

Seeing the Future: The Transformative Power of Visioning Experiences in School Design



Presenter: Dr. Kimberly Robertson

March 2025



Imagine if someone asked you to design the future of transportation, but you had never seen a car, a train, or an airplane.

You'd probably come up with something creative, but you'd also be **limited** by what you know.

This is exactly what happens in education—if we only design based on **what we've seen**, we'll never create spaces that match the future of learning.

What's something you *thought* was futuristic or impossible 10 years ago, but now it's part of everyday life?



What Does the Future Hold?



Evolution of the Phone

Innovation Over Time

If you had never seen a modern smartphone, what would you imagine it could do?

And now, think about this—what if schools are the same way? What possibilities are we missing?

The Takeaway:

- Innovation isn't always predictable if we've never been exposed to new possibilities.
- Just like technology evolves, so must our vision of school spaces.
- Once you see what's possible, you can never unsee it.





Think about your very first classroom experience as a student.





The Take Away...



We often design based on what we've seen. If we haven't experienced new learning environments, we may default to outdated ideas.



This highlights the power of visioning experiences to expand our understanding of what schools *can* be.

Join at menti.com | use code 3545 7947

Mentimeter

Who is attending this session?

0%

Educator/Education Leader

0%

School Designer/Architect

0%

Manufacturer/Learning
Solution Provider



KR

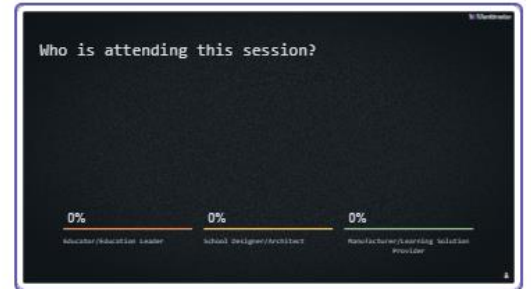


Menti

Visioning Experience Pr...



Choose a slide to present



About Me:



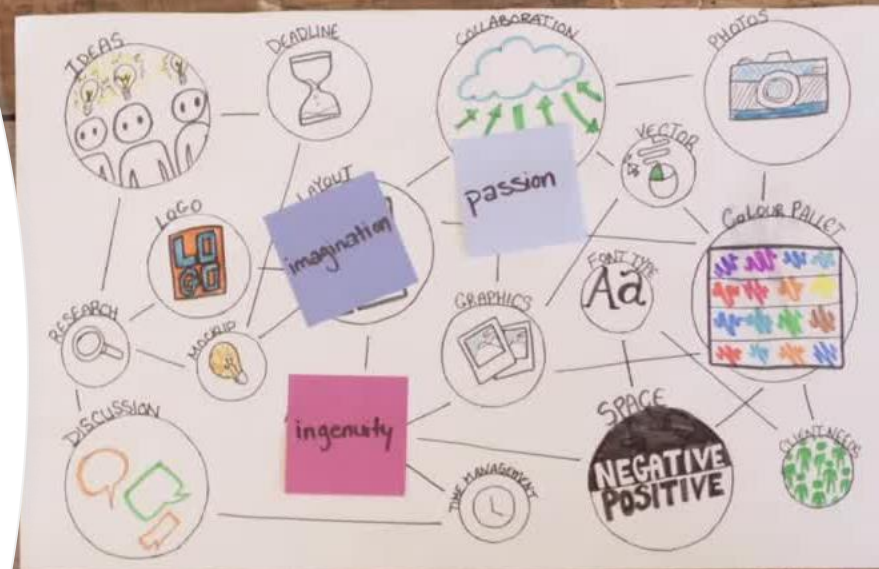
- Currently serve as the Executive Director of Choice Schools and Programs for Guilford County Schools, overseeing the district's 60+ magnet and choice programs to provide innovative educational opportunities for all students.
- Over 22 years in education, Dr. Robertson has served as a district leader, principal, and special education teacher across public and private sectors.
- She holds advanced degrees in Psychology, Special Education, and School Administration from NC A&T State University and a doctorate in Educational Leadership from UNC Greensboro.
- She is also the Founder/CEO of Vantage Strategy Group, a consulting group that partners with companies to ensure their education solutions align with the realities of schools and classrooms.
- Board of Directors for Edmarket and Vice-Chair of the Education Innovation Council
- Currently completing Edmarket's Learning Place Specialist Certification

What are Visioning Experiences?

Structured site visits to innovative schools that serve as powerful tools for inspiring creativity, collaboration, and bold thinking.

Visioning experiences inspire stakeholders to reimagine what is possible in learning environments, blending innovative design with community-focused approaches.

These experiences create pathways to rethink spaces that not only serve students but also function as vibrant hubs for connection and collaboration.



Learning Objectives

1. Examine how visioning experiences uncover emerging trends in educational leadership, teaching, and facility design, enhancing the alignment between school environments and instructional goals.
2. Identify key elements of effective visioning experiences and their impact on educational transformation.
3. Explore lessons learned from the Discovery and Innovation Design Tour, including innovative ideas for space utilization, sustainability, and community partnerships.
4. Develop a roadmap for integrating visioning experiences into strategic planning for school or district improvement.



Case Study

A Master Facilities Study & Plan identified over \$2 billion in needed school construction and repairs, prompting a multi-phase funding approach.



2020



2022





~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
THANK YOU for these renderings. They show schools that are state of the art, and I can only imagine how excited children will be to see their new classrooms in a few short years once work is complete.

2y Like Reply

25  

[View all 12 replies](#)



~~Harion Costner~~
And why the need for extravagant architectural designs? Is this supposed to enhance learning? Doubtful!

2y Like Reply

6 



~~John Henderson~~
~~Harion Costner~~ Lots of research shows that it does actually enhance learning. But you know science.

2y Like Reply

3 

[View all 3 replies](#)



~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
We're building schools, not warehouses.

2y Like Reply Edited



[View 1 reply](#)



~~Veronica Thompson~~
~~Harion Costner~~ Where's the extravagance? These look like basic 21st century drawings to me! I guess you all love rundown things. I see nothing extravagant about any of the designs!

2y Like Reply

More Comments

 ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

We don't need fancy schools we need repairs and touch ups to the existing schools, we need upgrades to the menus so the kids aren't starving all day and they can focus better and we need school time a better experience for kids.

 ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Imagine being angry about kids having safe, technologically equipped, modern schools. Imagine being angry about funding public schools and paying teachers. What's it like to live like that?

2y Like Reply

46  

 ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

I'm a little blown away by the over-the-top designs for these schools. This means someone or some group made the decision to spend "millions of dollars" developing extravagant, architectural marvels rather than creating functional, safe, well-appointed spaces for student learning. Could this be part of the reason that there is so much push-back regarding funding this bond? I think we all support repairing schools and building new ones where needed. It's just hard to be all-in when it appears the funds are not being managed in a responsible way.

2y Like Reply

24  

 ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Why do we waste money on the schools having to be so extravagant You can teach the same subjects without all the extravagant architecture which hopefully would be less expensive therefore having more money to spend all around the county



 ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

All y'all dropping in to tell us that these designs are too nice for our children...good grief!

2y Like Reply



 ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Thank you for your explanations. This bond needs to be passed in order to improve the education of our children and their children to come. I am dismayed at the coordinated effort of a certain group that is against fixing these crumbling schools. Let's all vote yes and yes for the future of our county's public schools.

GCS Historic Bond Passes

GREENSBORO NEWS

Superintendent reacts after \$1.7 billion bond passes for Guilford County Schools, sales tax fails

by: [Emily Mikkelsen](#)

Posted: May 18, 2022 / 05:46 AM EDT

Updated: May 18, 2022 / 05:54 AM EDT

- **Voter-Approved Bonds:** In 2020, voters passed a \$300 million bond, followed by a \$1.7 billion bond in 2022, marking the largest school bond in North Carolina history and the third largest in U.S. history.
- **Broad Community Support:** Business leaders, nonprofits, elected officials, and advocates collaborated to shape a shared vision, with over 60% of voters supporting both bonds across political lines.
- **Commitment to the Future:** The investments aim to create a modern, high-quality school system that equips students with the tools they need for success in the 21st century.

Election results

Guilford County School Bond Referendum

Result	Votes	Percentage
✔ Yes	169,084	69.47%
No	74,305	30.53%

Results are officially [certified](#).

[Source](#)

Election results

Guilford County, North Carolina, School Bond Measure (May 2022)

Result	Votes	Percentage
✔ Yes	45,639	60.68%
No	29,577	39.32%

Results are officially [certified](#).



Time to Build New Schools!

The Discovery and Innovation Design Tour:

Reimagining Innovative Schools and Programs

Focused on our **WHY** to determine our **WHAT**

Identified and partnered with innovative schools (**WHERE & WHO**)

Designed the experience (**HOW**)

Invited key stakeholders (**WHO**)

Hosted an informational meeting regarding the tour to learn more about travel arrangements, tour details, and logistical plans

- Welcome bags, travel snacks, journals, thank you gifts for our partners, etc.)

Provided resources to gather feedback (**DATA**)

Captured the experience to tell our story (**Videographer and Photographer hired**)

Debriefed around the experience and discussed next steps

Submitted a Press Release

Connected with Fulton County Schools in Georgia



Collaborated with Yalanda Bell, Executive Director of Academic Programs with Fulton County Schools

Preliminary List:

1. McNair Middle in College Park – [Design Details](#) & [School Website](#)
 - a) a. Immerses STEM habits and engineering design processes
 - b) b. Aligned schools: Swann Center, Welborn/Kearns, Foust, Kiser, Claxton, Montlieu, General Greene, and Brooks Global
2. Fulton County College and Career Academy – [School Website](#)
 - a) Builds specialized programming in high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations with office space for district-level staff
 - b) Aligned schools: Grimsley, Page, and Andrews
3. Banneker High School (Business/STEM Magnet) -3DE Junior Achievement Magnet – [School Website](#) & 3DE Junior Achievement [Website](#)
 - a) Engages learning environments that reflect the world in which we live and empowers students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to unlock greater economic opportunity.
 - b) Aligned schools: STEM NC A&T and Smith
4. Global Impact Academy – [Design Details](#) & [School Website](#)
 - a) Cultivates a forward thinking and community learning environment where students develop a passion for STEM learning and its real-world applications
 - b) Aligned schools: STEM NC A&T and Middle Colleges (UNCG, GTCCs)

Where & Who

2022

Guilford County Schools

Discovery & Innovation Design Tour

Fulton County Public Schools | Atlanta, Georgia

JOIN US AS WE DEVELOP NEW MINDSETS ON SCHOOL DESIGN!

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

- » 10:30am - Tour of [Gullatt Elementary](#)
- » 12:00pm - Lunch & Tour of [Fulton County College and Career Academy](#)
- » 3:15pm - Tour of [Banneker High School](#)

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

- » 8:30am - Tour of [Crabapple Middle School](#)
- » 10:30am - Tour of [Innovation Academy](#)
- » 12:00pm - Lunch & Tour of [Riverwood High School](#)
- » 3:00pm - [Junior Achievement Discovery Center](#)

Thursday, October 20, 2022

- » 8:00am - Tour of [The Global Impact Academy](#)
- » 9:30am - Tour of [McNair Middle School](#)

RSVP Here



RSVP BY
OCTOBER 5, 2022

Choice
Schools
+
Programs

GUILFORD
County Schools
SOAR TO GREATNESS

How

Identify Key Stakeholders

As GCS seeks to stay current with innovative school design and construction and curricular and instructional programming, conducting site visits at model schools provides insight, inspiration, and partnerships.

Join us (GCS leadership, principals, and external leaders) as we develop new mindsets regarding new school design, utilization, instruction, sustainability, branding, and marketing.

Questions to identify the key stakeholders:

- Who can serve as an advocate?
- Who can be an ally?
- Who benefits from mindset shifts?
- Who can tell the story?
- Who are the naysayers?

Chief Communications Officer

Chief Innovation Officer

Executive Director of Choice Schools and Programs

Facilities Space and Occupancy Planning Manager

CTE Director - Secondary Pathways

STEM Lead Teacher

SSO - Principal Supervisor

Eight Principals (new builds/renovations)

Architect w/ DRL Group - Senior K-12 Education Leader | Principal

External Partner: Chamber of Commerce

External Partner: Community College Leaders

External Partner: Philanthropic Organizations

Additional: External Photographer and Videographer

Who

User-Friendly Logistics



GCS

Discovery & Innovation

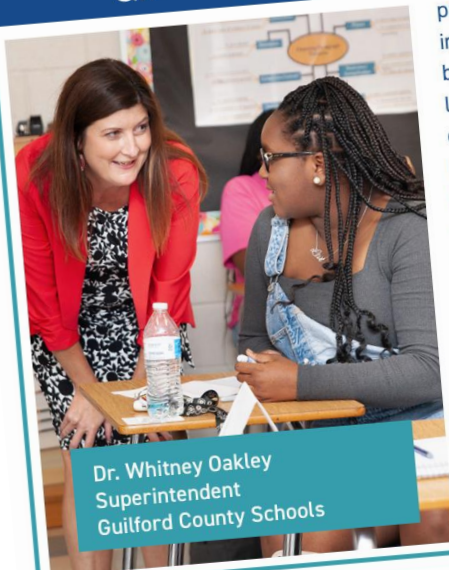
Fulton County Schools // Atlanta, GA

**Design Tour
2022**

October 18-20, 2022

GCSChoice
Schools + Programs

Superintendent Greetings



Dr. Whitney Oakley
Superintendent
Guilford County Schools

Thank you, Fulton County Schools' Superintendent, Board of Education, and Cross-functional Staff, for hosting Guilford County Schools and Community Partners. We're proud and fortunate to call Guilford County home, a place characterized by community involvement, economic opportunity, diversity of people and thought, collaborative businesses and nonprofits, and a student population that represents every kind of learner — the high-achieving, the college-bound, the entrepreneurial, the service-oriented, the career-focused, the traditional, the innovative, the one who needs us a little more than the others — all who are in the process of discovering their paths. **Our Discovery and Innovation Design Tours position us to provide school buildings and educational choices of the future for all kinds of learners throughout the district.** We give each student a path that fits right, challenges appropriately, provides community, and creates a foundation for success. **Three decades later, GCS is on the verge of a new chapter, one full of opportunity and promise for the future of our children and grandchildren.** However, we recognize that the context in which each school operates has changed—technological advances, globalization, and a pandemic have all contributed to these rapid changes. To be a thriving school district and community in the 21st Century will require us to look back at where we have been, where we are today, and where we see ourselves going.

#BETTERTOGETHER



The Purpose of GCS Discovery and Innovation School Design Tours

The Innovation Office is leading the district's first GCS Discovery and Innovation Design Tour: Reimagining Innovative Schools and Programs. GCS principals and staff members will visit Fulton County Schools (FCS) in Georgia. Site visits to model schools will focus on innovative construction, curricular programming, and developing partnerships for our principals associated with Phase One and **Two Facilities Master Plan Schools**. Gaining these insights and inspiration will be essential as GCS seeks to stay current with future and new school designs, utilization, instruction, branding, marketing, and sustainability.

Education deserves to move just as soon as business industries shift to meet consumer demands and needs from fast food industries, cellular carriers, hotels, airports, amusement parks, to movie theaters. Our students deserve school buildings reflective of the world around them to develop and learn in our ever-changing, technical, autonomous, and dynamic ecosphere.

Purpose



Dr. Eboni Camille Chillis
Chief of Innovation
Guilford County Schools

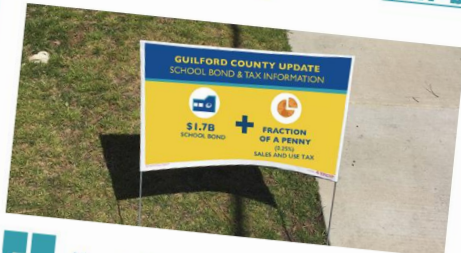
GCS by the Numbers



- 3rd** Largest District in North Carolina
- 12+** million square feet
- 3K** acres of land
- 91.8%** Graduation Rate
- 350** admin buildings
- 126** school buildings
- 66.3%** student poverty rate
- 121** languages/dialects spoken
- Approximately 70K** Pre-K-12 Students
- 763** National Board Certified Teachers (ranking ninth in the country)



Successful passage of the \$1.7 billion school bond.



“Now is the time and this is the place where disruptive ideas can come together to challenge the norm, spark learning, inspire collaboration and explore the possibilities.”



-Dr. Kimberly Robertson
Choice Schools & Programs

GCS Bond



Air Transportation



ATL

AIRPORT

Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport

6000 Terminal
Parkways
Atlanta, GA 30320
1-800-897-1910

ARRIVAL

Please ensure your flight arrives in ample time as the **first tour begins at 10:30am.** The Embassy Suites Shuttle will be available to transport you to the hotel.

RETURN

Your return flight will be scheduled after **11:30am on Thursday, October 20, 2022,** as the last tour ends at 10:30am.

Departure Flight // October 18, 2022

Delta 2087	Depart	Arrive
Main Cabin (B)	Greensboro 6:45 AM	Atlanta 8:07 AM

Return Flight // October 20, 2022

Delta 1447	Depart	Arrive
Main Cabin (B)	Atlanta 1:37 PM	Greensboro 2:48 PM



SHUTTLE

Courtesy of
The Embassy Suites

- 8-10 people per shuttle
- Staggered Pick-up from the airport every 30 minutes

CHARTER

Georgia
Coachlines

405 Ethan Drive
Fayetteville, GA 30214
www.georgiacoachlines.net

Ground Transportation



Lodging



The Embassy Suites Atlanta Airport Hotel
4700 Southport Rd, Atlanta, GA 30337
404-767-1988

Wi-Fi Code: **ATLSP**

Breakfast



Free made-to-order

Room Service



Pools



Airport Shuttle



Free

Business Center



Fitness Center



GUILFORD
County Schools
INNOVATION OFFICE

Discovery & Design

Dr. Eboni Camille Chillis
Innovation Office

☎ 336-660-8183

✉ chillie@gcsnc.com

Trip Coordination

Dr. Kimberly Robertson
Choice Schools & Programs

☎ 336-908-5502 &
336-255-5456

✉ robertk2@gcsnc.com

Accommodation Planning Inquiries

Jarrod Ross
Purchasing

☎ 336-370-3241

✉ rossj3@gcsnc.com

Accommodation Inquiries During Stay

Roxy Jessup Grant
Choice Schools & Programs

☎ 336-574-5721

✉ jessupr2@gcsnc.com

CCS Contact List



Weather



Atlanta

October 18, 2022



62°
39°

October 19, 2022



62°
41°

October 20, 2022



65°
43°



Comfortable Shoes



Charging Cables



Light Jacket



encouraged

Follow all TSA Rules



Electronic Devices



PPE



Packing Tips



Dinner & Food Options



Skinny's \$
(Burgers, Sandwiches and Wings) 4MIN
897 Virginia Ave, Hapeville, GA 30354
10:30 AM to 3PM

The Corner Grille \$
(American/Cajun- Burgers, Sandwiches and Salads) 6MIN
3823 Main St, Atlanta, GA 30337
11AM to 9PM

Zubi's Taco Kitchen \$
(Tacos) 8MIN
1509 Virginia Ave, Atlanta, GA 30337
12PM to 9PM

Mellow Mushroom \$\$
(Pizza) 8MIN
1477 Virginia Ave, College Park, GA 30337
11AM to 9PM

Folk Art Restaurant \$\$
(Southern) 17MIN
465 North Highland Avenue Northeast, Atlanta, GA 30307
9AM to 3 PM

Louisiana Bistreaux \$\$
(Cajun/Creole) 4MIN
1375 Virginia Ave, East Point, GA 30344
11AM to 11PM

Lickety Split Southern Kitchen & Bar \$\$
(Fast-Casual/Southern) 9MIN
1155 Virginia Ave Suite F, Hapeville, GA 30354
12PM to 8PM

Gunshow \$\$\$
(Dim-Sum-Style Southern) 14MIN
924 Garrett St, Atlanta, GA 30316
Wednesday 6PM to 8:30PM

Agave Restaurant \$\$
(Southwestern) 15MIN
242 Boulevard SE, Atlanta, GA 30312
4PM to 10PM

La Travola Trattoria \$\$\$
(Italian) 20MIN
992 Virginia Ave NE, Atlanta, GA 30306
5:30PM to 10:00PM

The Juicy Crab \$\$
(Seafood) 21MIN
1715 Howell Mill Rd NW, Atlanta, GA 30318
12PM to 11PM



October 18, 2022

Day 1

Departure Time: 9:20 AM

Meeting Location: Front Lobby of the Embassy Suites Atlanta Airport Hotel

Tour: Crabapple Middle School 10:30 AM-12:00 PM

Lunch and Tour: Innovation Academy 12:30 PM-2:00 PM

Tour: Riverwood High School 2:30 PM-4:00 PM

Notes

- Innovation Academy was built in 2021 by Cooper Carry as one of two STEM Magnet Schools
- Riverwood High School is the newest traditional high school
- Crabapple Middle School is the newest middle school

Points of Interest

- Middle School Footprint
- STEM Magnet with Healthcare, IT, and Engineering
- Innovative Labs, Media Center, and Cafeteria
- Architectural Pictures of both STEM Schools
- Innovation Academy - Cooper Carry | Global Architecture and Design

Schedule



Daily Reflection
complete at the end of the day

Schedule



Daily Reflection
complete at the end of the day

October 19, 2022

Day 2

Departure Time: 7:20 AM
Meeting Location: Front Lobby of the Embassy Suites Atlanta Airport Hotel

Tour: Gullatt Elementary School 8:00 AM–9:30 AM

Tour: McNair Middle School 10:00 AM–11:30 AM

Tour: Junior Achievement Center and Lunch 12:00 PM–2:00 PM

Tour: Global Impact Academy High School 2:30 PM–4:00 PM

Notes

- Gullatt is the newest elementary school built in 2018
- Global Impact Academy, built in 2021 as a STEM Magnet school, is one of the newest academies.
- Junior Achievement Center focuses on high impact programs that drive long-term outcomes in areas of financial literacy, career readiness and fostering the entrepreneurial spirit.

Points of Interest

- Elementary School Footprint CTAE Labs
- Innovative Labs, Media Center, and Cafeteria
- Middle School Footprint
- STEM Magnet with Healthcare, IT, and Engineering
- Architectural Pictures of both STEM schools Innovation Academy - Cooper Carry | Global Architecture and Design

October 20, 2022

Day 3

Departure Time: 7:20 AM
Meeting Location: Front Lobby of the Embassy Suites Atlanta Airport Hotel

Breakfast and Tour: Fulton Schools College and Career Academy (FSCCA) 8:00 AM–9:00 AM

Tour: Banneker High School 9:00 AM–10:00 AM

Arrive to the ATL Airport by 11:00 AM

Notes

- FSCCA was built in 2015 as a career academy for the South Fulton Schools.
- Banneker High School was built in 2011 and is one of the current footprints for our high school builds.

Points of Interest

- Innovative Labs, Media Center, and Cafeteria
- College and Career Academy (Culinary, Construction, Film, Teaching as a Profession, Flight Operations)
- Banneker Safe Center (support center for students and community)
- 3DE Junior Achievement Magnet Program

Schedule



Daily Reflection
complete at the end of the day

Facts-at-a-Glance

Fulton County Schools
Where Students Come First

SPLOST (bond referendum)
fultonschools.org/splost

District Map
bit.ly/3RRrTs5

Special thank you to
Yalanda Bell

Executive Director of Academic Programs Learning and Teaching,
Fulton County School System
for your professional insights and stellar tour coordination

Fulton County Schools

Superintendent Dr. Mike Looney



EMPLOYEES



MORE THAN
10,900 FULL-TIME PERSONNEL
MORE THAN
6,900 CERTIFIED PERSONNEL
(those who hold teaching or administrative certifications)

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

106
TOTAL

- 59 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS GRADES K-5**
PREKINDERGARTEN AVAILABLE IN SOME SCHOOLS
- 19 MIDDLE SCHOOLS GRADES 6-8**
- 18 HIGH SCHOOLS GRADES 9-12**
INCLUDES TWO OPEN CAMPUS HIGH SCHOOLS
- 9 START-UP CHARTER SCHOOLS**
- 1 FULL-TIME VIRTUAL SCHOOL**

SYSTEM-WIDE ENROLLMENT

89,450
(Projected)

BUDGET (As of 7/05/22)

FY23 General Fund Budget	FY22 Tax Levy	
\$1,152,099,216	Maintenance & Operations	17.49
FY23 Cost Per Student	Debt Service	0.00
\$12,880 (estimated)	Total	17.49

DIVERSE STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

42%
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN

26%
WHITE

16%
HISPANIC

12%
ASIAN

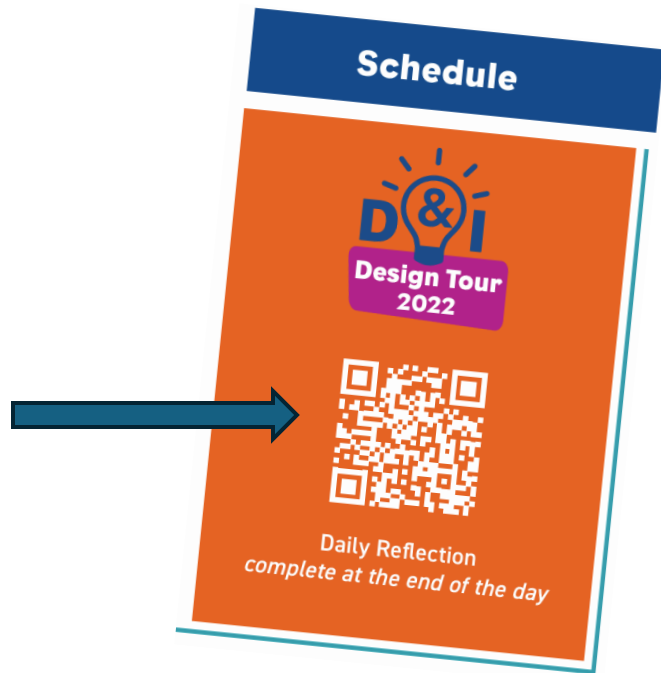
4%
MULTI-RACIAL

0.1%
PACIFIC ISLANDER

0.2%
AMERICAN INDIAN



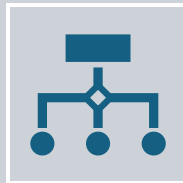
Reflection Questions



Based on your scope of work, what are three discoveries and/or innovative mind shifts that you experienced today?

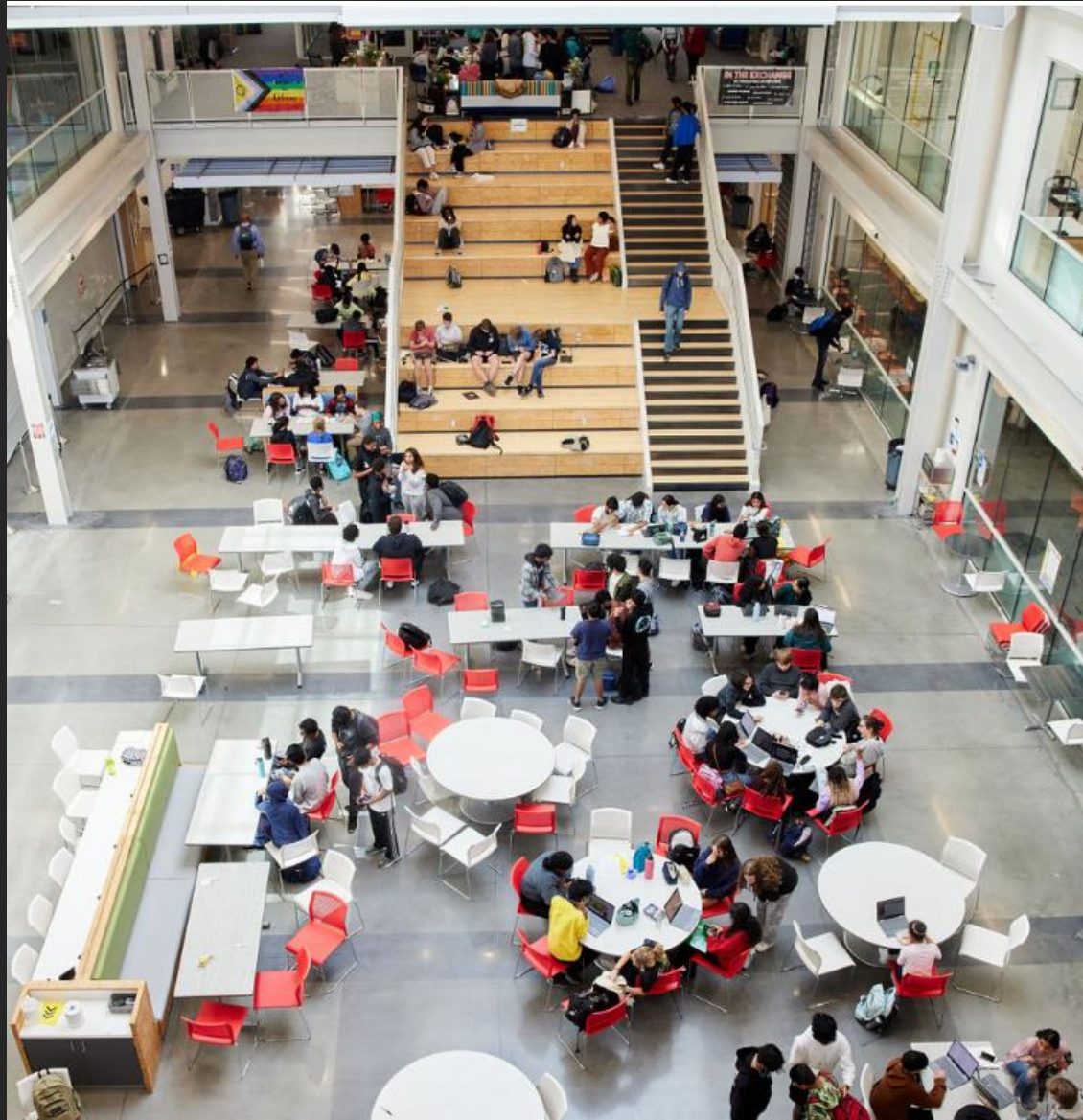


Based on your scope of work, what are two things that stimulated you to take action?



Based on your scope of work, what is one thing that you need to move forward in these efforts (ex. Additional information/resources)?

Data



Evidence Through Pictures



Evidence Through Pictures



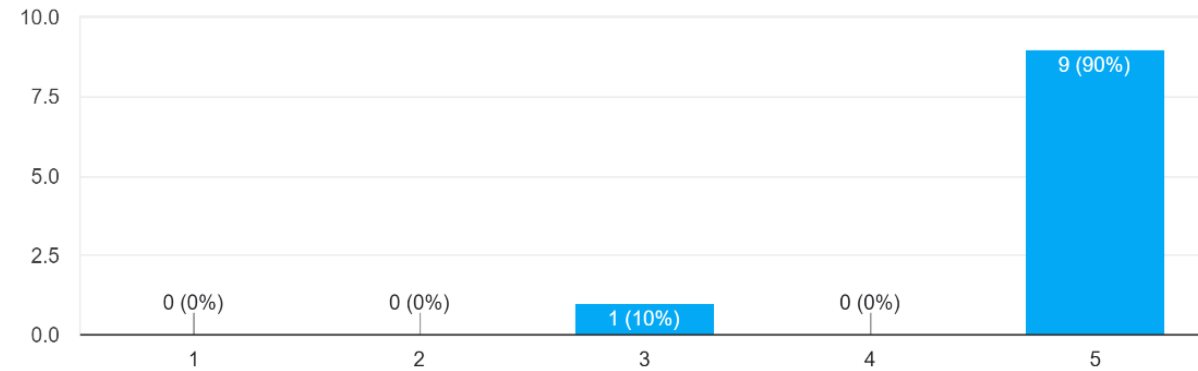
Evidence Through Video

Overall Experience Data



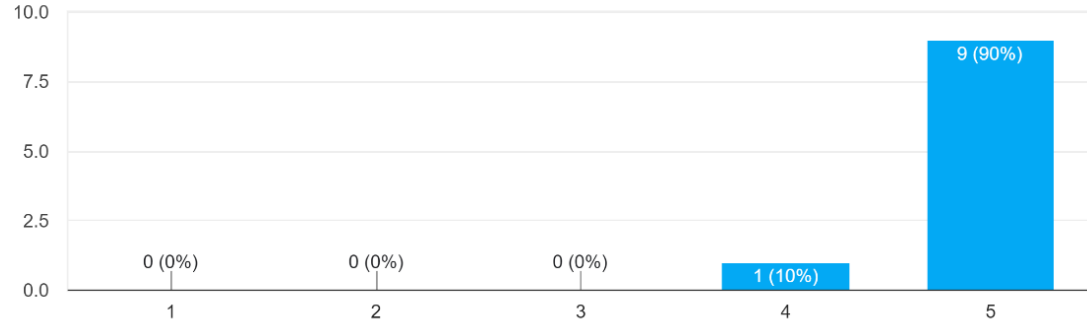
The Discovery and Innovation Design Tour enhanced my understanding of current trends as it relates to school design and construction.

10 responses



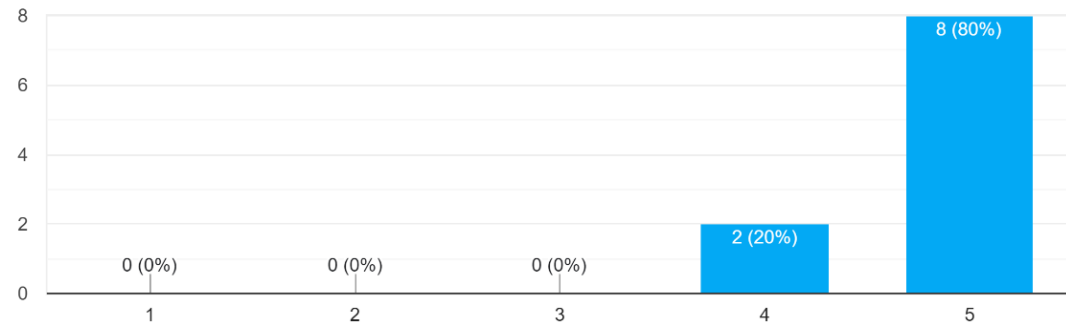
The Discovery and Innovation Design Tour increased my connectedness and created opportunities for collaboration with other district and school leaders.

10 responses



The Discovery and Innovation Design Tour sites were adequately aligned to my work.

10 responses



Common Responses From Daily Takeaways

REFLECTION QUESTION	MOST COMMON RESPONSES
Based on your scope of work, what are three discoveries and/or innovative mind shifts that you experienced today?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of various collaborative spaces/hubs for students, non-traditional teaching spaces, and spaces intentionally developed for teacher planning/collaboration. • Student engagement/ownership of learning was highly visible due to innovative spaces that inspire creativity. • District design/material standards visible across all school sites.
Based on your scope of work, what are two things that stimulated you to take action?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the importance of school administrator and teacher professional development related to how to use creative spaces and supporting shifts in mindset. • Increasing community engagement and business/organizational partnerships as they were strong across schools. • Placing student and staff safety as a top priority in building design and school culture.
Based on your scope of work, what is one thing that you need to move forward in these efforts (ex. Additional information/resources)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining professional development in advance to support innovative teaching and learning. • Leveraging strategies for helping others see outside the box and to welcome change. • Seeking more information on 3DE, school scheduling, etc.

What aspects of the Discovery and Innovation Design Tour could be improved?

What aspects of the Discovery and Innovation Design Tour could be improved?

Arranging a time for a group dinner/debrief would be a great next step.

None, it was truly a great experience and I look forward to hopefully participating again in the future.

I think it would be good for the team to debrief together.

I cannot think of anything.

Include more elementary schools. Invite TLPD staff

Some intentional whole group debriefing time to discuss the days experience at the end of the day or in the middle of the day. Utilizing some of the questions from the daily survey as whole group discussion questions.

Perhaps less schools and build in time for debrief, industry leader conversations, discussions about where funds were allotted for resources, and would like to see/visit some schools using some innovative scheduling that aligns with the vision for scheduling Kiser.

Truly everything was planned and executed beautifully. World class experience!!

Please include more elementary school designs, if possible, for K-5 or K-8 principals.

Having more information on the status of each of our school's construction status with the understanding that timelines change.

What aspects of the Discovery and Innovation Design Tour should be continued?

What aspects of the Discovery and Innovation Design Tour should be continued?

I enjoyed all aspects of the experience. Having the Charter take us to the airport was very convenient.

All, your team did a great job with communication prior to event and the guide was very helpful throughout the trip. GREAT work!

I think all aspects were important and should be repeated.

The ability to collaborate with our school and district leaders in a cross-functional way was beneficial. I met and made connections with people I likely would've never met otherwise, and I gained new insights into my work from different lenses. Moreover, the connections and ability to meet and talk with administrators in Fulton County, GA, who share some of the same concerns, issues, and have made innovative adjustments to their instructional practices and tangible investments in their facilities was priceless. Providing time after the tours for people to network was very beneficial and should be continued and the comprehensive travel companion and accommodations planning should be continued.

Collaborating with my principals about ideas/next steps

The explanations of the design choices and enhancements. The opinions from principal on what works best for students and teachers in regard to instruction and functionality.

-Tours, District staff involved, variety of different levels and schools

Continue to provide us the opportunities to engage in these types of events. To say that this experience was worthwhile and meaningful would be an understatement. Seeing renderings and images of what our schools can look like is one thing, but to see it for yourself and collaborate with other educators across the nation really made the "vision" real for me.

Travel/Hotel arrangements were very organized. Continue to showcase non-traditional and magnet schools. It was very helpful for us to have the school facts ahead of time for each school.

The companion and information from each school was very helpful.

What type of follow-up experiences, activities, and/or resources would you recommend that would be beneficial to you and your work?

What type of follow-up experiences, activities, and/or resources would you recommend that would be beneficial to you and your work?

Some form of debrief would be beneficial and an accountability measure such as a share out or write up.

More experiences like this. Not only was it useful for designs and innovation, I took three items from what high schools were doing down there that we are starting to implement here already!

I would love to share what I learned with TLPD.

I would recommend a debrief or follow-up with the team.

Observe innovative spaces being utilized to help "see" in action

Links to some of the curriculum/ programming, devices, furniture, and equipment from the schools. Acronym list from the visiting district, explanation of the teacher roles as they may reference their teachers differently. We should all identify something that we could implement in our school/ schools we serve (even if it has to be modified) develop an implementation plan and timeline and put it into place.

Whole group debrief, spot for all of us to drop our pictures, perhaps some work around setting some goals and vision for taking this work from research to student outcomes and the steps in between.

Provide all participants with a list serve with all of the principals and district leaders we had a chance to meet and formally talk with during our visit to Atlanta.

Maybe providing principals with a slide deck or video that showcases the important aspects of the schools so we can share with our colleagues after the tour.

Provide more information on the status of our own buildings

Additional Feedback

Feel free to share any additional feedback here:

It was a great experience. A travel agency should be used for future trips. :)

Again, great work. It was so organized.

Extremely well done! Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this experience!

Great job with planning and execution. It was a profound experience. I appreciate the opportunity to have been able to interact with my job alike peer. I appreciated the level of organization and planning that clearly went into the experience and it was very well done. Thank you for the opportunity to have had this worthwhile experience.

Awesome experience! Thank you and look forward to more.

I would like to have access to the pictures and videos to provide greater context to my amazing experience.

Thank you. I really appreciated the opportunity to visit other schools and another district. It was nice to get to know and spend time with colleagues from GCS especially those who are new. Looking forward to other tour opportunities.

It would be great if particular schools who are a part of the 2020 bond have an opportunity to participate in a site visit during the Summer and/or engage in a virtual collaborative PD session with educators and school leaders who are in the same phase of the Redesign phase as us.

Thank you for allowing me to participate in the Discovery and Innovation Design tour. It was extremely insightful to be able to observe new schools and ask administrators questions about their new school designs. Being able to collaborate with a variety of GCS principals (elem, middle, and high) was also helpful because we could brainstorm ideas that would work or not work for our individual schools. I would love to be able to participate in an upcoming Discovery and Innovation Design tour, if able.

The organization and visits were amazing. Thank you for the opportunity.

How can the data captured during **Visioning Experiences** be used to support your work?



Visioning Experiences for: *School Teams (Educators, Administrators, District Leaders)*



Purpose: To inform decision-making about school redesign, instructional practices, and community engagement.

- **Expand their understanding of what's possible:** Seeing non-traditional learning spaces firsthand challenges assumptions about school design.
- **Learn from high-performing models:** Observe how innovative spaces (e.g., flexible classrooms, outdoor learning, STEM labs) support student success.
- **Build buy-in for change:** Teachers and administrators can experience new models before implementing them, reducing resistance to innovation.
- **Engage students:** Involve students in visioning tours to gather insights on how spaces impact their learning experiences.

Key Benefit: Creates shared ownership and alignment among educators, ensuring that instructional models and school environments are **co-designed for success**.

Visioning Experiences for: *School Designers & Architects*

Purpose: To create learning spaces that are functional, flexible, and future-ready, ensuring that design aligns with pedagogy.

- **Observe schools in action:** Visit schools with innovative designs to see how learning spaces impact teaching, collaboration, and student engagement.
- **Engage educators and students:** Conduct walkthroughs and focus groups to understand real-world needs and pain points.
- **Prototype & refine designs:** Use insights from site visits to iterate on design concepts before finalizing plans.
- **Test adaptability:** Assess how flexible furniture, layouts, and technology integrate into different learning models.

Key Benefit: Prevents misalignment between design and educational needs, ensuring schools are **built to support** current and future instructional models.



Visioning Experiences for:

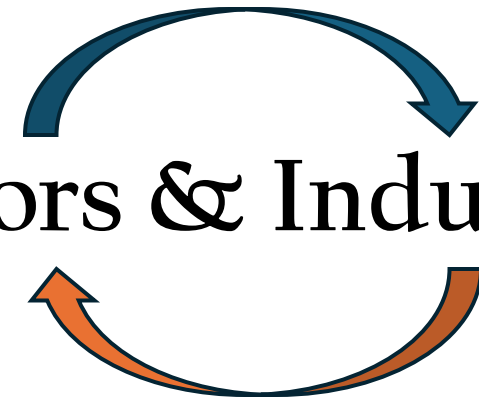
Manufacturers (Furniture, Technology, and Learning Tools Providers)

Purpose: To develop products that are responsive to real classroom needs and adaptable to modern learning environments.

- **See products in action:** Observe how teachers and students use existing furniture, technology, and tools to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement.
- **Engage directly with educators:** Conduct hands-on product testing in innovative schools to refine designs based on user feedback.
- **Identify emerging trends:** Gain insights into the future of learning environments to ensure product development stays ahead of market needs.
- **Develop case studies:** Use visioning tours to collect real-world success stories showcasing how their products support active learning, collaboration, and flexibility.

Key Benefit: Ensures new products are practical, adaptable, and aligned with the real challenges and opportunities in modern classrooms.

Knowledge Exchange (UDL) Educators & Industry



Rooted in Research: Based on principles from architecture and cognitive neuroscience, UDL ensures accessibility for all learners.

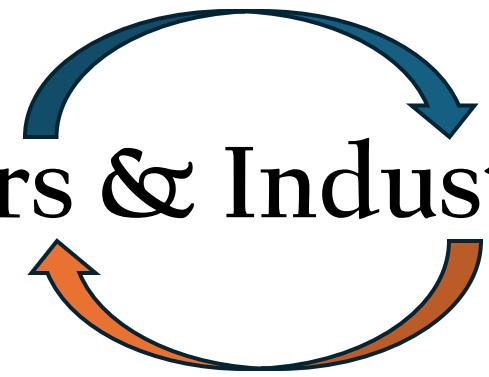
Flexible Learning Approach: UDL adapts teaching methods and materials to support diverse learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds.

Inclusive Education: Instead of modifying existing curricula, UDL designs learning environments where every student can thrive.

Many design principles can **transform the way schools function**, yet they are often **overlooked by educators** who haven't been exposed to architectural thinking.

Visioning experiences **bridge this gap** by giving teachers, administrators, and communities firsthand exposure to the **impact of design on learning**.

Knowledge Exchange (UDL) Educators & Industry



Architects and designers bring **specialized knowledge** to school and classroom design that many educators may not be aware of



Lighting

Biophilic Design

Flexible & Adaptable Learning Spaces

Acoustics & Sound Design

Color Psychology & Emotional Impact

Technology Integration & Future-Proofing

Sustainable & Energy Efficient Design

Outdoor Learning & Play-Based Design

Example (*Design Standards*)

The Benefits of Natural Light ☀️

Exposure to natural light has been linked to **higher student performance, better mood, and increased focus**. Studies show that classrooms with ample daylight improve test scores and reduce eye strain.

Design Considerations:

- Maximizing windows, skylights, and glass walls to bring in daylight.
- Using light shelves and reflective surfaces to distribute natural light more evenly.
- Balancing daylight with shading and glare control for optimal comfort.





Visioning experiences are **not just about seeing**—they're about **inspiring action**. By engaging stakeholders **before, during, and after**, you **transform passive observation into shared ownership** of school innovation.



Guilford County Schools is home to first public gaming and robotics elementary school in the country



Alli Lindenberg
February 11, 2025



REPUBLISH THIS STORY

Feature STEM K-12 Guilford



Idrick Alston, principal of Foust Gaming and Robotics Elementary School, cuts the ceremonial ribbon with community members and students. Alli Lindenberg/EducationNC





Discovery & Innovation Design Tour Costs

Per Person Expenses:

- Flights: \$790pp
- Hotel: \$500pp
- Subsistence: \$250pp OR \$50 per diem (B, L and D) +
Accrued Airport Parking and Baggage Fees

Other Costs:

- Travel Bus: \$5,100
- Photographer: \$2,025
- Videographer: \$1,050
- Printing Costs: \$500

Estimated Total: \$25,000

Funding Source: Title II Staff Development

Q & A & Take Aways

Resources:


- Visioning Experience Planning Template (5 pgs.)
- Strategies for Using Visioning Experiences (3 pgs.)

Dr. Kimberly Robertson

drrobertson@vantagestrategygroup.com




[in/drkimberlyrobertson](https://www.linkedin.com/in/drkimberlyrobertson)




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STRATEGIES FOR USING VISIONING EXPERIENCES

Foster Buy-In Among Educators, Administrators, and Community Stakeholders

Visioning experiences can be **powerful tools** for generating excitement, breaking down resistance, and building shared ownership over school design and transformation efforts. However, to **maximize buy-in**, it's essential to engage participants in meaningful ways before, during, and after the experience. Below are key **strategies** to ensure success:

1. PRE-VISIONING ENGAGEMENT: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

DEFINE THE "WHY" CLEARLY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connect the visioning experience to specific pain points, goals, or aspirations within your school or district.• Example: "Our students need more collaborative learning spaces—let's explore how other schools have solved this challenge."
INVOLVE KEY STAKEHOLDERS EARLY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get input from teachers, administrators, parents, and students on what they want to learn from the experience.• Conduct a pre-tour survey to understand concerns, expectations, and priorities.
FRAME IT AS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY, NOT A MANDATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resistance often comes from fear of forced change.• Position visioning as an exploration of possibilities rather than a predetermined agenda.



VISIONING EXPERIENCE PLANNING TEMPLATE


A structured guide to designing impactful visioning experiences for educators, administrators, and stakeholders.

1. VISION & GOALS

PURPOSE OF THE TOUR Why are you organizing this visioning experience?	KEY QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE What specific challenges or opportunities are you addressing? What aspects of school design, instruction, or community engagement do you want to observe?	INTENDED OUTCOMES What should participants gain from this experience?
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2. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administrators• Teachers• Students• Parents• Community Partners• Designers/Architects• Others: _____	PRE-TOUR PREPARATION <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct a survey to gather participant expectations.• Provide pre-reading materials or videos on innovative school design.
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**“When a flower doesn’t
bloom, you fix the
environment in which it
grows, not the flower.”**

—
Alexander den Heijer