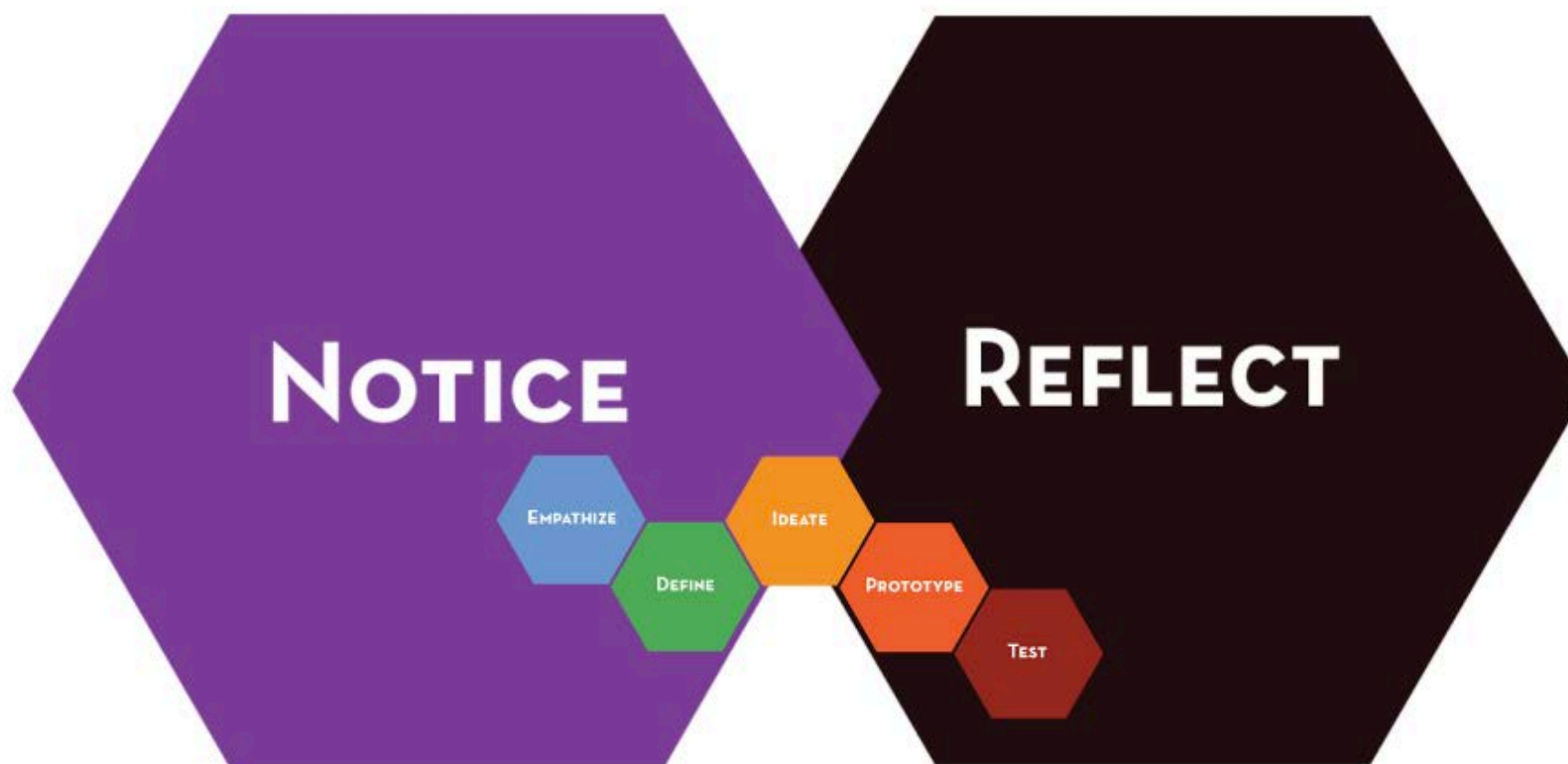
SENTENCE STEM: Collectively, we will acknowledge the historical and current context of diverse stakeholders to create an inclusive professional and educational culture by... **designing at the margins.**

BUT HOW? **Equity Pauses**

Looking for a starting place? You can quickly review details about each **design principle** in the *Medium Article, "Racism and inequity are products of design. They can be redesigned."*

Group Share Outs

Share with the whole group the topic you decided to approach, and how you approached addressing that topic collectively through policy and culture.



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Closing Reflections

Empathy: Design at the Margins

"An idea that suits an extreme user will nearly certainly work for the majority of others. And without understanding what people on the far reaches of your solution need, you'll never arrive at solutions that can work for everyone."

-IDEO's Design Toolkit

3 Common Types of Empathy Work

| Interview | Observation | Immersion |
|---|--|---|
| A technique for gathering information through direct dialogue | A fly-on the wall approach to conducting field research in an unobstructive manner | A “walk-a-mile” approach for building empathy for people through firsthand experience |

Empathy Interviews

| Non-Examples | Examples |
|---|--|
| Can you give me feedback on what you think of this app? | Tell me about your favorite app. Show me how you use [x] app. |
| Would this class be more fun if we did more projects? | What's an activity you could spend all day doing without getting bored? |
| On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate our last professional development session? | Talk about the best professional development session you've experienced. |

Encourage stories

Understand how users engage with a resource or service

Solicit the emotional and subconscious

Planning for Empathy

- Which empathy strategies will you leverage: interviewing, observation, and/or immersion?
- How will you select stakeholders to interview, observe, or shadow?
- What questions might you ask to encourage stories and solicit the subconscious?

Share Out

- What empathy practices or strategies are you taking away to more deeply infuse stakeholder input and cede power?
- What questions are you still grappling with?



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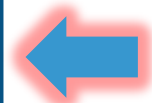
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Closing Reflections

Work across difference that privileges the voices and perspectives of the most affected “bends the moral arc of universe towards justice.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.,



As a _____(identity)_____ **DESIGNER** at
XXXX School, I strive to
build _____(what)_____
because _____(why)_____.

As a striving ***EQUITY-CENTERED***
DESIGNER, I recognize I need to notice
_____(what)_____ **when I** _____
_____(action))_____ **by** _____(how)_____ **so** _____
_____(equitable outcome of why)_____.

Collaborate and Thought Partner with us!



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