From "Robbyn Fernandez <robbyn.fernandez@bvsd.org>" <robbyn.fernandez@bvsd.org>
Subject **Could you share the presentation from today?**
To Randy Barber <randy.barber@bvsd.org>
Date February 25, 2026 12:22:23 PM MST

---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: **Angela King Smith** <akingsmith@erstrategies.org>
Date: Wed, Feb 25, 2026 at 12:17 PM
Subject: RE: Could you share the presentation from today?
To: Robbyn Fernandez <robbyn.fernandez@bvsd.org>
Cc: Samantha LeVangie <slevangie@erstrategies.org>

Absolutely. Here you go.

The Gameplay has the game we discussed and the ongoing BVSD has the Day in the Life content.

Angela

Angela King Smith, Ed.D (Pronouns: She/Her/Hers)
Partner

ERS

Education Resource Strategies
480 Pleasant St, Suite C200 | Watertown, MA 02472

678-612-4903

akingsmith@erstrategies.org | www.erstrategies.org



From: Robbyn Fernandez <robbyn.fernandez@bvsd.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 25, 2026 2:06 PM
To: Angela King Smith <akingsmith@erstrategies.org>
Subject: Could you share the presentation from today?

Hi Angela,

We are in our declining enrollment steering committee meeting and we would like to share the update with our team. Could you share the slides with us?

Thanks!

Robbyn

--

Robbyn Fernandez

Assistant Superintendent of Schools
720-561-5086

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contain information that is confidential, proprietary, privileged or otherwise protected by law. It is to be viewed only by the intended recipient(s). If you are not the intended recipient(s), please notify the sender of this message and delete your copy immediately. Thank you for your cooperation.

--

Robbyn Fernandez
Assistant Superintendent of Schools
720-561-5086

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Attachments:

- Ongoing_BVSD_touchpoints.pdf
- Draft_ERS Lunch_Gameplay.pdf



ALL TOGETHER
for ALL STUDENTS

ERS x BVSD Ongoing Touchpoint Deck

Agenda

- Share back what we have heard/learned about the “small school” experience in the DITL summary
- Your vision for the types of experiences we want to highlight for students along each dimension
- Walk through the current draft of gameplay for ERS week/internal testing
- Share the full set of student experience cards we have currently drafted
- **Other Logistical Things**
  - Any updates on the logistical planning side (dates, locations, etc.) for you to share with our team
  - Scheduling – can we get time on the calendar for testing the game with your team? Is this possible the week of spring break or no?
  - Communication/Translation – who will be our point of contact for translating the final set of materials?
-

What we heard about the small-school experience in BVSD

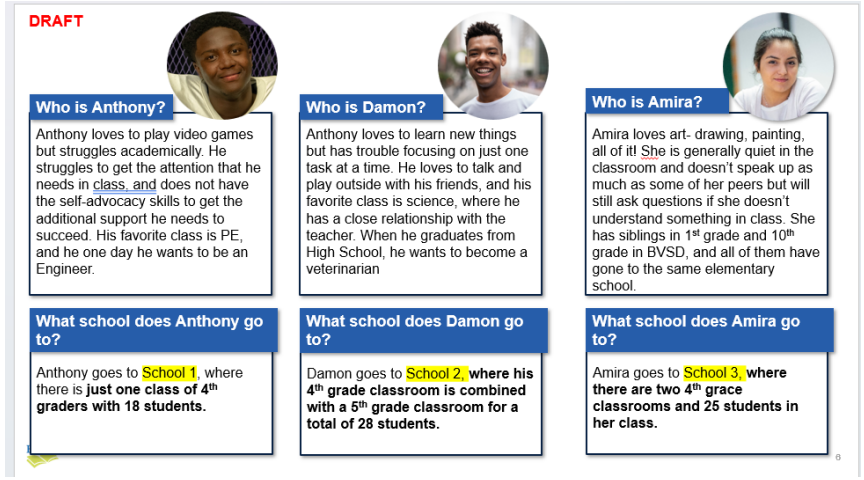
- **Class size inconsistency creates disruptive experiences for students and staff.** Students and families experience significant year-to-year variability (e.g., class sizes of 18 students one year, 29 the next), which impacts predictability, staffing, and parent perception.
- **Access to advanced academics and specialized programs differs significantly across schools, by size**. Larger schools can often advanced or accelerated courses such as math in person, while smaller schools often rely on virtual options or cannot offer the same range. Similarly, extracurricular and enrichment opportunities are limited in very small schools. With only 5–6 full-time teachers, smaller schools are not able to staff the same breadth of offerings.
- **Student support services are thinner in small schools.** Schools under ~350 students have part-time counselors, and specialized staff (psychologists, special education providers, ELD teachers) are often itinerant across multiple schools. Additionally, Special education and MLL services are ongoing pain points. Dedicated in-school services depend on enrollment thresholds and students may only receive services when specialists are physically on site, rather than when they are experiencing immediate need.

What we heard about the small-school experience in BVSD

- **Family access to PreK and aftercare is uneven.** Not all schools have PreK (due to space/demand), and aftercare operates at a rigid threshold, meaning some schools cannot offer it or rely on lotteries where there are too many students interested.
- **Principals have been getting creative to prioritize student experiences, but solutions aren't sustainable.** Continuing full course offerings (such as both Orchestra and Band in 5th grade), Creative staffing backfills, additional sections instead of para hours, and continued programming beyond what enrollment supports have masked the strain but increased per-pupil costs.
- **Community perception of the issue is embedded in school specific reputations.** Families value small-school culture and the SEL attention their students receive. There is strong emotional resistance to perceived boundary shifts or closures (based on past district actions), despite families exercising open choice about 30% of the time. Some schools have tried implementing specialized programming to attract students, but success has been limited.

Pillar	Experiences to Highlight
 **Academic Access & Rigor** *What learning opportunities are (and are not) available based on school size?*	• A student attending a large school with in-person accelerated math vs a student logging into a virtual advanced math class in a small school. • Limited course sections (only one of each grade level) vs. multiple strands with differentiated grouping. • Enrichment courses unavailable to some students based on small school staffing •Year-to-year class size swings (18 → 29 students) that impact the student academic experience •Shared specials teachers (art/music/PE rotating across buildings).
 **Student Supports and Wellbeing** *How consistently students can access mental health, special education, and intervention support?*	• Itinerant counselor only on campus 2–3 days per week. • Psychologist available only on scheduled consult days despite rising mental health acuity. • Intervention blocks/IEP minutes that are cut short because specialists are only on site certain days • MLL students of various levels in the same classroom/clustered into programs at specific schools
 **Staffing & Scheduling** *What operational constraints and impacts are shaping the daily experiences of staff and teachers?*	• Master schedule limited by itinerant staff availability. • Multi-grade classrooms. • Teachers without common planning time.
 **Beyond the Bell** *What happens outside of the school day, and how may family and community mindsets need to shift?*	• Shifting perceptions of which school is “in” or “out” in the moment and families exercising school choice • Legacy family schools that students siblings/parents/families have attended in the past • Lack of consistent PreK classrooms for siblings/family • Culture and climate, feeling of unique connection to school community and boundary

The structure of the DITL would focus on the experience of three students at three different BVSD schools





- Student profiles highlight the diverse experiences of three elementary school students in BVSD, including a student with an IEP
- Each student attends a specific named BVSD school:
  - Three elementary
  - At least one school in West Boulder
  - A 1 strand, 1.5 strand, and 2 strand school
- We follow the student throughout the school-day from arrival to dismissal, highlighting elements of each pillar and how the student experience is impacted by their school's specific resource reality
- Community stakeholders read and internalize the DITL and engage in a short discussion on the needs of each student and how their school environment does/does not meet those needs

Boulder Valley School District x ERS Kick-Off

February 17th 2026



Objectives

20 Min	**Team Introductions & review project scope and outcomes**
15 Min	**Review current artifacts and align on exercise direction**
20 Min	**Identify key milestones and long-term workplan**
5 Min	**Scheduling and close-out**

ERS Boulder Valley Team



Angela King Smith

She/Her

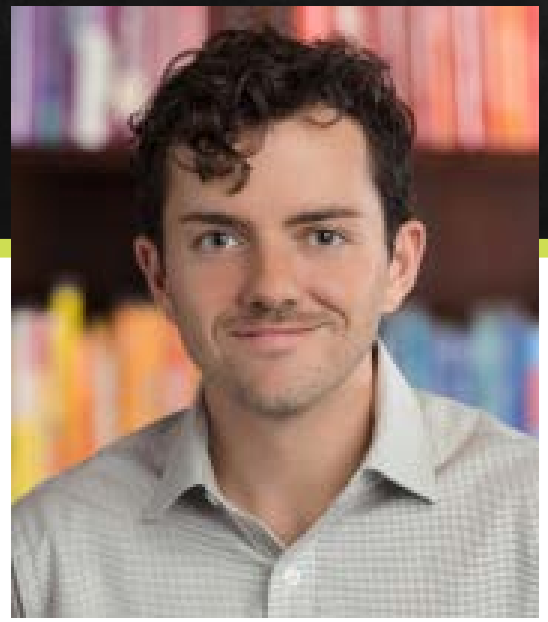
Partner & Project Lead



Samantha LeVangie

She/Her

Principal Associate



Simon Ellis

He/Him

Associate



Raquel Fernandes

She/Her

Analyst

Overall Project Goals



To develop and facilitate a community engagement exercise, so that:

The Boulder Valley District Team:

- Has a deep understanding of the types of student experiences the community values the most
- Understands community appetite for – and considerations around – different trade-offs and potential portfolio decisions

Community Members:

- Can articulate the types of student experiences they value the most, and want the district to prioritize creating for all students
- Understand, at a high level, the relationship between school size and student experience – and what trade-offs and strategies districts can pursue to prioritize offering the experience they want for students

Questions for the Boulder Valley Team:

✓ What other outcome(s) do you want us to be designing towards?

✓ Do you have feedback on the framing of these broad goals?

Draft Project Timeline

Week of	2/16	2/23	3/2	3/9	3/16	3/23	3/30	4/6
External Engagements *(Outside of Weekly Check-ins)*	***This week**			*Game Test with the BV Team	***School Break*** *Facilitation Training, if possible	*Facilitation Training, ctd.	***Potential Community Sessions**	***Potential Community Sessions**
Weekly Work	*Aligning game design to BV goals & priorities*	*Content testing & decision making*	*Facilitation Testing & revised content feedback*	*Prep for in-person facilitation test* *Finalizing Materials*	***Materials Sent for Printing*** *Session coordination*	*Prepare for facilitation training* *Prepare for feedback synthesis*	*Session Delivery* *Synthesize Feedback & Insights*	*Session Delivery* *Synthesize Feedback & Insights** **(May continue after 4/6)*

Question for the Boulder Valley Team:

- ✓ What date(s) do you want to target for facilitating these community sessions? When will we be able to get those dates confirmed on the calendar?
- ✓ ***Likely targeting the weeks of April 13th and April 20th for back-to-back facilitation***

Who will need to be involved

Who?	What role will they play?	Notes
ERS Team	- Project Management - Material Creation and Testing - Training BVSD Facilitators	
BVSD Project Leads Rob Price, Robbyn Fernandez, Randy Barber, Lora De La Cruz	- Executive direction setting - Providing feedback, weekly collaboration	
BVSD Staff – Play-testers Cross-functional stakeholder group (Central Office, School Leaders, School based staff, who else?)	- Providing feedback for draft exercise content - Testing and iterating on gameplay	Principals (All levels); Cabinet members & senior leadership Parent group (or two)
BVSD Staff - Facilitators	- Engaged throughout design process to understand facilitation roles and nuance - Facilitating exercise during community session	Principals (All levels); Cabinet members & senior leadership
BVSD Communications Staff	- Exercise and material translation/coordination	

Question for the Boulder Valley Team:

✓ Who are the right internal stakeholders to involve in pressure testing the game design?

Our plan is an exercise that starts by grounding in students "Day in the Life" experiences, before going into a trade-off decision making exercise

1 Day-in-the-Life

[Est 30min] Grounded in realistic student experiences, community members **review and discuss the experiences of students and staff** in a well-enrolled and resourced school compared to an under-enrolled, resource-constrained school

Creates a shared-fact base that helps the community understand the impact of the resource environment on student experience

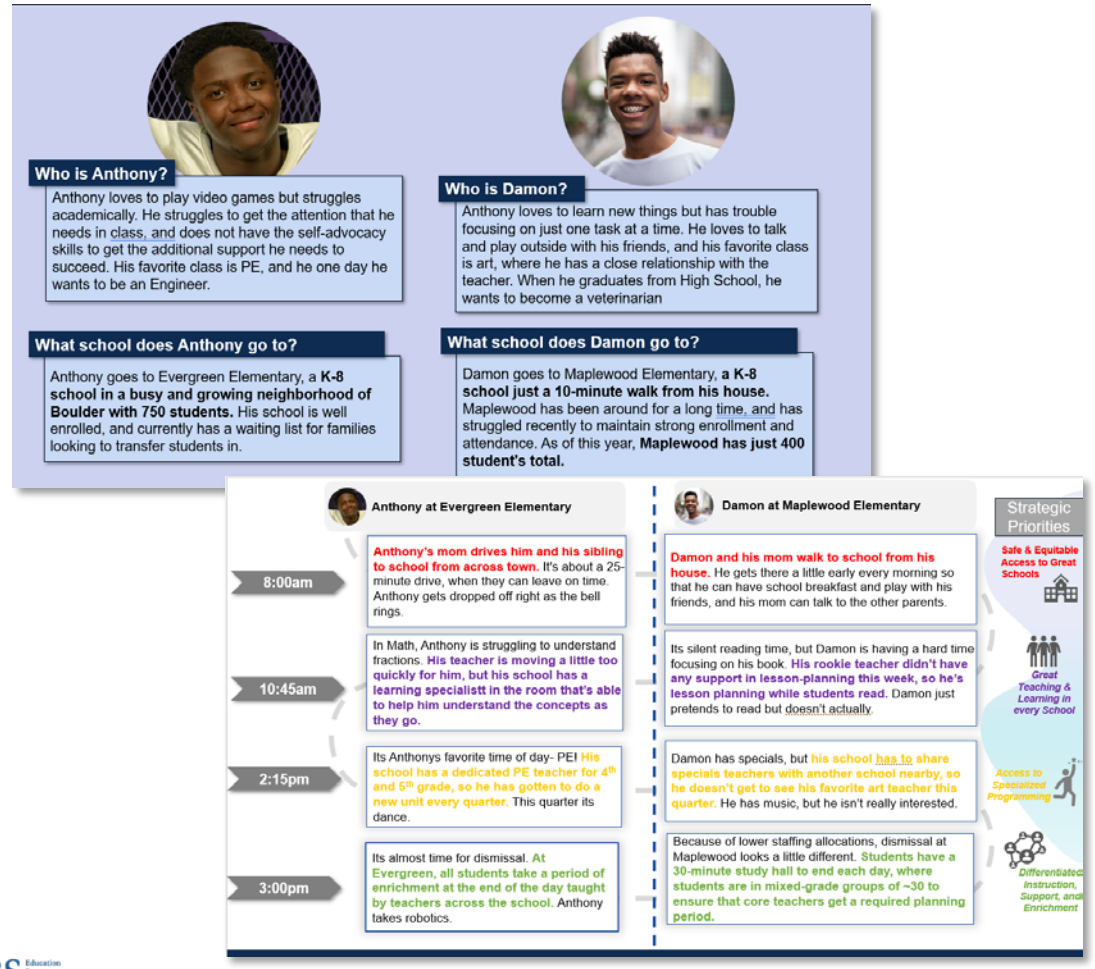
2 Student Priority Exercise

[Est 60min] Take the experiences from the DITL activity**, community members advocate for and prioritize specific student experiences** and understand the tradeoffs that come with prioritizing them

Socializes school resource and student experience decisions, and builds community knowledge of the impacts of specific resource decisions

During both activities, facilitators are collecting feedback and writing down notes to be summarized for district recommendations and takeaways

Centering on Elementary School (& K-8) student and staff experiences, the Day in the Life activity creates an entry-point to understanding school resource tradeoffs



Key Decision Points

1. What types of student experiences are most important to highlight for the BV community? (e.g., student types, classroom instruction, before/after school, etc.)

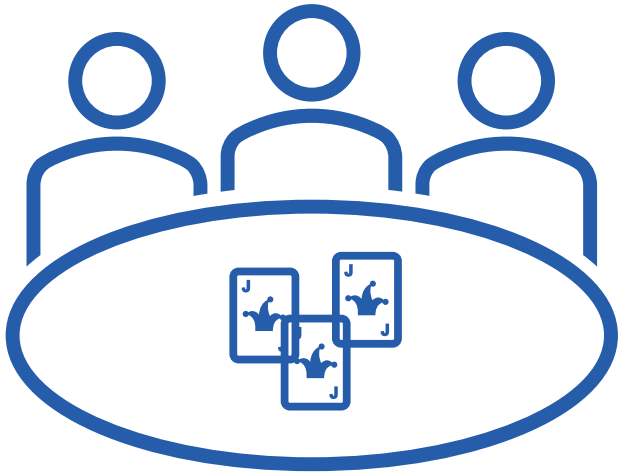
2. What data sources exist that illustrate the current experience of those students, that we might be able to pull from to create a relevant “Day in the Life” exercise for Boulder Valley? (E.g., current school resource realities/challenges) **

Question: Can we get time later this week/early next week to discuss your student experience priorities in more depth?

The Student Priority Exercise will be set up in multiple phases of play designed to introduce a framework for thinking about the student experience, and the actions on the table for prioritizing those experiences

Draft Exercise Gameplay

1. *Framing & Set-Up:* In groups of 6-8, players receive a framing scenario and directions from the facilitator
2. *Priority Round:* Players are given a **set of Student Experience Cards aligned to strategic priorities** and **must pick a sub-set to prioritize** in the Action Card round
3. *Action Round:* Players are told that the district is experiencing enrollment decline and given a **set of Action Cards.** Each card can "unlock" a student experiences. Teams must prioritize which experiences to keep.
4. *Discussion:* Players then **discuss how the action cards they picked affected their prioritized student experiences** or limited other possible student experiences



Example Student Experiences & Actions

Student Experiences

Strategic Priority	Student Experience
Strong Instruction	Offer a variety of academic experiences in Elementary (e.g. Music, Art, STEM, Career Exposure, Health & PE)
Individual Time & Attention	Create smaller class sizes in higher need schools (e.g. schools serving more students in poverty)

Actions

Resource Shift	Student Experience Impact
Reducing the number of grades that a school may offer (K-8 to K-5 and 6-8)	Increases class size
Consolidate or Regionalize Non-Core Offerings (rotate enrichment teachers, regional language programs, shared lang.)	Decrease breadth of elective academic offerings

Each Action is explicitly tied to a student experience impact from Phase I of the exercise

Key decision points for exercise

1. Are there specific student experiences or strategic priorities in BVSD we should be aligning our cards to?
2. Are there specific resource actions/decisions (such as the consolidation of schools/closing school campuses) that should be excluded from the exercise?
3. In addition to translation (into Spanish) of the exercise, are there other accessibility considerations we should take into account as we tailor this to the BVSD context?

Logistics & Admin

- When is a good day/time for a standing check-in – ideally 1hr
  - **Potential Time Windows:**
    - *Tuesdays, 9-10am MST*
    - *Wednesdays, 9-10am MST, 10-11am MST, 12-1pm MST*
    - *Thursdays, 9-10am MST, 11-12pm MST, 12-1pm MST*
    - *Fridays, 9-10am MST, 10-11am MST, 12-1pm MST*
- When is a good time to discuss student experiences in more depth, and who should be involved in that conversation in the upcoming week?
- What is the best method for sharing materials and documents for collaboration?
  - *ERS Team can set up an external Sharepoint for shared materials, unless BV prefers an alternative structure*

Archive

DRAFT



Who is Anthony?

Anthony loves to play video games but struggles academically. He struggles to get the attention that he needs in class, and does not have the self-advocacy skills to get the additional support he needs to succeed. His favorite class is PE, and he one day he wants to be an Engineer.

Who is Damon?

Anthony loves to learn new things but has trouble focusing on just one task at a time. He loves to talk and play outside with his friends, and his favorite class is art, where he has a close relationship with the teacher. When he graduates from High School, he wants to become a veterinarian

What school does Anthony go to?

Anthony goes to Evergreen Elementary, a **K-8 school in a busy and growing neighborhood of Boulder with 750 students.** His school is well enrolled, and currently has a waiting list for families looking to transfer students in.

What school does Damon go to?

Damon goes to Maplewood Elementary, **a K-8 school just a 10-minute walk from his house.** Maplewood has been around for a long time, and has struggled recently to maintain strong enrollment and attendance. As of this year, **Maplewood has just 400 student's total.**

DRAFT

Anthony at Evergreen Elementary



Damon at Maplewood Elementary

8:00am

Anthony's mom drives him and his sibling to school from across town. It's about a 25-minute drive, when they can leave on time. Anthony gets dropped off right as the bell rings.

Damon and his mom walk to school from his house. He gets there a little early every morning so that he can have school breakfast and play with his friends, and his mom can talk to the other parents.

10:45am

In Math, Anthony is struggling to understand fractions. **His teacher is moving a little too quickly for him, but his school has a learning specialistt in the room that's able to help him understand the concepts as they go.**

Its silent reading time, but Damon is having a hard time focusing on his book. **His rookie teacher didn't have any support in lesson-planning this week, so he's lesson planning while students read.** Damon just pretends to read but doesn't actually.

2:15pm

Its Anthonys favorite time of day- PE! **His school has a dedicated PE teacher for 4th and 5th grade, so he has gotten to do a new unit every quarter.** This quarter its dance.

Damon has specials, but **his school has to share specials teachers with another school nearby, so he doesn't get to see his favorite art teacher this quarter.** He has music, but he isn't really interested.

3:00pm

Its almost time for dismissal. **At Evergreen, all students take a period of enrichment at the end of the day taught by teachers across the school.** Anthony takes robotics.

Because of lower staffing allocations, dismissal at Maplewood looks a little different. **Students have a 30-minute study hall to end each day, where students are in mixed-grade groups of ~30 to ensure that core teachers get a required planning period.**

Strategic Priorities

Safe & Equitable Access to Great Schools

Great Teaching & Learning in every School

Access to Specialized Programming

Differentiated Instruction, Support, and Enrichment

Card Mock-Up

ALL STUDENTS

Small Class Sizes for High Needs Schools
All students attend schools with class sizes of 20 or below

Small Class Sizes for Higih Needs Schools

Time & Attention

ERS Lunch – Small School Tradeoff Game Testing

March 2, 2026



Introductory Framing

Problem Statement

- Districts nationwide are grappling with school portfolios misaligned to declining enrollment, resulting in under-enrolled schools that strain resources and negatively impact student outcomes.
- Current conditions often limit access to key supports—such as specials teachers, mental health services, and intervention resources—while creating inequitable and inconsistent student experiences.
- Boulder Valley School District (BVSD), serving 28,000 students across 56 schools, has experienced a decline of over 3,600 students since 2017, with impacts most visible at the elementary level.
- Despite higher-than-average per-pupil spending, many schools operate with minimal staffing structures that constrain teacher collaboration and limit program flexibility.
- As BVSD considers potential reconfiguration strategies, they want to ensure a strong engagement strategy with their school community for long-term success.

Opportunity Statement

- Given the issues facing BVSD and similar districts experiencing under-enrollment and uneven portfolios, there is an opportunity for ERS to support in ensuring that:
  - The broader BVSD community (district staff, families, community) have a shared understanding of the relationship between school size and student experience, and are able to see how small under-enrolled schools often create disparate student experiences and an imbalance in resource allocation, creating significant equity concerns.
  - The dialogue has shifted from whether to close schools or not to how to redesign a broader school footprint that maximizes equitable resource allocation and student experiences in the current enrollment environment
  - District leaders have the resources and understanding of reconfiguration levers to facilitate effective community engagement sessions and solicit input and feedback on proposed shifts

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- Understand, at a high level, the relationship between school size and student experience – and what trade-offs and strategies districts can pursue to prioritize offering the experience they want for students

Our plan is an exercise that starts by grounding in students "Day in the Life" experiences, before going into a trade-off decision making exercise

1 Day-in-the-Life

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Each Action is explicitly tied to a student experience impact from Phase I of the exercise

Student Experience Cards Mock-ups

Elements to include

Refer to the language currently mocked up here

- ARE Framework Category
- Card Title
- Description
- Research (either a summary of research, or a tag that something is “Evidence based practice”?
- Challenges in a small school (Maybe on the “Back” of a card?)
- Potentially: Number/type of students

1A

Students have access to a variety of academic experiences *(e.g., Art/Music, Health & PE, STEM)*



Research shows that giving students access to elective academic experiences in elementary school can have beneficial effects on some core academic competencies, such as arithmetic abilities, speech segmentation and processing speed.

Empowering, Rigorous Content $$$ **High Cost**

FRONT

Trade-Offs in Small Schools

- *In Small schools, students may have to share elective rotations with other grade-levels, or share elective-teachers with other schools entirely.*
- *This may look like students receiving a rotation of elective courses based on teacher availability, which can lead to inconsistent student experiences and disruption in curriculum.*

BACK

Front

Back

8a	Students who need support

Students get more instructional time and smaller group sizes in ELA and Math

Students who struggle in ELA and Math in Elementary school are likely to continue to struggle in Middle and High school, unless they get the supports and interventions they need. One effective proactive strategy is increasing the amount of time Elementary students spend in ELA and Math, and ensuring there are enough staff to work with students in small groups.

Instructional Time and Attention

8b	Students who need support

Small School

In small schools, especially ones with only one or two teachers per grade level, there is often not enough staffing flexibility to group students according to need and provide additional instructional support. Providing the additional staff schools need to make this work can be costly.

Action cards to unlock:
1, 3, 5, 7

Instructional Time and Attention

Action/Lever-Card Mock-Ups

Elements to include

Refer to the language currently mocked up here

- Card Title
- Description
- Benefits/Impact (Why you might recommend this action)
- Trade-offs/Considerations (Why you might not recommend this action)
- Other (?) (E.g., points, how many experience cards they unlock, etc.)

Front

Back

1 **Action Card** 3

Reduce the number of grades that schools serve *(E.g., shifting two schools from K-5's to a K-2 and 3-5)*

Why Play this card?
Splitting K-5 schools into K-2 and 3-5 schools increases the number of teachers per grade level in each building, and

Unlocks: *Experience 3, 4, 6*

What are the drawbacks?
Requires more frequent building transitions for students. Does not improve overall school size.

Action Card

Game “A” Instructions

ERS Only Instructions: Take on a new perspective

Take a moment to identify <u>who you're playing as</u>

- A **parent of a child who currently attends a small school**
- A **staff member who currently works at a small school**
- A **community member** whose children previously attended – and loved - their neighborhood school
- Other!

Everyone in your group should embody a different perspective! [round off]

Discuss: What are their priorities? What are their worries?

The game will occur in phases

Priority Phase: *Go through the set of "Experience" cards, and pick your Top Five Priorities for students in SPS*

Impact Phase: *Your district is experiencing enrollment decline – what is the impact on student experiences in your district?*

Action Phase: *Review the "Action" cards and identify Three that you would implement to unlock student experiences.*

Review Phase: *As a group, discuss the impact of your decisions. What needs to be considered for these changes to go well?*

Welcome to District X!



Fast Facts:

- **12 K-5 Elementary Schools**
- **XX% SWD**
- **XX% MLL**
- **XX% FRL**

Priorities Include:

- *Rigorous Academic Experiences for All Students*
- *Teacher support and retention*

Priority Round [15m]

Congratulations! You are a member of the District X community who has been identified to be part of the districts **Strategic Planning Committee.**

Your job is to identify the **student and teacher experience priorities** that are most important to District X.

In teams, read each student experience card, and choose **five** to become strategic priorities.

Example experience card

8a	Students who need support

Students get more instructional time and smaller group sizes in ELA and Math

Students who struggle in ELA and Math in Elementary school are likely to continue to struggle in Middle and High school, unless they get the supports and interventions they need. One effective proactive strategy is increasing the amount of time Elementary students spend in ELA and Math, and ensuring there are enough staff to work with students in small groups.

Instructional Time and Attention

Share: What were the most important priorities at your table?



District X has experienced enrollment decline



What this means

- **12 K-5 Elementary Schools**
- **Only 4** have more than 350 Students
- **The remainder are considered “Small Schools”**

Flip over your student experience cards

Discuss:

What is the impact of being a “small school” on the student experience?

How has District X Responded?

For now, District X has been able to implement some temporary, costly solutions to maintain a high-quality student experience, such as:

- Back-filling positions at schools ($$)
- Allowing smaller-than-typical class sizes in some grade levels ($$$)

However, these solutions are not sustainable for more than the next three years. The district needs to identify sustainable, long-term solutions.

Especially because **if the student experience declines** at their schools, **enrollment may continue to decline.**

Action Round [10m]

District X has pulled together a committee of community representatives to discuss what actions can be taken to <u>improve the experience</u> of students at all schools.

In teams, review the “Action Cards” provided. Each action card is a decision the district could make to improve the student experience – but comes at a cost.

Your goal is to **play <u>three action cards</u>** to unlock your student experiences.

Example Action card

1	**Action Card**

Reduce the number of grades that schools serve *(E.g., shifting two schools from K-5’s to a K-2 and 3-5)*

Why Play this card?
Splitting K-5 schools into K-2 and 3-5 schools increases the number of teachers per grade level in each building, and

Unlocks: *Experience 3, 4, 6*

What are the drawbacks?
Requires more frequent building transitions for students. Does not improve overall school size.

Why only three? *Change is hard! To many shifts at once may create more challenges for the district to address.*

Discuss: What action cards were easy to say “yes” to?

What cards were most difficult to say “yes” to?

Were there experiences you prioritized initially that you couldn’t unlock?



Re-Prioritize

You've played a set of action cards that unlocked your priority experiences – but also unlocked others that weren't in your initial set of five.

What experiences are now on the table, after playing your action cards?

Are there any cards you would trade in or out?

Questions for Community Discussion post-game

- What questions, concerns or considerations were top of top of mind as you were making decisions?
- How would you want to be engaged in these kinds of discussions in your district?
- Were there experiences that you would prioritize that weren't represented in the game?
- Where there actions that weren't on the table that you would want the district to consider?