Executive Summary: Community-Based Design

“The boldness of community-based design is that students help to lead the work. This isn’t just another strategic planning process. Students’ voices matter and they are at the center of the process; this just doesn’t happen in school improvement generally.”

- Dr. Lynn Moody, Former Superintendent of Rowan-Salisbury Schools

For a long while, many have agreed that the 100-year-old industrial design of same-age, standardized progression in schools is neither effective nor equitable. But how do we go about changing such an entrenched model?

We've learned that making big and long-lasting changes in the design of schools requires working together as a community: young people, caregivers, teachers, experts, and other important community members coming together to figure out what kinds of learning experiences will help kids succeed in the future. We subscribe to an approach called community-based design.

Community-based design is a local process where young people, educators, administrators, caregivers, and experts come together to collaboratively design better learning experiences and outcomes.

The goals of community-based design are to create powerful school designs that provide extraordinary and equitable learning experiences and better outcomes for all young people, preparing them for this century’s greatest challenges.

Community-based design is an empowering process that harnesses untapped strengths and brings communities together around the shared goal of creating more extraordinary and equitable learning environments for all young people. At a time when so much of the country—including education—is polarized, we need processes that bring communities together more than ever. This work has never been more necessary, and more possible.