



SPRINGPOINT: PARTNERS IN SCHOOL DESIGN

School Design Scope & Sequence

The school model development work called for by the [Opportunity by Design initiative](#) requires that district, network, and school leaders function like a team of designers: problem solvers who understand that strong solutions grow from targeted inquiry, collaboration, iteration, and creativity – but always with a disciplined focus on “users” – students – and their needs. These are the hallmarks of an authentic and rigorous design process – as is the understanding that the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY) [design principles](#) are the lens for building an innovative system, not a checklist of parts for fitting into the system that already exists.

To help partner districts, networks, and design teams organize this work, we have created a toolkit aligned to each phase of the design process. The toolkit resources provide a road map through the school creation and launch process, but are designed to be flexible, so that districts and networks can develop their own tools that reflect the unique students and communities they serve, as well as the conditions and challenges they face. The toolkit is organized around a school design scope and sequence map, described below and included on page 6, which depicts one possible approach to the design process.

A. School Design Planning Year

Teams can use the school design scope and sequence map (on page 6) to begin outlining the scope of work, objectives, timeframe, personnel, activities, events, and work products they might choose to implement in their initial planning year. The phases in that scope and sequence are outlined below.

Phase 0: Prepare

Preparation for design work is as important as the design work itself. The process of designing new school models is a complex, multi-layered process, requiring engagement and investment from a broad range of internal teams and public constituencies. As teams begin this work, the need for thoughtful preparation and cross-functional organization is critical. Strong preparation requires that districts and networks become thoroughly familiar with the design principles and think deeply about both organizational resources and design team leadership and member recruitment. In particular, for many teams the work of designing for mastery systems, together with the enabling technologies to support them, has been a significant challenge, and requires that partners and design teams begin strategic planning for implementation in the earliest stages of the project.

Here are a few questions teams might consider as they begin this phase of the work:

- Who can bring leadership in design thinking to the district and/or network and the task at hand?
- What are the various areas of expertise that design team members need to complement each other’s strengths?
- What do district and/or network personnel need to know and understand to support this work?
- Who do we need to engage outside of the district or network to facilitate the design work?
- What are the specific areas of work that the design principles suggest?

Some of the work streams and activities of this phase include:

- Create a preliminary project plan
- Orient district and network personnel to design principles and model development processes
- Recruit design team leader(s)
- Outreach to community stakeholders

- Develop competencies of design team

Some of the tools provided by Springpoint for this phase of the work include:

- Project planning tools – a process overview, cross-functional planning tools
- Other tools that may be useful as you begin to explore innovative schools and design process planning

Phase 1: Research & Frame

The ultimate goal of the design process is to generate school models that will meet the unique needs of the communities they serve, and will engage, accelerate, and support all students. During this phase of the work, it is essential that design teams focus intently on understanding the needs of prospective students. Design teams must undertake a comprehensive review of the needs, assets, and experiences of students to fully define the challenges that the new school will be designed to address. Teams collect and analyze both quantitative data about student performance (in particular, that of matriculating eighth graders), to provide the context for accountability and measurement planning, and qualitative data (drawn from focus groups, surveys, observations, a review of student work, etc.) that speaks to the needs and assets of the school’s potential inaugural class.

During this phase design teams will also need to deepen their understanding of the design principles themselves, which are deeply grounded in research and best practice. Design teams must not only develop an understanding of how the principles are integrated and interdependent, they must also begin to outline their concrete implications for successful school development.

This initiative seeks to reshape both the paradigm for high school development, and, ultimately, the district and/or network systems and practices that support it. Consequently, a key charge of this phase of the work is that design teams develop an understanding of the existing ecosystem within which they will develop, launch, and grow, before they begin their design work. Design teams will also begin to help the district and/or network adjust its practices, operations and resources to accommodate the unique aspects of the design they develop. Key leaders in technology, operations and finance, student support, and facilities will need to lend support to this effort, and design teams will need to plan for who these stakeholders will be, setting a foundation so that they are engaged and empowered to participate effectively in the process.

Questions teams will need to consider during this phase of the design process include:

- Do we have all of the relevant data we need to understand the student population we intend to serve?
- How can we map the design principles to our understanding of students’ assets, needs and experiences?
- What barriers exist in the district and/or network and in the community to the work of the design team? How can we best address these barriers, and who must we engage to do so?
- Who in the district is most likely to support innovation, and how can we leverage his/her influence?

Some of the work streams and activities of this phase might include:

- Collect and analyze data on prospective students
- Analyze the requirements of the design principles
- Assess the capacity and resources of the district and/or network to support the design work
- Document network and district resources, requirements and readiness
- Map community stakeholders and potential design facilitators

- Plan to negotiate contracts and regulations to address barriers to implementing the proposed new model

Some of the tools provided by Springpoint for this phase of the work include:

- Background information tools – intro to data-driven design course and intro to the design principles course, with 6-8 instructional modules, webinars, and associated research and analysis tools
- District readiness resources – cross-functional district readiness surveys, technology landscape assessment tools
- Planning templates – “field guide” (data analysis report template), “inventory” (district readiness survey report template); “road map” (design recommendations report template)

Phase 2: Design & Build

This phase is focused on creation: the labor intensive work of brainstorming, sifting through ideas for actionable solutions, and crafting prototypes that bring these ideas to life so they can be shared, learned from, revisited and revised. Implementing a rigorous process of experimentation and testing during this phase helps design teams ensure that the model they are building is student-centered and grounded in a responsiveness to students’ needs, assets and experiences. These iteration cycles enable teams to identify inconsistencies, flaws, and inefficiencies in their plans, and to improve their designs during the planning process.

The types of questions that guide this work focus intensely on the students and the foundational design principles:

- Will this model promote authentic relationships?
- Will this approach to assessment allow students to demonstrate true mastery?
- Will this design promote the kind of collaboration and professional growth needed for ongoing innovation and high-quality teaching?

It will also be important to think strategically about how to structure the design process. For example, teams may need to consider these types of questions:

- What district timelines (procurement, hiring, facilities, student recruitment, community outreach) will influence our design process?
- How do we need to prioritize and sequence our mastery design work in order to have the elements ready for launch (building competencies, selecting and developing curriculum and assessments)?

Some of the work streams and activities of this phase might include:

- Develop school mission and vision
- Develop competencies, rubrics, assessments
- Develop a robust instructional plan
- Determine plan for building school culture
- Collaborate with district and community partners to develop an outreach strategy to recruit, enroll, and orient new students
- Identify and source technology resources
- Create a comprehensive and rigorous human capital plan
- Identify benchmarks and outcomes for each phase of implementation

Some of the tools provided by Springpoint for this phase of the work include:

- Design team tools – toolkit containing innovation & design theory introduction, design team sample assignments and planning guides, discussion protocols, and a design principles rubric
- Planning templates – “handbook” (model design summary template)

Phase 3: Prepare to Launch

The launch phase of this effort may feel like a foot race: an incredible distance to cover in an impossibly short time. Teams will need to pull the threads of their model prototypes, their project plans, staff, students, community, space, resources, and time together into a tightly woven web. It will be important in this phase to emphasize robust preparation and planning for staff, highly engaging community outreach, and a rigorous and strategic student orientation program. It’s important to note during this phase of the work that “launch” does not signify the end of the design work for the team; rather, it represents a gear shift: during this phase and throughout the life of the school, while the day-to-day work gets done, it will be necessary to also continue the practices of assessment, analysis, and iteration established by the design process.

Questions teams will need to consider during this phase of the process include:

- How do we operationalize all aspects of our design?
- What are the district and/or network timelines that will drive our project plan, and how do we prioritize and sequence our implementation plan?
- Does our model design have unique implications for our implementation plan, which require realignment of district and/or network processes, structures, or resources (re: hiring, budgeting, procurement, etc.)?
- Are there additional key collaborators within the district or network who will be necessary to support implementation and launch?

Some of the work streams and activities of this phase might include:

- Plan pre-launch activities to build awareness and promote strong recruitment
- Physical plant and technological system readiness
- Prepare entire team for school year 1 activities

Some of the tools provided by Springpoint for this phase of the work include:

- Project planning guides
- Sample implementation, hiring, policy, operations, and hiring guides

B. Implementation: Operational Years 1 & 2

An innovative model proposal is only the first step in creating a vibrant new school. As outlined by the design principles, a strong school model embeds continuous learning – robust cycles of inquiry, assessment, and innovation – into all aspects of its operation. In order to fully meet the developing needs of students and promote strong learning, the practices of data-based inquiry, research, reflection and revision – all tightly linked to student outcomes and experience – must continue as the school launches operations.

Phase 4: Continuous Improvement: Launch, Ongoing Inquiry & Innovation

Evidence from the new small schools research suggests that creating processes that enable a robust practice of inquiry and innovation early in the design process will most effectively help design teams think about how to build these elements into the DNA of their new schools. Thus, the Phase 4 Continuous Improvement matrix focuses on iterative cycles of inquiry, through which teams focus on

assessment, reflection and ongoing planning to constantly refine the school design through the lens of the design principles. In the matrix, these cycles serve as the framework for all aspects of the school's design, including instructional practice and operations.

School teams will need to build in regular cycles of assessment, reflection, and planning as a continuation of the practices established by design teams during the planning year. Areas that teams will likely want to consider, including operations, curriculum modules, and student support systems, are all represented in the matrix, so that teams can separately track their regular inquiry into the successes and challenges of these areas.

These cycles will require a regular practice of data collection and analysis, supported by tools that promote this work at the student, classroom/cohort/group, team, and school level. The matrix can be used to track this work and specify the questions and resources that teams will rely on to engage in this process effectively.

Questions teams can engage with as part of their regular inquiry and innovation cycle:

- What is our data telling us about what works and what doesn't in our model?
- What do our students tell us about what works and what doesn't in our model?
- What levers in our model do we need to readjust?
- What expertise do we need to help us revise our design?
- What new solution will we test?
- What metrics will tell us if we've improved?

Effective cycles of inquiry will share the following characteristics:

- A reliance on collection of both quantitative and qualitative performance data (e.g. formative assessments, classroom records, school records, student and teacher surveys, observation records, focus group feedback, programming and transcript review, etc.)
- Use of a "dashboard" of data elements shared by all staff and students
- A focus on honing specific model elements to improve performance
- Concrete benchmarks to measure success/failure of next iteration

School Design Scope & Sequence Map

Planning Year

	Phase 0 → Prepare	Phase 1 → Research & Frame		Phase 2 → Design & Build		Phase 3 → Prepare to Launch
Scope of Work	<p><i>Build the foundation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Create project plan → Ready district/network personnel → Find the right design team leaders 	<p><i>Define the challenge:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Analyze needs/assets of prospective students → Analyze requirements of the design principles → Analyze capacity & resources of the district/network to support the work, including the technology landscape (internal/external) → Create & prepare the design team - building both group and individual competencies and work plans 		<p><i>Create the blueprint:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Articulate school mission & vision → Build the instructional plan → Create the map for building culture & community → Identify the technology & resources necessary to implement → Develop benchmark/outcome goals for continuous learning <p><i>Clear the road:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Reorganize district/network operations to support the work → Secure technology & resources → Negotiate policy, regulatory, contractual space for the work 		<p><i>Prepare stakeholders & field:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Build awareness in parents, students, and community → Ready the team -for YD, instruction, assessment, digital learning, using data, collaboration → Ready the space - both physical and virtual
Time Frame Objectives & Personnel	<p>PREPARE Months 1-2</p> <p>Study design principles; national search for design team leaders; preparation of district/network personnel, leadership, and community stakeholders</p> <p><i>District/Network lead(s)</i></p>	<p>RESEARCH & FRAME Months 2-3</p> <p><i>Research:</i> Investigate student profiles/needs/assets and district/network resources/readiness</p> <p><i>Frame:</i> Examine design principles & map implications for model designs</p> <p><i>Design team + partners + community</i></p>		<p>DESIGN [Cycles] Months 4-5</p> <p><i>Design intensive:</i> Initial cycles of ideation, prototyping, testing, revising (building on the design principles)</p> <p><i>Design team + partners</i></p>	<p>BUILD [Cycles] Months 6-9</p> <p>Project planning intensive: project plan; implementation team organization; continued design cycles + initial project implementation</p> <p><i>Design team + district/network liaison + broader network</i></p>	<p>LAUNCH Months 9-10</p> <p>Spring & summer event series; hiring; staff development; student/parent orientation; facilities preparation; project management</p> <p><i>Design team + district/network + partners + faculty</i></p>
Activities & Events	<p>Hiring activities</p> <p>Webinars/conference calls</p> <p>District/network team meetings</p> <p>Partner meetings</p>	<p>Virtual seminars</p> <p>Quantitative analysis</p> <p>Field research</p> <p>Visits & observations</p> <p>Expert consultations</p> <p>District/network interviews*</p> <p>Partner interviews*</p> <p>District/network readiness & tools/tech surveys</p>		<p>Design cycles</p> <p>Community outreach & student recruitment</p> <p>Staff recruitment/hiring</p> <p>Partner engagement</p> <p>Curriculum module selection/development</p> <p>Competency grading system selection/development</p> <p>State/local assessment planning</p> <p>Resource planning & procurement process initiation</p> <p>Data Inquiry Plan</p> <p>Facilities assessment</p>		<p>Summer session</p> <p>"People prep" institutes</p> <p>Student/parent orientation</p> <p>Week 1/month 1/semester 1 Year 1</p> <p>(*all activities incorporate plans for community, teachers, and students)</p>
Possible Products	<p>Articulation plan</p> <p>Design team job descriptions</p> <p>Preliminary project plan</p> <p>Internal project support brief</p>	<p>Field Guide:</p> <p><i>Data analysis</i></p> <p><i>Population profile</i></p> <p><i>Needs assessment</i></p> <p>Inventory:</p> <p><i>Budget/Procurement Guide</i></p> <p><i>Technology Asset Survey</i></p> <p><i>Facilities Readiness Survey</i></p>	<p>Road Map:</p> <p><i>Theory of Action</i></p> <p><i>Design</i></p> <p><i>Recommendations</i></p>	<p>Model Elements:</p> <p><i>Mission/vision statement</i></p> <p><i>Belief/practice statement</i></p> <p><i>Student ecosystem plan</i></p> <p><i>Performance goals & targets</i></p> <p><i>Curriculum guidelines</i></p> <p><i>Calendar & schedules</i></p> <p><i>Grading & assessment plan</i></p> <p><i>Pathways & transitions plan</i></p> <p><i>Staffing/development plan</i></p> <p><i>Budget & operations plan</i></p> <p><i>Tools, tech & space guidelines</i></p>	<p>Project Plan:</p> <p><i>Data/accountability measures</i></p> <p><i>Milestones & benchmarks</i></p> <p><i>Project & school budget projections</i></p> <p>Tools:</p> <p><i>LMS/SIS</i></p> <p><i>Curriculum map & modules</i></p> <p><i>Grading & Assessment tools</i></p> <p><i>Organizational Chart</i></p>	<p>Launch Map:</p> <p>Summer map</p> <p>Week 1 map</p> <p>Month 1 map</p> <p>Semester 1 map</p> <p>Year 1 map</p>

Sample Implementation Matrix

Implementation Years

Phase 4 → Innovate: Launch, Implement, Assess, Iterate						
Continuous Improvement	<p><i>Key Questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is our data telling us about what works and what doesn't in our model? • What do our students tell us about what works and what doesn't in our model? • What levers in our model do we need to readjust? • What expertise do we need to help us revise our design? • What new solution will we test? • What metrics will tell us if we've improved 			<p><i>Key elements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rely on rapid data collection, quantitative/qualitative performance data (can include, but not limited to formative assessments, classroom records, school records, attendance, student & teacher surveys, observation records, focus group feedback, program/transcript review, etc.) • Focus on honing specific model elements to improve performance • Using MDRC NSS outcomes as baseline, establish concrete benchmarks to measure success/failure of next iteration. 		
⊕	Inquiry & Innovation Cycle 1 4-6 weeks	Inquiry & Innovation Cycle 2 4-6 weeks	Inquiry & Innovation Cycle 3 4-6 weeks	Inquiry & Innovation Cycle 4 4-6 weeks	Inquiry & Innovation Cycle 5 4-6 weeks	Inquiry & Innovation Cycle 6 4-6 weeks
Teaching & Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Common Core-based curriculum launch • Year 2 state/local assessment planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New curriculum launch • Curriculum Module evaluation • Year 3 curriculum planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New curriculum launch • Curriculum Module evaluation • Year 3 curriculum research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New curriculum launch • Curriculum Module evaluation • Year 3 curriculum selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New curriculum launch • Curriculum Module evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum sequence development, revision
Student Ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary person introductions • (Student-led) Caregiver conferences • Community Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Student-led) Caregiver conferences • Community Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Student-led) Caregiver conferences • Community Forum • New student recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Student-led) Caregiver conferences • Community Forum • New student open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Student-led) Caregiver conferences • Community Forum • New student open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community (re)Design Team • New student orientation
College & Career Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College/Career Explorations • Trips, observations, college & career counseling, student exhibitions & presentations, work experience (internships & externships), transcript review, academic advisement, etc. 					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College sequence development, revision
Staff Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching conferences • Individual/peer observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching conferences • Individual/peer observations • Year 3 position forecasting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching conferences • Individual/peer observations • Year 3 Staff Recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching conferences • Individual/peer observations • Year 3 Planning (Pitches) • Year 3 Staff Selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching conferences • Individual/peer observations • Year 3 New staff orientation/observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 3 new staff orientation/observations • Summer Training institute
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech Systems Check • Resource Allocation Check • Budget Forecasting, Adjustment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech Systems Check • Resource Allocation Check • Budget Forecasting, Adjustment • Year 3 Expansion Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech Systems Check • Resource Allocation Check • Budget Forecasting, Adjustment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech Systems Check • Resource Allocation Check • Budget Forecasting, Adjustment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech Systems Check • Resource Allocation Check • Budget Forecasting, Adjustment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational planning



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Springpoint is a national nonprofit organization that partners with districts and networks to establish new, innovative high schools. Springpoint provides the training and support to design, launch, and continually improve these schools, such that they leverage all available talent, time, technology, and resources to produce success on a grand scale. Our aim is to enable all students, regardless of environment or background, to succeed in high school, college and beyond.

Read the landmark study that provides the foundation for our work: Carnegie Corporation of New York's [Opportunity by Design](#) report.

To find out more about Springpoint and our work, visit springpointschools.org.

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