



# SCHOOLS 2030 HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN TOOLKIT

School Leaders' Guide

Developed by  
**Accelerate Impact**







# SCHOOL LEADERS' GUIDE

## ■ LAUNCHING A DESIGN CHALLENGE AT YOUR SCHOOL

Congratulations! You and your school community have decided to embark on a human-centered design challenge that will help you explore the existing barriers to your students achieving the holistic learning outcomes identified in the Schools2030 initiative. By putting aside your assumptions, listening to stakeholders closely and working collaboratively as a team, you will uncover root causes to challenges facing your school community and will generate creative solutions to solve those challenges.

As a school leader, you have a special role to play in launching and leading design work on your campus. We wrote this to help guide you and your Aga Khan Foundation facilitator to reflect and prepare to form design team(s), initiate this design challenge and complete the work needed to get to more student-centered, innovative ideas that are ready to pitch to the Schools2030 initiative.

For this design challenge, there are ten phases. Each phase has different tools or activities that your design team will need to complete in order to move to the next phase. The Educator Toolkit will serve as your team(s)' guide to this process. Each step of the design challenge is supported with a tool in the toolkit. Throughout the toolkit, at the beginning of each phase there is an introduction page with context and goals for the phase as well as summaries of the tools. At the end of each phase there is a tool to help you summarize your work and a tool to help you evaluate whether you are ready to move on and to reflect on what you have learned.

See below for the topics covered in this guide. Work with your Aga Khan Foundation facilitator to reflect on the topics presented here in order for you to prepare to launch your design challenge.

### BUILDING A TEAM

- Your role in the design challenge
- Identifying who to select for this work
- Empowering your design team

### MAKING A PLAN

- The core tenets of a human-centered design challenge
- Different models for facilitating a design challenge

### LAUNCHING THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

- Preparing to launch
- Working with an equity lens

### DURING THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

#### COMPLETING THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

- Selecting the idea to pitch
- Regional Pitch Night & Celebration
- Transitioning from the design challenge to implementation

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## ■ BUILDING A TEAM

### *Your Role in the Design Challenge*

As the School Leader, you have roles and responsibilities that are distinct from those of your educators. It is important to recognize these differences and leverage each of your roles and responsibilities to accelerate your design work.

Thinking about your specific roles and responsibilities as a School Leader, what can you do to help position the members of your design team to be successful in this design challenge? Think about how you can help reduce their day-to-day responsibilities, arrange for coverage of their classroom when or if they leave campus to shadow at another school or attend workshops, make arrangements for them to interview students, parents and other stakeholders and provide support for when the design team convenes to do their collaborative work.

Be aware of how you can **lend your leadership and decision-making power to help your design team(s)** test their prototypes as well. You may need to help arrange space, give design team(s) a small budget for snacks, etc. in order for them to successfully test their prototypes. Your design team(s) may also develop ideas that fall into your sphere of influence. Be aware that you may be needed to help test some of the prototypes developed.

It is also important that you both **engage with the design team(s) to give constructive feedback** – every phase will ask the design team(s) to report to you for feedback – while also allowing innovative ideas to continue to develop without discouraging them. Beware of throwing up roadblocks or saying “no” too early. **Stay optimistic about the possibilities** – your attitude and energy about possibilities will likely have a huge impact on the team(s)' energy levels.

### *Your Educators' Role in the Design Challenge*

Think about the unique roles and responsibilities of your educators. What are they better positioned to do during the design process than you are as a school leader? Think about if your educators have stronger relationships with students and families in terms of share their thoughts and feelings, if they are more easily able to test prototypes in their classrooms, etc.

### *Do You Participate on a Design Team?*

You are welcome to participate on a design team as long as you can ensure that your presence will not influence the rest of the team(s)' participation in any way. If you think educators may not feel comfortable speaking freely or will only defer to your leadership, it might be better for you to support but not fully participate. Be aware that your power and influence might be hard to overcome, especially for certain educators (new teachers or people with less status) or in hierarchal cultural contexts.

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■ **REFLECT ON YOUR ROLE AS A SCHOOL LEADER**

What might you do to assist your educators to be a successful design team?

How might you support the work of the design team with their day-to-day responsibilities?

When are ideal times in your schedule that you can support your design teams in the design work?

What might be some of the advantages if you participated on the design team?

What might be some of the challenges if you participated on the design team?

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## ■ MAKING A PLAN

### *Identifying Who to Select for this Work*

You will want to initiate **one or two design team(s)** for your school. Each design team should have **four to six participants**. Design team(s) should be made of up educators who teach in the same grade level or similar grade levels.

When you identify how many design team(s) you want to initiate and which grade levels, begin to think about the educators you would like to invite to participate. Spend some time working with your Aga Khan Foundation facilitator to identify who is best suited for participating. Think about individuals who are able and willing to engage in projects that require extra effort. Think about educators who are open to new ideas and are excited to try new things. Think about educators who are good at listening and value other people's perspective. Think about educators who match the Mindsets listed below.

Also think about identifying educators with a diversity of backgrounds – men, women, grew up in the community, grew up elsewhere, new teacher, experienced teacher, etc. In design projects, we find that it is helpful to have a variety of backgrounds and perspectives on a design team in order to push the team to question assumptions and challenge the status quo.

Below are some of the mindsets that are helpful to have when engaging in a design challenge. Take a look and reflect on which members of your staff embody these mindsets on a day-to-day basis.

### *Mindsets of Design*

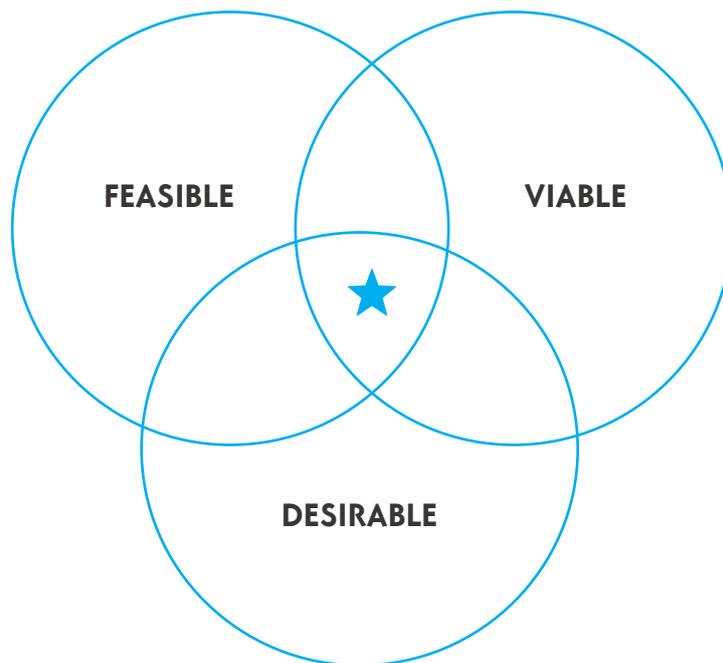
- Work together to understand the context
- Look carefully to understand potential problems and opportunities
- Stay optimistic that you can solve the problem
- Hold back on solving the problem until the time is right
- Get inspired by people – active listening is a source of creative inspiration
- Put aside biases and assumptions about what you think the problem is - listen to the stakeholder.
- Seek new perspectives on old problems
- See opportunities in constraints
- Get comfortable with navigating contradictory information
- Many ideas lead to good ideas
- Defer judgment and criticism of ideas until the time is right
- Idea generation is not the time for evaluating ideas
- Brainstorming is a collaborative team activity
- Allow yourself to think of wild ideas
- Prototype early and often in order to learn about your idea
- Start small to make big changes
- Show don't tell
- Many cycles of prototyping are necessary to develop an idea
- Feedback is a gift to improve your ideas

## ■ BUILDING A TEAM

### *Empowering Your Design Team(s)*

Some of the ideas your design team(s) develop might feel like they are not feasible at first. The design process will help the team(s) to understand how to implement their ideas in a way that is feasible, desirable and viable.

- *Feasible* means that given the constraints of your context, your school will be able to implement the idea.
- *Desirable* means that the idea your design team creates solves a real need for the stakeholders they are serving.
- *Viable* means that with funding this idea will be able to be implemented and sustained for years to come.



Although it may be difficult, try hard to empower your design team(s) to explore new ideas that challenge the status quo. They will rely on you later to help them strategize and assess if their idea is feasible and viable. But at the beginning of the project allow for the design team(s) to focus on what is most desirable to the stakeholder and what is most likely going to solve their problem and meet their needs – even if it is not feasible or viable in its first iteration.

If your design team(s) are hesitant, encourage them to keep going and to lean on the design process to help to develop solutions that will make a real and measurable difference for your students.

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## ■ MAKING A PLAN

### *The Core Tenets of a Human-Centered Design Challenge*

The foundation of human-centered design is a first-hand understanding of the human needs and behaviors related to the problem you are solving, followed by decision-making that is based on that understanding. It relies heavily on collaboration from a team, participation from potential end users and stakeholders, a willingness to find the solution through iterative cycles of learning, and a focus on action over planning.

To preserve the integrity of the human-centered design process, we are requesting that you commit to the following components of your design challenge:

- Engaging with stakeholders in one-on-one interviews to deeply understand their perspectives, needs and motivations.
- Working collaboratively as a team when possible.
- Generating many ideas before selecting one to move forward.
- Trying an idea in a small-scale prototype in order to test your assumptions before committing to implementing the idea.

If you and your design team are able to fully commit to all of those steps, you will be maximizing the innovation potential of conducting a design challenge. If you skip any of those steps, you will be compromising the potential to create a truly student-centered solution that helps to increase students' holistic learning outcomes.

### *Mapping Out Your Team(s)' Design Challenge*

We understand that every school has different constraints in terms of their educators' ability to be away from their classrooms, their ability to travel to other campuses and the budget to cover those expenses.

Start with the reflection tool (on the following page) and please work with your Aga Khan Foundation facilitator to determine which of the four options explained in the following pages is most appropriate for your school and region.

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■ **REFLECT ON YOUR SCHOOL**

Who are some educators you would like to participate on a design team?

What are the mindsets that these people represent?

What are some strengths at your school that will aid the design team?

What are some challenges at your school that your design team might face?

Who are members of your community (outside your school) who might want to participate in the design challenge?

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## ■ OPTIONS FOR DESIGN CHALLENGE MODELS

*There are four options for how to structure your design challenge and the work your design team will complete.*

- Option 1: Regional Teams - 4 workshops
- Option 2: Schools-Based Teams - 4 workshops
- Option 3: School-Based Teams - 20 Meetings
- Option 4: Solo or Partnered Work

Each option has a structure for the flow of work and the approximate times for each engagement model. Between workshop/meetings, the design team will complete fieldwork, individually.

### *What is a Workshop?*

A workshop is a convening of educators on the design team where everyone works together collaboratively using the Educator Toolkit. Workshops are not training sessions. A workshop will focus on the phases of the design challenge in the Educator Toolkit, and the design team will use the collaborative time to debrief completed phases of work, complete current phases, and plan for fieldwork.

### *What is a Meeting?*

For Option 3, your design team will hold 20 shorter meetings (90 minutes to 2 hours) instead of 4 longer workshops. This is the same amount of total time commitment, but will be spread out over numerous smaller engagements as a design team.

### *What is Fieldwork?*

Between workshops or meetings your design team will complete fieldwork individually. Each member of the design team will use their Educator Toolkit to guide work on their own. Fieldwork should be completed before the start of the next team workshop or meeting.

### *What is a Regional Pitch Night and Celebration?*

This is an opportunity to bring together the leaders of the Schools 2030 initiative and the regional design teams, as well as community members and stakeholders to publicly share and discuss the work that has been created in the design challenges. This an opportunity for teams to determine if they have a common idea they all want to share to ask for funding, or if teams want to seek funding for their individual team projects.

The Regional Pitch night is also an opportunity celebrate the effort, ideas, and commitment of the educators, leaders, and community that have all participated in the work. It will feel like a special event full of joy and fun.

## OPTION 1: REGIONAL TEAMS - 4 WORKSHOPS

### Option 1: Regional Teams

Four workshops with regional schools. Individual fieldwork to be completed between workshops.

#### Pros:

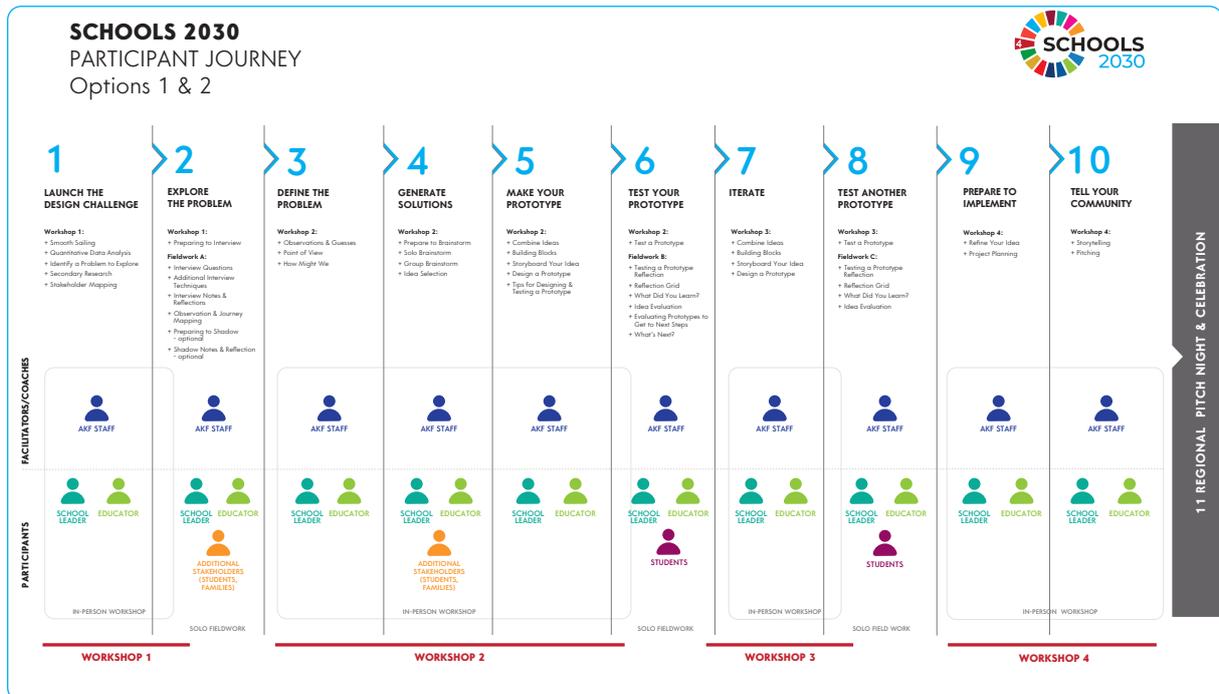
- Educators get a chance to share ideas and collaborate with other local schools. This diversity of perspectives enriches the design process.
- Educators get to maximize their opportunities to work through the design challenge together and to receive coaching support.

#### Cons:

- The logistics and budget required to get regional groups together.
- This model requires several days away from school.

#### Who Should Consider This Model:

If you live in a region where schools can gather with relative ease, this model may prove to be beneficial. If it is possible for educators to be away from their classrooms for the day, this model may prove to be beneficial.



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## MAKING A PLAN: OPTION 2

### Option 2: School-Based Team(s) – 4 Workshops

Four workshops with school-based team(s).  
Individual fieldwork to be completed between workshops.

**Pros:**

- Educators get a chance to share ideas and collaborate with their colleagues.
- Educators get to maximize their opportunities to work through the design challenge together and to receive coaching support.

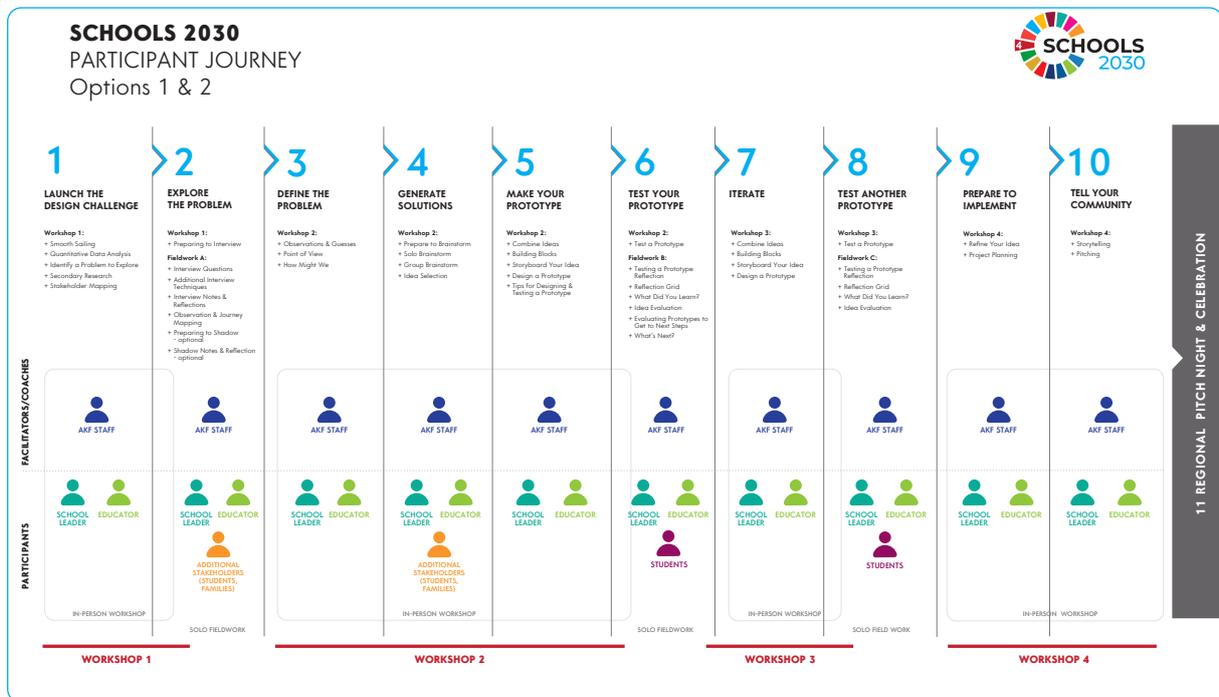
**Cons:**

- This model requires several days where the educators are not in the classroom.

**Who Should Consider This Model:**

If you live in a region where schools cannot gather with ease, this model may prove to be beneficial.

If it is possible for educators to be away from their classrooms for the day, this model may prove to be beneficial.



## MAKING A PLAN: OPTION 3 - 20 MEETINGS

### Option 3: School-Based Teams - 20 Meetings

Twenty before- or after school meetings working in school-based teams. Four phases of individual fieldwork to be completed between workshops as stated below. This model takes the elements of the four workshops (in Option 1 & 2) and divides the engagement time and work across twenty shorter meetings.

There are more activities in a phase than a design team can complete in a short meeting (approximately 90 minutes). So multiple meetings are clustered into this model to help outline your work plan. For example, the Launch Phase will take approximately two meetings, and by the end of the Meetings 1 & 2 your design team will have, ideally, completed #5 Stakeholder Mapping.

#### Pros:

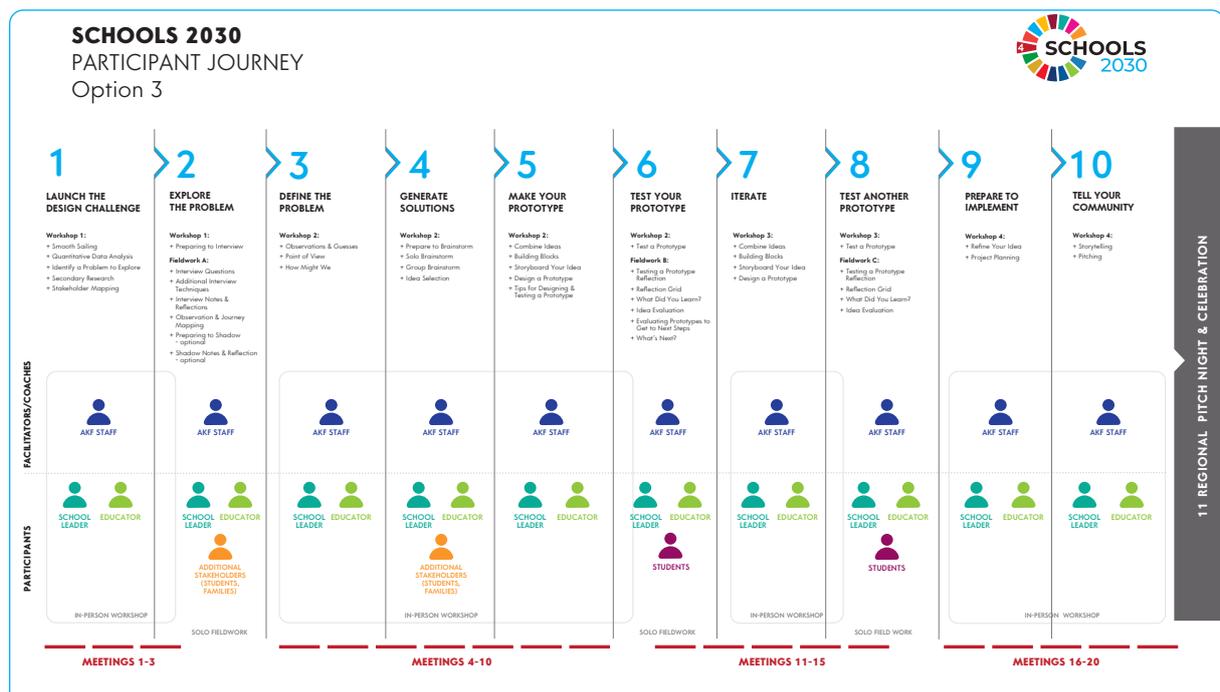
- Educators get a chance to share ideas and collaborate with their colleagues.
- The process is broken into manageable chunks that can be completed over time.
- Educators do not have to commit to meetings that take them away from class.

#### Cons:

- This model does not maximize opportunities for coaching.
- This model spreads the work over time limiting the potential for the process to gain and maintain momentum.
- This model requires a commitment to meeting before or after school for twenty meetings.

#### Who Should Consider This Model:

If you live in a region where schools cannot gather with ease, this model may prove to be beneficial. If it is not possible for educators to be away from their classrooms for the day, this model may prove to be beneficial.



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## ■ MAKING A PLAN: OPTION 4 - SOLO OR PARTNERED WORK

### *Option 4: Solo or Partnered Work*

Solo or partnered work except one meeting to conduct “Generate” activities. Educators will work individually or with their School Leader to complete all the activities of the toolkit (except for the Generate phase) – including fieldwork. All tools, including those designated as workshop tools and fieldwork tools, to be completed according to individual schedules.

#### **Pros:**

- Educators do not have to commit to meetings that take them away from class.
- Educators can schedule their work on the design challenge as they see fit.

#### **Cons:**

- Educators do not get a chance to share ideas and collaborate with other local schools or colleagues.
- This model does not maximize opportunities for coaching.
- This model does not create accountability to a team or the deadline of a workshop to motivate educators to continue the work.

#### **“Generate” workshop**

There is an opportunity to bring students and/or families to assist with the brainstorming process during this meeting.

- 1.75 - 2 hours for *Generate* activities
- 1 hour for *Generate* reflection

#### **Additional Guidance for Option 4:**

This option should only be picked if you’re the only member of a school with two or fewer participants. If you have multiple people at your school participating in the School 2030 Initiative and the design challenge then use another option for your design challenge model.

#### **Who Should Consider This Model:**

If you live in a region where schools cannot gather with ease, this model may prove to be beneficial. If it is not possible for educators to be away from their classrooms for the day, this model may prove to be beneficial. If you have a small number of educators or educators who cannot find time to meet, this model may prove to be beneficial.

- Working individually for an entire design challenge means you will want to incorporate some other structures for support and accountability. Who might you ask to support you?
- You might set up a weekly or monthly call with other designers or leaders of the Schools2030 Initiatives to share, ask questions, and learn more.
- You might want to establish who you will call if you need help, support, or guidance.

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■ **REFLECT ON YOUR DESIGN CHALLENGE MODEL**

*When you return to your school, work with your Educators to answer these questions...*

When will be a good time for your design team(s) to regularly work on the design challenge?

How will your Educators connect with you and their Aga Khan Foundation facilitator for support and feedback?

When and how often will you check in about their progress?

What other structure or guidance will you need to provide for your design teams to be successful with the design challenge?

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## ■ LAUNCHING THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

### *Preparing to Launch*

After you have identified your design team(s) and determined the model your school is going to use, gather everyone together to share the expectations of their participation. Ask for a commitment to the entire process and explain the supports that you will put in place for them.

From there, review the tools in the *Launch* phase of the toolkit in order to gather together the information your design team(s) will need into order to complete this phase. Plan to participate with the design team(s) during this part of the first workshop in order to help guide them through these steps.

### *Working with an Equity Lens*

When making changes to your school's structure and culture, it is important to keep in mind all stakeholders, including those who are typically underrepresented. We have embedded an equity lens into this toolkit to help design team(s) keep those who are typically underrepresented in the forefront of the decision-making process.

Please see below for our definitions of equity and inequity.

**Equity:** An approach where every person, regardless of who they are, is given what she or he needs in order to survive and thrive.

**Inequity:** A circumstance in which some people get more resources than others; those with less do not have what they need to survive and thrive.

How might you and your design team(s) leverage this design challenge to overcome inequities at your school and ensure that everyone has what she or he needs to survive and thrive?

## ■ DURING THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

### *Supporting Your Design Team(s)*

Remember to continue supporting your design team(s) as they progress through the design challenge. Make sure to prioritize giving them feedback at the end of every phase. Ensure that they have what they need (space, time off, coverage of duties and/or classroom) to complete their design work. Encourage them to keep going if they ever seem hesitant and ask how you could provide further support.

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## ■ COMPLETING THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

### *Selecting the Idea to Pitch*

Once your design team(s) have completed their design challenge, they will have prepared a story of their design work (who they met, what they did, what they learned, etc.) as well as a pitch for why their idea solves a challenge that will lead to improving holistic learning outcomes for students. Work with the team(s) to hone their stories and pitches. Now is a good time to assess the feasibility and viability of their ideas and help them to shape their ideas into something that is possible to implement.

### *Regional Pitch Night & Celebration*

Work with your Aga Khan Foundation facilitator to explore the possibility of a regional pitch night and celebration where design team(s) from different schools across the region come together to share their ideas and celebrate the completion of their design challenge. Depending on the structure being proposed by the Aga Khan Foundation facilitator, the Schools2030 leadership may decide to select one idea or multiple ideas to fund in all regional schools. Do your part to provide space for hosting the celebration and for gathering the community (families, business leaders, professors, etc.) together to hear the design team(s)' pitches.

### *Transitioning from the Design Challenge to Implementation*

Once your design team(s) have presented their pitches, received feedback, and heard whether or not they received funding, help your design team(s) transition from an exploratory design mode to a strategic implementation mode. Now is the time for you to influence the process, share your knowledge and collaborate to help with what is needed in order to implement the solution. As a School Leader, you can also play a role in helping design team(s) assess the success of the ideas they are implementing over the long term.

## ■ REFLECTION ON YOUR ROLE AS A SCHOOL LEADER

How will you support your design team(s) to be successful?

What model will your school use for their design challenge? Why?



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