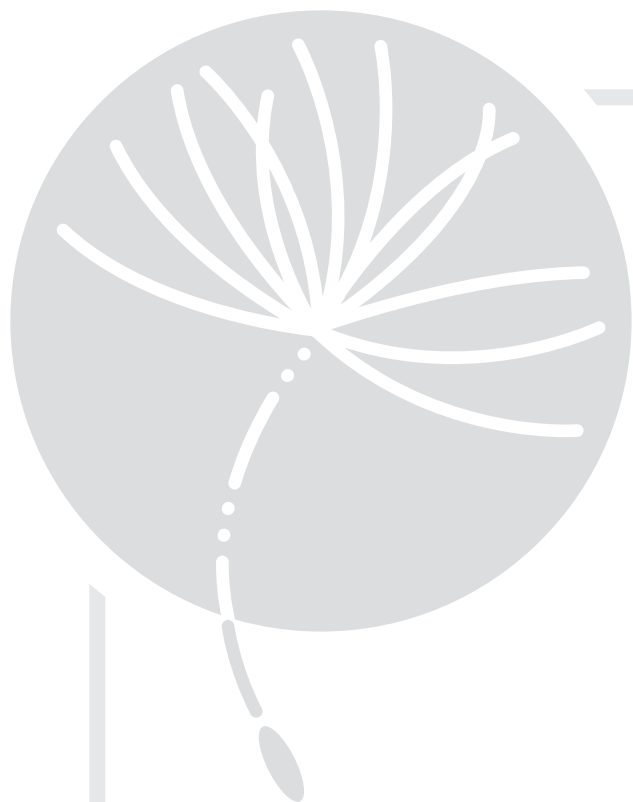# DESIGN · IN · MIND

A Framework for Sparking Ideas, Collaboration, and Innovation in Early Education

Miriam Beloglovsky • Michelle Grant-Groves

DESIGN in MIND

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and Michelle Grant-Groves

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Thank you to all of our readers and colleagues who have encouraged us to write a follow-up to *Loose Parts 3*, a book that specifically addresses how to make thoughtful and relationship-based design decisions versus copy-cut-paste photo simulations. This book wouldn't have come forward without your interest and insistence that we scaffold explicit design thinking steps for those who want and need to move toward authentic equity-focused education and beyond Pinterest-ready, duplicative curriculum, activities, and provocations. We want to thank the programs that graciously invited us to test the DIM framework: PreK4SA, Quality Matters of Monterey County, 9th Bridge Independent School, Mission Neighborhood Centers, Center of Gravity, and Pacific Primary. We are so grateful for all of our critical friends, our mentors (literary and living), and our editors for supporting the development and publication of a book we hope will hold much inspiration and ideation for the field to spark new ideas, sprint toward innovation, and spread stories of transformation and growth. Our children and communities are waiting for *us* to be ready.

Miriam Beloglovsky

I want to thank my family, who has helped me develop a passion for creativity and innovation. I am grateful to have grown surrounded by the beauty of art and design, which inspires and fuels my heart, soul, and mind. Being able to combine my love for design with education is a privilege and an honor. I appreciate the support the team at Redleaf Press has given us. Thank you Eric for believing in me all these years. To Melissa York for her talent, patience, and incredible guidance. You are an incredible editor. A big recognition and appreciation for all the programs that agreed to participate in the writing of this book. It is stronger because of you. Special shout-out to Megan Matteoni for trusting us and believing in this work. This has been an incredible adventure of discovery and change. Michelle, you have challenged me and guided me to discover the connections between design thinking and education. Working side by side to bring this book and our wish to fruition has been an honor and pleasure.

Michelle Grant-Groves

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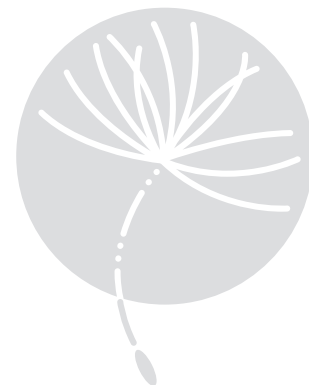
Introduction

WHAT IS THE DESIGN IN MIND (DiM) FRAMEWORK?

If you find something missing in your life and you don't know why it is so; introspect on what you are doing and try doing it some other way.
—Ravi V. Melwani, RVM Foundation, India

Imagine all of the complex challenges that confront you daily as an educational professional. Maybe this includes wading through quality assessment requirements, constantly advocating for living wages or higher compensation, confronting the reduction of play in early childhood environments, developing engaging and meaningful professional development opportunities, designing high-quality physical environments that honor both the child and external quality benchmarks, creating hybrid virtual classrooms in the era of COVID-19, and perhaps most poignant: learning how to better elevate and empower the lives, voices, and opportunities of Black children, families, and communities of color.

These real-world challenges for educators need real-world, innovative solutions that can be accomplished within a short period of time or they will only keep growing. You know you don't want to replicate the same problem-based processes you have used in the past, but you may be so overwhelmed that you have stopped being able to see any possible solutions to the problems you face. At the same time, you don't want to give up! You want to find an innovative way to analyze your practices and probable solutions. You've researched or been involved in using many different frameworks; some have limited long-term success, and other frameworks take too long or do not apply specifically to your educational context. You may have attended multiple professional development

opportunities, hoping to learn something to help you stay inspired and possibly to better overcome—or at least better understand—your dilemma. We know from personal experience how things can get to the point where it is easier to continue doing what is comfortable and familiar than risk wasting time with yet another new framework, process, or protocol. And yet you know that things need to change. You ask yourself, "How can I make sustainable and meaningful shifts, ones that don't cost time or money or both? Where can I find new ideas to address the complex challenges that keep cropping up?" When frustration and disequilibrium set in, perhaps you throw your hands up in the air and move on to completing easier, more achievable work. Nevertheless, the challenges are still lurking underneath the surface, and you know that eventually you will have to find a solution.

Too much of a focus on problems and complex, competing realities can become exhausting for educators and cause burnout, helplessness, hopelessness, compassion fatigue, and sometimes very real, residual trauma. You name it, and an early childhood educator more than likely has experienced it. Educators today need room for hope, flexibility, and imagination to thrive in their craft, and they need the freedom and trust to create opportunities for equity, equality, and inclusion for their students.

The Design in Mind Framework is a design process that supports creative thinking for educators who refuse to give up despite the ongoing challenges. It is a framework built on the power of hope that demonstrates how small, deliberate steps can lead creative educators—educational designers—toward incremental, transformational change inside of any ecosystem or context. Changes and challenges are inevitable. The best we can do in service to our profession is to approach challenges with imagination, courage, and the willingness to be part of a solution. At its essence, Design in Mind is a framework of design thinking protocols for teams to work through as they consider multiple solutions for complex issues.

As educators, authors, and coaching consultants ourselves, we are incredibly familiar with the feeling of being overwhelmed, the policy disequilibrium, and the all too real frustrations of wanting to make sustainable and child-centered change while having to wade through insurmountable paperwork, child and classroom assessments, and a barrage of other accountability requirements and societal expectations. Feeling overwhelmed can threaten to interfere with actually educating children. We have seen too many educators raising their hands and saying, "WAIT—Why Am I Teaching?"

It is this exact sense of urgency and disequilibrium that brought us to create the Design in Mind Framework, our thinking system that invites you to examine your dilemmas using a quick, step-by-step design process. The Design in

Mind Framework, DiM for short, facilitates the process of finding innovative solutions to complex systemic challenges, with inquiry, equity, equality, and inclusion at its core. We want to introduce educators to the concept of design thinking, which is a collaborative, human-centered approach for engineering solutions based on connecting and empathizing with others to problem solve and create more sustainable systems. We invite readers to think as both designers *and* educators; in other words, you will become EDesigners as you address the dilemmas of practice (problems and challenges) that have a tendency to keep you up at night. In this book, we hope to share with readers our passion for creativity, design, and, more specifically, design thinking and how it has informed our practices as educators, authors, and designers of the DiM Framework. We want to provide educators with new language to better describe and defend the need for equitable early learning ecosystems, and we see design thinking as a crucial tool for making sustainable change in and beyond the twenty-first century.

That recognizable feeling of overload when teachers start to ask, "Why Am I Teaching (WAIT)?"

THE EVOLUTION OF DESIGN THINKING

Designers in professions like technology, furniture, fashion, toys, and mechanics have all embraced design thinking over the past ten years, and it's high time we in education do the same. *Design thinking* as a term emerged from an exploration of theory and practice in a range of disciplines and sciences as a way of addressing the human, scientific, and technological needs of our times.

In 1934 John Dewey applied the aesthetic tools of engineering to education as a way to integrate and solve the challenges presented by society. In other words, applying the beauty of the tools of engineering, scientific, mathematical, and design thinking to find solutions to educational challenges. By the 1960s design theorist Horst Rittel had challenged designers and scientists to move from solving problems in a linear and straightforward conceptual manner to explore design thinking by embracing what he called "wicked" problems—extremely complex and multidimensional issues.

Moving into the twenty-first century, design theorist and academic Richard Buchanan published the seminal journal article "Wicked Problems in

Design Thinking" as a way to describe problems that need an innovative solution (Buchanan, 2008). We, the authors, have now redefined *wicked problems* as *design dilemmas*. Buchanan also made connections to the work and philosophy of Dewey and the importance of integrated, holistic, social-centered thinking, or the process of focusing on the whole person within the society they live in. Buchanan's premise allows that communication is still possible among people who hold varied perspectives, because despite the differences in intellectual and practical approaches, there is always a theme of a common problem to connect the perspectives. He proposes that when individuals have the willingness to discover what is useful in one another's work and can cast the material in terms of their own vision of design thinking, there is no limit to innovation (Buchanan 2008). Additionally, in the past decade, the design firm [IDEO](#) has undeniably propelled the concept of design thinking throughout global markets with their approach to "human-centered design." The firm uses the term to describe the values of empathy, optimism, iteration, creative confidence, and experimentation, while embracing ambiguity and failure (IDEO 2015).

HOW DOES THE DESIGN IN MIND FRAMEWORK WORK?

The DiM Framework breaks down into three simple Micro-Cycles that work together to form a SPRINT, which is short for "Simplified Process for Rapid Innovation in Teaching" The SPRINT is designed to be completed in teams and works best as a collaborative process. We call the three-cycle design process a SPRINT because it is intended to move very quickly. The compound term is playful but with very purposeful and practical implications at its core. After all, how many of us have too often found ourselves in a meeting to plan for the meeting about the plan? Not to say that long-term, deliberate planning isn't necessary or meaningful in the right context, but lingering in drawn-out meetings is the exact opposite of what a design SPRINT is meant to be. The DiM SPRINT process keeps an emphasis on rapid, learning-based action that is tied to playing with ideas and prototyping designs for immediate feedback and revision. Each of the three DiM Micro-Cycles is further broken down into a five-part, step-by-step process that includes helpful tools, questions, and protocols for teams, coaches, facilitators, and individuals to follow—or improvise—as they work to address the challenges they experience in their practice.

All together we call the complete circuit of the three DiM Micro-Cycles and their respective five-part steps within each cycle the DiM 3^5 SPRINT. Each of the three DiM Micro-Cycles exponentially builds on the last; this is why we represent the three-cycle, five-step process in exponents.

This is the basic structure of the three DiM 3^5 SPRINT Micro-Cycles:

1. Define Micro-Cycle (1–3 weeks)

2. Design Micro-Cycle (2–3 weeks)

3. Discover Micro-Cycle (1–3 weeks)

Completing a full circuit of the 3^5 DiM SPRINT Micro-Cycles as a team encourages a design mindset that supports creative tension and encourages collaborative innovation. Here you will find a brief outline of each of the three DiM Micro-Cycles and their respective five steps. A further, detailed explanation of each of the three DiM Micro-Cycles and the five DiM SEEDs of innovation (Ecosystems, Core Values, Design Tenets, Depths of Practice, and STORIES) can be found in the next several chapters. These five "seeds" are the core ideas of the DiM Framework that help EDesigners in sparking innovation and collaborative solutions to design dilemmas, turning problems into possibilities.

Inside of each of the Micro-Cycles, EDesign teams work together and push themselves to stretch, learn, and grow, then return to the design table to rapidly repeat the process, all the while looking for ways to improve. The whole process should take no more than three to nine weeks. Successful EDesign teams look for observable measures of progress and small wins versus absolute perfection. As a result, the 3^5 SPRINT Micro-Cycles support EDesigners to examine critical aspects of their collaboration and design implementation, pushing team members to think more deeply about future implications and possibilities. Design processes are messy, and that's okay. Instead of focusing on perfectly polished plans, EDesign teams work together with one another (and with community or classroom partners) to play and prototype ideas, working through the messiness of revisions until the final product, policy, or process is developed and there is an important story to tell about how it came to be. Every story needs a rough draft and several revisions, and the same is true for designs, prototypes, and their final stories.

Educators face a myriad of sticky problems every day that require us to think critically and differently. For example, when there is tension in the teachers' lounge, is the problem really about staff members not respecting the shared space in the room? Or could it be a more profound dilemma around the culture of how staffing patterns affect timing and breaks? Or is it about a discrepancy between individual and collective agreements or core values? The Design in Mind Framework guides you to dig deep beneath the surface of how your problems first present themselves. You work diligently with your team to uncover what some of the underlying issues might be. And you think together about possible ecosystem interactions that may or may not be contributing to the surface issues and problems. The DiM Framework can help you examine a small dilemma, such as

**The Design in Mind 3^5 SPRINT
(Simplified Process for Rapid Innovation in Teaching)**

A micro-cycle blueprint for design thinking

Micro-Cycle 1: Define your dilemma.   (1–3 weeks)
1. Define roles and expectations for design team members.
2. Define your design dilemma and the DiM Ecosystem where it is located (dilemma context).
3. Define the deeper issues around your dilemma.
4. Define your professional WISHes (Where I See Hope) and DREAMs (Designs that Reflect Endless Aspects of Magic).
5. Define the DiM Core Values together as a team.

Micro-Cycle 2: Design for implementation.   (2–3 weeks)
1. Design and adopt the DiM Design Tenets as a team.
2. Design a hive mind to build many ideas for possible implementation.
3. Design prototypes to test through play and revision.
4. Design feedback loops for and from your participants.
5. Design reflection protocols for data discoveries.

Micro-Cycle 3: Discover powerful stories.   (1–3 weeks)
1. Discover what everyone sees in the design data.
2. Discover the team's design story in the evidence.
3. Discover your DiM Depths of Practice (DoPs), using your design data and story.
4. Discover more to research beyond your design.
5. Discover how others might be inspired/impacted by your design STORIES (Stories That Transform, Organize, Reshape, and Ignite Education Systems).

"How do I change my physical environment to include more loose parts?" but it can also be applied to more complex dilemmas, such as "How do we ensure that early educators are compensated with living wages and benefits?"

We have a great need to understand our practices, routines, context, variations, constraints, paradoxes, and conflicts of priority within our current educational systems, all the while keeping a collective eye on what might yet be needed in our immediate and distant futures. With adequate support, using the Design in Mind Framework, dilemmas can be turned into fertile design thinking opportunities, ultimately helping us conceive and design educational systems that are rooted in a regenerative cycle of evolution.

THE CRISES OF SPRING 2020

As we wrote this book, the COVID-19 pandemic was affecting global society in multiple ways. As educators ourselves, we were pushed to change our practices and incorporate a wide use of digital technology to deliver content and develop virtual communities of practice. Meanwhile, we had to hold a safe space for families and educators who were struggling with fear, uncertainty surrounding their financial futures, and worry whether their children were continuing to learn. As a nation, we questioned how to distance ourselves physically while at the same time remaining socially connected. Early educators were struggling to maintain distancing protocols, all the while knowing how much young children need physical contact with adults and peers to thrive. Together we despaired as we witnessed how the pandemic exposed the ever-widening gap of inequities within our country. Together we acknowledged the brave educators who continued to take care of children with empathy and compassion through virtual and online school formats. And even inside all of this, there was hope. For while all of these real-world challenges and dilemmas were happening, we were also witnessing a surge of creativity and innovation that indicated the capacity educators and policy makers have to make rapid, meaningful, and sustainable change.

We are also bearing witness as our nation experiences a transformational and turbulent awakening to the heightened and critical need to affirm Black lives. All of us are being called to a higher standard of behavior and morality in the actions we take, the language we use, the protections we provide, and the education we offer. The cultural crisis we are living through is a call to immediate action for every educator and leader to lean in and collaboratively design innovative opportunities that embrace and empower our children, students, families, and staff of color in ways we perhaps had never considered before. Twenty-first-century human-centered educational design approaches have never been more needed than now. We would be remiss if we did not take an earnest, equitable, and ethical look at our education policies and practices. We must make sustainable change that creates spaces where people of color belong and thrive, where respectful, powerful, and courageous conversation can take place under the deep-rooted understanding of our differences and similarities.

Perhaps the gift of this historic spring is the opportunity to shift our priorities, change our practices, modify our educational systems, and rethink the way we deliver and assess quality—not to reflect *what* children and students need to know but instead to focus on *how* they learn and how to support them to become critical thinkers and innovative problem solvers of the future.

THE DiM FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

THE DESIGN IN MIND ECOSYSTEM
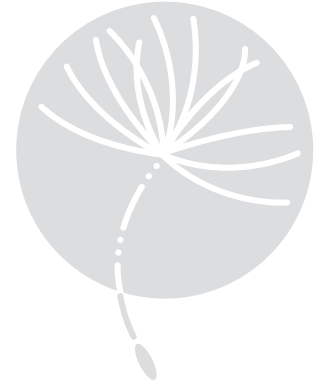
The bewildering variety at work in a healthy ecosystem is nothing but an exercise in sustained experimentation—try something new and see what sticks. —Tim Brown

THE DESIGN IN MIND FRAMEWORK GENESIS

As we set out to write a book about design thinking for early education, we found much inspiration and metaphor for systems thinking in the natural world. Plant systems and biological ecosystems are fraught with simple complexities and evolving systems that have the ability to respond and adapt to ecological challenges and changes. With these ideas in mind, we sought to create a design thinking framework for early educators and designers that encouraged adaptive thinking and a growth mindset. As a team of two, we eagerly spent time researching and analyzing a variety of systems until we found inspiration in a metaphor of how diverse ecosystems function. In addition, we also looked closely at plant-based bio systems, examining the beauty and science of how a single simple seed contains a blueprint and internal mechanisms to spread and regenerate the idea of itself inside a variety of ecological contexts.

As we looked closer at plant-based systems of regeneration and design, we absolutely fell in love with the turn-of-the-twentieth-century botanical studies of dandelions and quickly found analogies between the life cycle of dandelions and the human struggle both to survive and to transform. Dandelions are self-reliant and extremely resilient, just like educators! Dandelions improve the soil as they grow through different stages of propagation, pollination, and reproduction. From the root to the flower to the iconic transformational wish tuft, dandelions are amazing little plants that can grow anywhere, anytime, and in almost any condition. Dandelions are also aesthetically and architecturally beautiful. The

architecture and analogy of these beautifully resilient plants inspired us to integrate the emerging blueprint of our design framework with the image of a dandelion in mind. Taking the analogy of the dandelion one step further, we think about how few can resist plucking a dandelion in its wispy final stage, breathing in deeply, and then blowing its seeds into the wind while making a wish. This organic inspiration of wish-making became an integral part of understanding and using the DiM Framework.

This idea of making a wish led us to create the Design in Mind Framework. Educators need more than wishes to get us through the tough challenges and complex problems facing us in our profession today and tomorrow. We see how educational ecosystems, much like dandelions, are in a continuous cycle of regeneration, based on a simple design: they grow to sustain the hope and idea of what might yet be, if only we believe in the wish and possibility of hope in the future.

With our readers and educational colleagues in mind, we have created the Design in Mind Framework as a schema for change. We want to support educators to develop the ability to take the idea of a "wish" and put it into applicable practice for sustainable and holistic transformation; turn their WAIT (Why Am I Teaching) into a WISH (Where I See Hope).

The DiM Framework encourages educators to think deeply about their practices and existing ecosystems and to get in touch with their hopes, dreams, values, ideas, and deeper thinking. DiM pushes its EDesigner teams to better describe and defend their decisions by applying continuous collaboration and democratic decision-making in order to achieve sustainable change. We wish for educators to become regenerative in their thinking and leading and, like a dandelion, create seed systems of ideas that will promote equity and inclusion.

As any ecologist can tell you, a wealth of diversity will always increase the overall health and sustainability of an ecosystem. The early learning and living environments we create and curate collectively form a deeply interconnected ecosystem that requires healthy cycles of energy exchange and continuous nutrient generation. It is only through careful observation and relationship-based interactions that we can begin to understand how our roles within our larger educational ecosystem require an acute awareness of the whole—not just the parts.

We believe we can find the place where equity and inclusion-focused systems come together by envisioning new designs using an ecological approach. Consider the function of a dandelion in an ecosystem. They are usually the first plant (and pollinator) to emerge in the spring and are all too often seen as weeds, destroyed before they can propagate and expand their abundant sustaining qualities. (Many do not realize that dandelions are highly nutritious and edible.) The dandelion returns every spring and continues to pollinate and generate seeds that sustain and feed its ecosystem—and not just the animals in it. When dandelions are allowed to propagate, they distribute powerful nutrients in the soil that sustain and support the roots of other plants. Think with us now as we connect with the same analogy to promote resilience and opportunity when a dilemma emerges within our educational contexts. Too often we attempt to extinguish dilemmas before they get too out of hand. However, in the process, we may have missed an important opportunity to examine and explore how the dilemma could have provided us with possibilities for growth and to reimagine more sustainable and regenerative solutions. When we use the

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DiM Framework, we transform impossible dilemmas into relentlessly hopeful opportunities for change. Dandelions find opportunities to thrive, even when they are viewed as a weed that needs to be destroyed. The same is true for design dilemmas. When we shift our focus to see dilemmas as opportunities instead of weeds, we discover our capacity to create regenerative processes that lead to sustainable change.

FINDING THE OPPORTUNITY INSIDE OF ANY CHALLENGE

When we first began to play and prototype with the concepts behind the Design in Mind Framework, we also directed our research toward finding power in designing around existing dilemmas. For example, we looked at dilemmas stemming from the multitude of conflicting and impossible-to-implement unfunded mandates that are intended to improve schools and early care and education systems. For us, the term *design dilemmas* began to resonate deeply. Educators are overburdened with compliance checklists and implementation strategies that are more often than not at odds with their school philosophy or pedagogy. They work within systems that insist on having the right or wrong answers, which in turn limits everyone's critical thinking and problem-solving. Ideological arguments around play and academics, equity and inclusion, or creativity and compliance all too often position educators into either/or corners that quickly end in zero-sum frustrations. And then there is the ultimate EDesigner's dilemma: "If I don't _____, I might jeopardize my job or lose our funding, so what can I do?"

Through the Design in Mind Framework and this book, we are offering EDesigners a blueprint for a "both/and" approach. The DiM Framework has the ability to support both quality and accountability systems *and* individual programs or personal ideologies, practices, and pedagogy. Very few truly difficult design dilemmas have overly simplified either/or options for change. Because of the nature of complex problems, we wanted to create a design framework that could help educators and teams practice holding several truths and multiple possibilities at the same time.

Consider, for example, the fact that educators are required to increase and adapt their classroom knowledge and experience continuously to guide students better. But how do we know what educators should focus on? Educational theories, philosophies, and pedagogical approaches proliferate, and opinions differ as to the type of training and the level of education educators need to have. How do we ensure that educators get the education and experience that will best support their work with their students within a specific learning context and community? How do we design professional development that ensures quality educational outcomes for *all* young children, not just some?

Education is not a one-size-fits-all ecosystem, and the DiM Framework helps us see complex problems from multiple perspectives, not just one. By integrating the DiM Framework within education ecosystems, we can create sustainable, human-centered changes and energize our people power for the future, preparing ourselves and our students for systems divergent from those of today.

As we have reflected on the Design in Mind Framework, we have learned that when all we see are the problems, we become blind and numb to the possibilities.

And any great designer will tell you—better yet, show you—a single challenge or flaw can release a myriad of possibilities for what happens next. In their book *Fail Fast, Fail Often*, authors Ryan Babineaux and John Krumboltz argue that making mistakes leads to seeking opportunities for growth. Instead of avoiding making mistakes and failing, successful people actively seek opportunities where they can face the limits of their skills and knowledge and stretch to learn quickly. People who know how to learn from their mistakes recognize that their feeling of fear or uncertainty is a sure sign that they are in the prime mental space for optimal growth (Babineaux and Krumboltz 2013, 24).

The authors' concept of failing fast and failing often should not be a new concept for educators. Children's books, including *Beautiful Oops!* (Saltzberg 2010) and *What Do You Do with a Problem?* (Yamada and Besom 2016) have critically valuable lessons for us as adults, who are ourselves so reluctant to make mistakes, take risks, or play with new ideas that might solve real-world problems. If only we were willing to see the possibilities within mistakes and design dilemmas and focus on what might be versus staying trapped in the vicious cycle of what isn't! These kinds of quick-to-learn growth mindsets around dilemmas of practice are critical dispositions for twenty-first-century leaders and EDesigners to model and cultivate with teams, self, and children and students alike.

FINDING NEW WAYS TO SEE PROBLEMS

We humans are creatures of habit, and we often apply the same strategies to different problems with no fruitful results. Our neural networks are built through schemas of repetition and routine. These patterns can also prevent us from seeing alternative and innovative solutions to solving problems, and our thinking becomes stagnant. If not actively overridden, our internal schemas can obstruct an innovative approach or deeper assessment of a problem.

A perfect example of how our neural schemas can either limit or expand our ability to pursue innovative solutions happened to author Miriam Beloglovsky while writing and photographing *[Loose Parts 2: Inspiring Play with Infants and Toddlers](#)*. She wanted to provide toddlers an opportunity to explore pushing and pulling and set up clean toilet plungers in a solution of cornstarch and water. As adults explored and tested the learning experience before we offered it to the children, we got the plungers stuck and were not able to break the seal that the suction produced. We lifted, we shook, and we moved the plungers without positive results. We considered scrapping the provocation to avoid frustrating the children. Eventually we decided to proceed and let the toddlers explore as they wished. As they started investigating the provocation, they automatically

lowered the plunger handle to one side, thus releasing the seal. Because children's brains are still growing, they do not have the ossified schema of adults. Thus, they are able to see problems from a different angle.

JENNA KNIGHT, *LOOSE PARTS 2*, REDLEAF PRESS

Within the DiM Framework, we invite readers to consider the question "What if anything was possible?" This question has the power to challenge our assumptions and beliefs, breaking us out of habitual schemas. When we use the DiM Framework, we embrace novelty and are able to see things from a different perspective. Thus, we start down the road to developing innovative solutions to complex problems by doing these things:

- Framing a dilemma of practice that inspires others to search for creative solutions

- Discovering what people need for a human-centered and empathic design

- Generating breakthrough ideas that move beyond obvious solutions

- Testing and prototyping to gather feedback, followed by further learning and experimentation

- Sharing the story to inspire regeneration and forward action

For busy educators, time is precious and not something easily shared with competing requirements and responsibilities, not the least of which is caring for and connecting with children. Having a system that guides EDesigners through short, rapid cycles to solve small and complex challenges can allow innovation and opportunity to arise inside of relatively short periods of time. Each of the

Design in Mind Micro-Cycles begins with curiosity and by approaching the design process with a creative and open mind, despite the unique challenges your dilemma may present. The simple series of the three Micro-Cycles can give EDesigners the data they need to define, design, and discover creative solutions better without jumping too quickly into a problem-based mindset. And instead of EDesigners failing fast and failing often, we would like to encourage them to grow fast and grow forward—learning from all of their mistakes, successes, challenges, and breakthroughs. Remember, mistakes help us grow just as much as accomplishments do. EDesigners learn how to embrace them all and keep going to keep growing.

A NEW VISION FOR EDUCATION

Since the Industrial Revolution, we have been locked into an educational system that prioritizes content knowledge and academic logic at the expense of creativity and innovation. Sidelining creativity has led to a system that is not preparing children and students to readily be the creative, flexible leaders that will be needed in the later twenty-first and early twenty-second centuries. Even today our educational systems and many private corporations operate with outdated hierarchical analytical thinking and find themselves constantly disrupted by changing trends and consumer values that render their businesses and educational approaches obsolete due to an inability to quickly pivot and adapt. It is time that we refocus education to embrace a new vision grounded on equity, equality, and inclusion.

And so we ask, "What would be different if educators thought more like designers?" When educators use design thinking, they partner with other educators and mentors to delve into creative mindsets and move through cycles of prototyping and playing. Our hope is for educators to understand how the DiM Framework, much like education, is a cyclical process that can be replicated again and again, each time producing new ideas and insights within a dynamic learning ecosystem.

The DiM Framework places people at the center of every dilemma, requiring EDesigners to build empathy and real relationships with others throughout every step and decision. The DiM Framework inspires us to create human-centered change and innovation. It starts with anchoring the seeds of our ideas into our deeper values and perceptions, recognizing how beliefs can drive our passion for change or mire us into stagnation. By using the DiM Framework, educators and EDesigners can see new possibilities for themselves as collaborative creators of environments, architects of programs, and innovators of curriculum,

centered around the seeds of empathy, innovation, inclusion, and equity for everyone within the given ecosystem and learning context. The DiM Framework is simple in nature yet allows complex possibilities for advancement or success. What an extraordinary invitation to be able to consider and reconsider our own design perspectives, over time, throughout the course of our careers.

Overview of the Design-In-Mind 3 × 5 System

1. Core Values:
   Who are we?
   • Inquiry
   • Aesthetics
   • Authentic Connections
   • Critical Reflections
   • Praxis

2. Core Tenets:
   What fuels our effort?
   • Intention
   • Intersectionality
   • Empathy
   • Safe and Brave
   • Play and Prototype

3. Depth of Practice:
   How deep are our roots?
   • Duplicative
   • Substantive
   • Integrative
   • Iterative
   • Regenerative
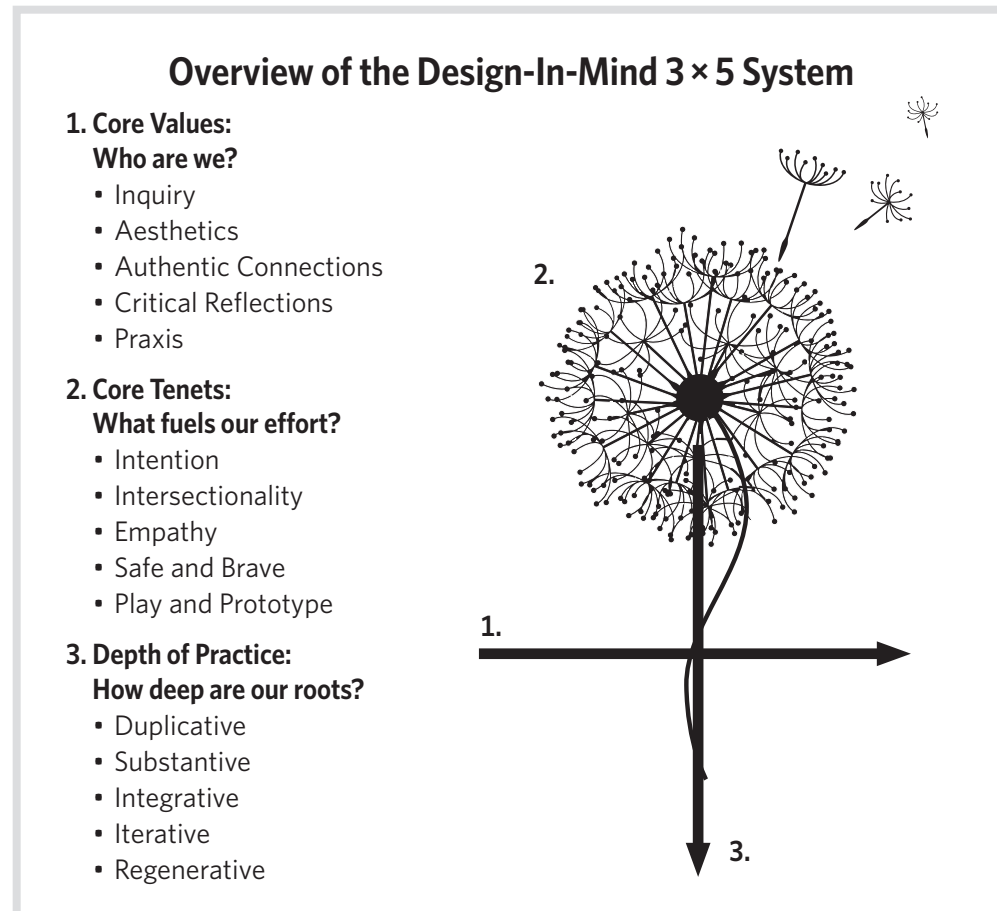
Designers of large and complex systems innately understand how a variety of parts and pieces within any process can come together to form a whole. So, too, must we EDesigners of environments, education, curriculum, and care systems work together in creating more holistic and interconnected approaches with young children, families, communities, and ourselves.

We know that many educators today are looking to make meaningful changes in their policies and practices. We also recognize that as a global community, we are experiencing one of the most complex, accelerated, and interconnected times known in our collective human existence. Worldwide, socio-ecological challenges continue to confound us, and yet at the same time, people are discovering exciting innovations that have the power to solve or transform some

of the world's most difficult and historical dilemmas. The field of education is ever poised as a pivotal contributor to culture, community, creativity, and critical mass, and we stand at a crucial crest in human evolution. As we look into the third decade of the twenty-first century, we recognize the need for education—as the incubator of our future—to be as vibrant and inspiring as the unprecedented changes and challenges we and our children are facing today.

Education systems that continue to follow outdated formats and designs from the turn of the twentieth century, intended to prepare students for industrial fabrication and replication, are in dire need of future-forward restructuring. Current educational systems must change to meet up with the social, technological, and intersectional lives of our students and ourselves. Education today must build innovative ecosystems of thought and design for the future, operating in learning spaces that are filled with hope, creativity, spiraled learning, and a sustained belief in the possibility for transformational change.

Educators today readily acknowledge the need to design learning systems that include diverse perspectives from the start. [The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)](#) supported this through the release of its position statement "Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education" (NAEYC 2019). Children today arrive at our doors with a sophisticated cache of lived experiences. As responsible and responsive educators, we must learn to design teaching ecosystems that cultivate multiple learning modalities for students. We must move away from one-size-fits-all approaches as quickly as possible. Our students are becoming more racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse with every generation. As civic-minded educators and as compassionate caregivers, we have a moral imperative to ensure that we design learning systems that are equitable and inclusive by design, on purpose, across the board.

To think globally and act locally requires our larger social systems and services, including education, to dig beneath the surface of common social practices. The Design in Mind Framework gives us an innovative, concise, step-by-step process to solve complex challenges both individual and systemic and to do it in a short period of time. Each step is designed for EDesigner teams to use a democratic approach that ensures inclusion of multiple perspectives and an equity of voice within the design process, including the perspectives and voices of children, support staff, and families.

Chapter Two

THE FIVE DiM SEEDs

An Overview of Key DiM Terms and Definitions
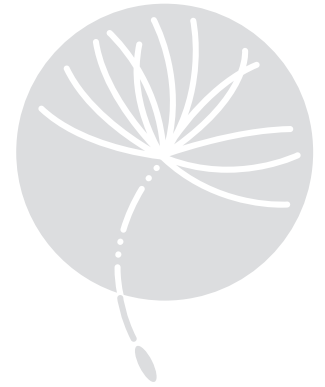
The Design in Mind Framework is structured to support EDesigners in learning how to better transform design dilemmas into design discoveries by using a specific set of design thinking steps and processes. This chapter is dedicated to defining a number of key terms and considerations that EDesigners will refer to as they work through each of the three DiM Micro-Cycles that make up the full DiM 3^5 SPRINT.

We call the following section of the Design in Mind Framework the DiM SEEDs. We refer to the following terms as SEEDs because they represent the essential seeds of knowledge EDesigners need as they enter more fully into each of the three DiM 3^5 SPRINT Micro-Cycles. We also call the following terms and definitions SEEDs because of the high-power potential they each have to revolutionize Systems for Equity, Equality, and Design. The playful acronym has great purpose and was intentionally formed for you to consider as you begin to work with your design steps and protocols. As you read this chapter, we encourage you to consider how we have explained the different DiM SEED terms and considerations. We also highly encourage EDesigners to further norm and define the following SEED terms for themselves.

Ecosystems • Core Values • Design Tenets • Depths of Practice • STORIES

The DiM SEEDs are essentially the main ideas of each of the three DiM Micro-Cycles, and they are dispersed throughout the DiM Framework as a whole. We feel it is important for EDesigners to have some shared understanding of the terms and definitions we are using before jumping into the full design SPRINT process because, as we all know, thinking takes time. As conscientious EDesigners ourselves, we include this chapter as a way of making sure we as authors are

not making assumptions about the words we use and their overall intent within the DiM Framework itself. This chapter is dedicated to providing you with deep, critical-thought preparation prior to moving forward with implementing your design.

DESIGN IDEA-SEEDS AND THE DiM SEEDs

To design is to make creative and intentional choices, choices that grow out of a single seed of an original idea or problem. The same is true for the DiM Framework, which is structured to support EDesigners to make design decisions related to an idea or dilemma that affects your ecosystem. Design idea-seeds are similar to plant seeds, in that inside of each seed kernel is a blueprint for systemic change waiting to emerge. Design thinking within the Design in Mind Framework promotes systemic change by teaching EDesigners how to nurture design ideas that can flourish through compassion, vulnerability, and a readiness to take calculated risks. Design thinking encourages educators to better embrace high-level, complex thinking and to value design as a catalyst for creativity and innovation, while at the same time propagating trust and democracy. As you read this book and begin to integrate and implement the DiM Framework, we hope that you begin to see yourself as an EDesigner who does far more than deliver services or simply teach children stock curriculum. The seeds of your ideas are incubating extraordinary possibilities, and we have high hopes that EDesigners will find ways to use the DiM Framework for creating sustainably diverse, holistic systems that focus on forward-thinking leadership and learning.

As you begin to engage with the DiM Framework and the various components of the DiM 3^5 SPRINT, we encourage you and your design team members to allow the seeds of your design ideas to develop as you do these things:

- Listen, observe, understand, empathize, and respond to people's needs, desires, and ideas.
- Use storytelling to record, revisit, and reinvent yourselves and your work.
- Create prototypes that will function effectively.
- Apply and integrate the philosophy of aesthetics to inspire human connections: line, color, harmony, texture, and shapes.
- Ask the Simple Six questions (what, when, where, who, how, and why), which can lead to complex revelations about any given subject, experience, or idea.
- Consider the roles of both equity and equality in your decisions (pro tip: they are not the same).

- Practice making progress versus perfection. Work on learning from your mistakes, and you will quickly get better at what you do.

- Make marvelous mistakes, embrace them, and use them to challenge and change your views and perspectives.

- Shape culture, evolve behavior, and advance inclusive values, priorities, practices, and policies.

Monterey County Office of Education leaders and administrators working through a collaborative design dilemma using the DiM 3⁵ SPRINT framework.
HARRY WHO PHOTOGRAPHY

The DiM 3^5 SPRINT is composed of three separate, albeit interconnected, Micro-Cycles. Each of the three DiM Micro-Cycles is further divided into five distinct steps that walk EDesigners through structured thinking, discussion, and decision-making protocols. Further definitions of each of the three DiM Micro-Cycles and details of each Micro-Cycle's five steps can be found in chapters 3–5.

These are the five DiM SEEDs embedded within the DiM Framework:

1. Ecosystems (five design ecosystems)

2. Core Values (five design core values)

3. Design Tenets (five design tenets)

4. Depths of Practice (five depths of practice)

5. STORIES (five elements of storyboarding)

The rest of the chapter will outline the specific definitions needed for moving forward in the design thinking process.

ECOSYSTEMS: DETERMINING WHERE THE DESIGN YOU HAVE IN MIND WILL LIVE AND GROW

So you have a design dilemma. One of the first steps in your journey of dilemma transformation is to identify in which DiM Ecosystem your design idea-seed might best be planted. In the DiM Framework, we have identified five design ecosystems that EDesigners can examine before deciding which context is most appropriate to dig into for their design dilemma or design idea to evolve. Throughout the book, you will notice we use the term *ecosystem*, not *environment*. This is deliberate. We chose to use the term *ecosystem* rather than *environment* because we believe that an ecosystem encompasses a more complex idea of how living organisms interact as a unit to support their communal environment.

We recommend that EDesigners spend time considering each of the five DiM Ecosystem types prior to deciding which one best defines the ecological contexts of your specific dilemma: physical environment, curriculum and instruction, professional development, program structure, or personal growth. When you understand the role each of the five DiM Ecosystems serves in your program, the better and more refined your design dilemma will become when it's time to further define its dimensions in Micro-Cycle 1. Defining the specifics of where your idea-seed lands and gets focused on is up to you. You pick where you want to plant it, and you think about where it can best grow roots and spread out. You know your design dilemma best, and you and your team are the ultimate architects of this process. We also offer a few examples and reflective questions here to help get your creative mind thinking about your possible design.

1. Physical Environments

The physical environment ecosystem invites EDesigners to consider the space (indoors, outdoor, or virtual) where they interact and communicate learning opportunities and expectations with students, colleagues, and families. When EDesigners work together to design physical environments, their efforts have the power to promote a sense of belonging, equity, and inclusion for all by respecting their complex identities (abilities, values, language, history, culture, and traditions). Considering the physical environment is essential in creating a learning environment that promotes physical and physiological well-being, agency, and engagement. Planting your design seed in the physical environment ecosystem might be on a large scale, such as redesigning safety systems or campus landscapes (systems-level designs), or on a small scale, such as redesigning a single area or small section of your classroom environment (on-the-ground design).

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Ecosystem

Physical Environment	**Curriculum and Instruction**	**Professional Development**	**Program Structure**	**Personal Growth**
This might include child or adult spaces, indoor or outdoor. For this framework, start small, go deep, and dream forward. You can always go back and do more.	Design dilemmas for this ecosystem context might include small or large rethinking of any or all parts of the instructional cycle: standards, curriculum (provocations, experiences, experiments, activities, and so forth), or assessment.	Within this ecosystem, even the smallest design shifts can have large and everlasting effects. Your dilemma might exist in facilities, finance, operations, culture/communication, or other areas.	This ecosystem affects many adults who are all together for one purpose but *are not* the same and *do not* think the same way about any single issue, idea, or innovation.	As individuals, we are a living ecosystem unto ourselves. Each of us has a rich inner life that influences and informs our daily interactions, exchanges, decisions, and discoveries.

Systems Example: Chapter 6 provides an in-depth, systems-level design story about Mission Neighborhood Centers, an inner-city Head Start, and its design journey.

Classroom Example: Interlude 2 offers the story of how the Polar Bear Classroom at Pacific Primary redesigned an area in its outdoor classroom in San Francisco, California.

Physical Environment Design Considerations: How does the physical environment create a sense of belonging for children and students? Is culture authentically represented in a way that supports children's identity? Are we creating a sense of democracy where all voices are honored? How do we move from just fulfilling a checklist of quality improvement accountability requirements into representing and honoring our collective values?

2. Curriculum and Instruction

The curriculum and instruction ecosystem invites EDesigners to think about design dilemmas that exist within student learning and assessment systems. For the purposes of the DiM Framework, we define *curriculum* as a plan for learning that is focused on creating engaging opportunities and acknowledges children's complex identities. Curriculum includes the content and organization of the

educational program, daily schedule, transitions, and routines that impact children's cognitive, physical, socio-emotional, and creative development. Inclusive and equitable curriculum is also responsive and adaptive to students' culture, home language, traditions, values, and history. *Instruction* is further defined here as the methods and strategies used to deliver and evaluate students' learning. Effective instruction holds elements of both fidelity and flexibility while staying focused on supporting children's strengths. Differentiated instruction adapts the curriculum to support individual students' needs. As part of the larger instructional process, summative and formative assessments can provide critical data for educators and EDesigners to consider as they support children's learning and development. This ecosystem invites EDesigners to yearn toward creating curriculum and instruction designs that promote ongoing observation systems, curricular designs that partner with and support children's ideas and identities, teaching strategies that cultivate inquiry and critical thinking about the content, and assessment systems that elevate children's diverse funds of knowledge. EDesigners who have design dilemmas in the curriculum and instruction ecosystem might find themselves redesigning pedagogical philosophy or instructional policies for their school or agency (systems level). On the smaller scale, a classroom team of EDesigners might explore how to better align their student documentation and assessment data to their curriculum planning (student level). The following are examples of both system-level and classroom-level dilemma ecosystems:

Hypothetical System Example: A large municipal school district is interested in transitioning away from theme-based instruction toward project-based learning over the next twelve months across all of its early learning schools in the district.

Classroom Example: In [chapter 7](#), three teaching teams at the [Center of Gravity](#) in Pleasant Hill, California, explore how to better ensure that their weekly and monthly curriculum plans are based on their daily documentation and data.

Curriculum and Instruction Design Considerations: How will you and your team adapt the curriculum to ensure that children's identities are authentically represented and elevated? How do you respond to children's emerging interests and ideas while making connections to required curricular standards?

3. Professional Development

In an ecological learning system, professional development acts as a catalyst for design thinking to emerge. Innovative professional development is essential to engage passion, compassion, curiosity, and capacity. For example, design thinking professional development must do the following:

- Go beyond teaching instructional compliance expectations and instead seek to develop collaborative approaches that guide teaching practices and promote personal growth. Professional development must encourage sense-making questions rather than delivering didactic instructions.

- Place community participation front and center and empower educators and administrators to build up their own complex thinking and design capacities within and among their teams rather than always looking to external experts first to share key instructional knowledge.

- Take a systems view that encompasses creating more practice-based coaching models within an agency or school district versus designing a single "one-and-done" workshop.

System Example: In [chapter 8](#), a large moderately rural Office of Education team challenged themselves to reconceptualize the overall design and intent of all early childhood adult learning and training experiences across the county in Monterey County, California.

Hypothetical Classroom Example: Happy Family Child Care teachers are interested in attending a one-time workshop on inquiry and problem-solving, but they need to resolve the dilemma of finding coverage in the classroom for their absence.

Professional Development Design Considerations: How do we create more robust professional development that enhances educators' personal and professional knowledge and growth and goes beyond meeting standard mandates? What strategies can we create to frequently engage in collective inquiry and explorations of our common values? How do we create professional development that helps EDesigners make connections with colleagues and serves as an avenue for advocacy and transformational justice?

4. Program Structure

Teams that dig into the program structure ecosystem are looking to effect change in the overarching systems, large or small. Either way, program structure designs inevitably affect a large group of people, if not the organization or agency as a whole. When focusing on program structure designs, it's important to remember that this ecosystem (and in truth every ecosystem) relies heavily on getting lots of input from the people you are working with. The more input and evidence you gather through the design process, the stronger your design and design story will be. That is, authentic, partnership-focused input, not just a rubber stamp, "because I said so" kind of input, but the real, honest, gritty, courageous type that you and your design team are willing to grapple with as you move through the design

discovery cycles. How deep are you willing to go in your discovery process? Who will you reach out to for the most honest and crucial feedback throughout the life of this design? What are you willing to discover and not have a ready answer for? Where might these discoveries lead? Think carefully together with your design team about what level of program development you want or need to focus on. As with the other DiM Ecosystem contexts, sometimes starting small and looking for a quick win can establish trust within your system that you can draw upon when you do take on some of the bigger system challenges.

Hypothetical System Example: Early education teachers and early elementary teachers within a school district typically get little planning or conversation time together. Using the DiM Framework to examine program structures, focusing on fiscal systems, might reveal invisible structural inequities. For example, are there funding streams that could be leveraged or reallocated to focus on in-district collaboration or stipends? Are there current line items in your budget that go unspent or are typically underutilized that could be reallocated to prioritize community input and innovation? You never know unless you ask.

Team Example: In [chapter 9](#), the educational and administrative teams at [9th Bridge Independent School](#) in Las Vegas, Nevada, examine and reconsider how institutional knowledge is shared and stored over time throughout the life of their school and within and across their faculty.

Program Structure Design Considerations: How can you focus your efforts on building relationships and spaces that are meaningful and authentic, where learning acts as a vehicle that supports children's fullest potential? How will this be integrated into each of the particular systems in your program?

5. Personal Growth

As individuals, we are living ecosystems unto ourselves. Each of us has a rich inner life that influences and informs our daily interactions, exchanges, decisions, and discoveries. For one reason or another, readers may choose to use the design thinking process for themselves. Focusing design efforts on personal growth can lead to profound insights for any EDesigner. Each of us is a leader in our own right. Every day we have the power to act, decide, design, and reflect on the effects of our choices. The DiM Ecosystem of personal growth can be as bold as the EDesigner themselves so long as there is a deep and abiding commitment to see the process through to the end.

Hypothetical System Example: Teacher Y'De'Dios (who uses *they/them* pronouns) is eager to try out a number of new early learning strategies they have learned about in a recent series of trainings offered by their corporate office, but a number of their colleagues are disinterested in "trying out anything new."

Y'De'Dios thinks that maybe if they start with a focus on personal growth on their own, perhaps what they learn from the DiM process can be shared with others on their team for ideas and inspiration across the classroom system.

Self Example: In chapter 10, a state-level early learning administrator shares her design story about personal growth and how she used the DiM Framework to better understand her dilemma of where to focus her future career goals and efforts.

Personal Growth Design Considerations: What new possibilities for growth both as a professional and a human being are guiding my decisions? This can be something as simple as deciding the next career steps to take or as complex as making an intentional decision to leave a job or pursue a higher educational degree.

CORE VALUES: DEFINING WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU BELIEVE

The DiM Core Values fertilize our thinking as we begin to work through the five steps of design thinking within Micro-Cycle 1 of the DiM 3^5 SPRINT. The DiM Core Values help define who we are as designers and thinkers. They provide us with a solid base of shared understanding for our work moving forward. They guide the design decisions EDesigners make and the way we conduct ourselves inside our relationships and interactions. The DiM Core Values appeal to the emotions and develop democratic debates that lead to positive change. They evolved through dialogue and profound introspection about our individual and collective beliefs as authors and researchers. We offer them to you, the reader, understanding the responsibility and hope of how they might positively affect others and the ecosystems in which you serve. Of course, you can adapt or generate your own core values both as an individual and as a program. We have learned that when groups take the time to define personal and institutional values, members form cohesive thinking systems that make sense and are followed with consistency, integrity, and compassion. We encourage EDesigners to use the following DiM Core Value definitions, as well as adding your own dimensions as you move into using them in Micro-Cycle 1 of your 3^5 SPRINT.
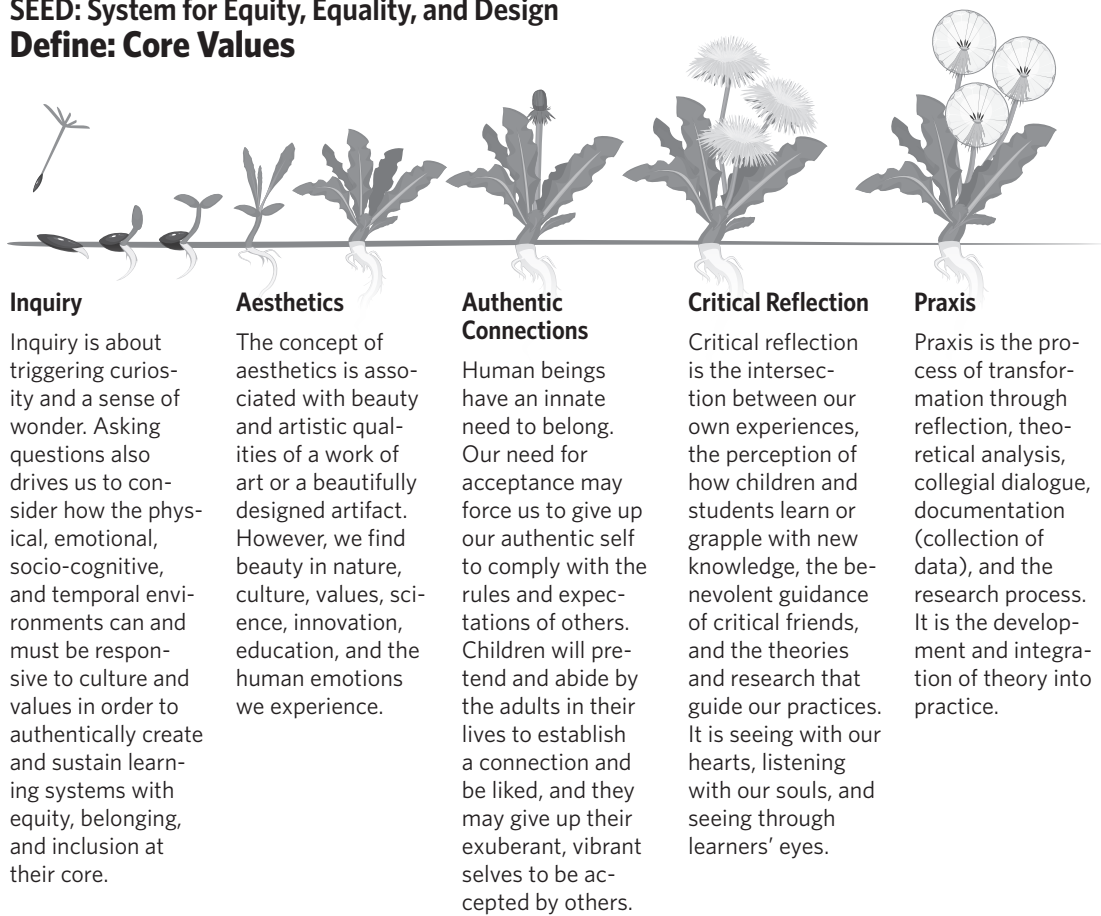
1. Inquiry

Inquiry is the unyielding spark of curiosity and sense of wonder. It incorporates evidence-based reasoning and creative problem-solving to nurture prototyping and innovation within a learning community and throughout the design

process. Inquiry engages us in asking deeper questions through investigation, experimentation, analysis, and revisiting. In an inquiry-driven approach, educators, children, and families work together in observing, listening, and expressing ideas to explore problems. Developing a culture of inquiry requires intentionality, empathy, the acquisition of new knowledge, perspective-taking, perspective changing, and thoughtful planning. A culture of inquiry focuses on moving beyond general curiosity into the realms of critical thinking, integration, and understanding. Inquiry requires us to ask meaningful questions, to understand how an investigative process must respond to ideas and curiosity, and to include responsive assessments that inform the overall process.

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Define: Core Values

Inquiry

Inquiry is about triggering curiosity and a sense of wonder. Asking questions also drives us to consider how the physical, emotional, socio-cognitive, and temporal environments can and must be responsive to culture and values in order to authentically create and sustain learning systems with equity, belonging, and inclusion at their core.

Aesthetics

The concept of aesthetics is associated with beauty and artistic qualities of a work of art or a beautifully designed artifact. However, we find beauty in nature, culture, values, science, innovation, education, and the human emotions we experience.

Authentic Connections

Human beings have an innate need to belong. Our need for acceptance may force us to give up our authentic self to comply with the rules and expectations of others. Children will pretend and abide by the adults in their lives to establish a connection and be liked, and they may give up their exuberant, vibrant selves to be accepted by others.

Critical Reflection

Critical reflection is the intersection between our own experiences, the perception of how children and students learn or grapple with new knowledge, the benevolent guidance of critical friends, and the theories and research that guide our practices. It is seeing with our hearts, listening with our souls, and seeing through learners' eyes.

Praxis

Praxis is the process of transformation through reflection, theoretical analysis, collegial dialogue, documentation (collection of data), and the research process. It is the development and integration of theory into practice.

2. Aesthetics

Aesthetics is primarily associated with the principles of beauty, encompassing the qualities of a work of art or a pleasingly designed artifact. Through the philosophy of aesthetics, we can better define beauty in nature, culture, values, science, innovation, education, the human form, and even the emotions we experience. Aesthetic environments integrate the critical perspectives of the human beings who inhabit the space. The design of aesthetically pleasing environments is not merely centered in superficial styling or the placing of curated artifacts. Instead, it involves the use of imagination and empathy to create new perspectives, ultimately transfiguring both living and learning. Beautiful environments focus on the human experience with a regard for joy that enriches and improves life at many levels. An aesthetically pleasing environment reflects the diverse perspectives of children, educators, and families in the community ecosystem.

3. Authentic Connections

Authentic connections help humans fulfill an innate need to belong and be accepted. Many times our need for acceptance forces us to give up our authentic self to comply with the expectations imposed on us. This is particularly true for children, who will pretend and go along with the adults in their lives to establish a connection and be liked, perhaps giving up their exuberant, vibrant selves so they will be accepted. To support children's authenticity, as EDesigners we must allow them to be honest without criticism, to be expressive without judgment, and to be silly, imaginative, and joyful without the fear of rejection. We need to create spaces where children can be the free human beings they so naturally are. This requires us to be aware of the messages we project so we will promote and be responsive to the cultural values of students and families.

4. Critical Reflection

Critical reflection is the intersection between our own experiences, the perception of how children and students grapple with new knowledge, the benevolent guidance of critical friends, and the theories and research that guide our practices. Learning about our perceptions, assumptions, and justifications through the wisdom of our colleagues, even though it is difficult, helps us design a path to clarity. We also find comfort when we see that our challenges are not unique and that many others share our successes and failures. Critical reflective practice is a process of inquiry in which educators discover and research the assumptions that frame our work. Critical reflection is a natural way of processing how each of us makes decisions, forms opinions, and examines the contexts and

content of our lives. Reflective thinking brings light to our deep, thoughtful, and intentional work with children. Through critical reflection, we learn that there is power in knowing that we are not alone in this journey and that we can trust our colleagues to help us change the structures of power so that we can create democracy and shared humanity.

5. Praxis

Praxis is the active process of transformation that happens through reflection, theoretical analysis, collegial dialogue, and documentation (collection of data). It is the development and integration of theory into practice. Praxis gives us the ability to move away from a binary learning narrative (the teacher as the holder of knowledge who narrates it to the students, who in turn are empty vessels that need to be filled) and into the world of differentiated learning where there are many paths and options for applying new knowledge based on the learners themselves. Praxis encourages learners to embrace higher-level thinking and to personalize what is most meaningful to them. At its best, praxis is the highly personal integration of new ideas and learning. Many people may be in the room, learning the same information, but not a single one of those people will take away exactly the same ideas or inspiration. Nor will they implement those new ideas in exactly the same way. Praxis enthusiastically encourages learning to be dynamic and deeply personal.

DESIGN TENETS: DEFINING HOW YOU AND YOUR DESIGN TEAM WILL MAKE DECISIONS TOGETHER

The DiM Design Tenets are the integral core of Micro-Cycle 2. They work together as a whole to give credibility and integrity to your work as EDesigners. The DiM Design Tenets help the design team think carefully about the dimensions of the design idea *and* about the people who will be affected. We define *tenets* here as the values and principles that guide our practices. EDesign teams are highly encouraged to research the following five DiM tenets beyond our definitions and develop a clear, collaborative picture of what these terms mean for you.

1. Intentionality

Intentionality is the state of mind in which our thoughts and beliefs help us analyze, make decisions, and thoughtfully solve a challenge with careful consideration. Intentionality requires us to lean into the tensions that exist within ourselves and the world around us. Leaning into the tension serves as an

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SEED: Systems for Equity, Equality, and Design
Design: Tenets

Intentionality

Intentionality is the state of mind in which our thoughts and beliefs help us analyze, make decisions, and thoughtfully solve a challenge with careful consideration. Intentionality requires us to lean into the tensions that exist within ourselves and the world around us.

Empathy

Designers actively pursue multiple perspectives to understand and respect how people think, feel, and express who they are as humans. Perspective taking leads to deeper understanding and empathy for the people they serve and support.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality embraces the power of diverse perspectives and lived experiences. It insists that all participants and stakeholders are equal in their ideas and opportunities and that all historically dominant narratives must be addressed, redressed, and leveled within the design and implementation cycle.

Save and Brave Spaces

In equal measure, a brave space is where courageous dialogue is encouraged. Differences are recognized, honored, and celebrated. Each person is held accountable to do the work of sharing and come to new understanding.

Play and Prototype

The play and prototype step helps us release the innate and incredible freedom we all experience when we play. Children and adults alike know the difference between menial tasks and unbounded playtime. Play is the freedom to think, tinker, explore, and ideate with little to no interruption or authority.

invitation to gain awareness about our thoughts, ideas, and perspectives. It encourages us to ask, "What am I thinking? How are you thinking?" It pushes us to build trust and make decisions based on research and a clear understanding of our thoughts and plans. By being intentional, we demonstrate our willingness to thoughtfully consider the impact of our ideas, which allows us to build trust upon our efforts. When we strive together to build a shared definition of trust, we engage in a powerful process of transformation (simultaneous tension and creativity) that has the power to lead to sustainable change. Trust fuels the well-being of a healthy learning ecosystem—an ecosystem where tensions are named and all participants learn how to respectfully disagree, debate, and ask meaningful questions that go beneath the surface of "nice." It pushes us to test one another's theories to find viable innovations, ideas, and solutions. Designers who lean into the design tensions together build trusting bonds that have the power to strengthen creativity and community.

2. Empathy

The word *empathy* is often misused or misunderstood. Pop culture would have us believe that empathy and sympathy are interchangeable, essentially synonyms, when in truth they couldn't be more different from each other. The basis of empathy—true and conscious, on-purpose empathy—is putting yourself into an equal experience with someone other than yourself, igniting your inherent ability to put yourself in the place of another human being and having an authentic shared experience through the power of active listening (not speaking). Sympathy comes from seeing someone else's experience and being thankful that it's not you in their place, having pity on the person in front of you, acknowledging their pain or frustration but standing back from actually listening and offering only words of condolence or advice. Designers actively pursue multiple perspectives to understand and respect how people think, feel, and express who they are as humans. Perspective-taking leads to deeper understanding and empathy for the people they serve and support. If others are not enjoying or benefiting from the design, then what is the point?

3. Intersectionality

Intersectionality encapsulates the infinitely complex identities among our lives and the lives of others. The term was first explored by author and researcher Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in her seminal work, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics" (1989). She invites readers to understand how each of us has arrived in our current place and time within a historical context, and she asks us to consider how our lives, experiences, freedoms, and oppressions are all intersectional in nature. No one's life has a single story. In this book, we ask readers to integrate the concept of intersectionality into their design thinking and processes, asking self and others in what ways our lives, learning, leadership, and liberties are all intersectional and how our design reflects this multidimensional reality. Intersectionality embraces the power of diverse perspectives and lived experiences. It insists that all participants and stakeholders are equal in their ideas and opportunities and that all historically dominant narratives must be addressed, redressed, and leveled within the design and implementation cycle. Each participant has equal rights, opportunities, and access within the team and ecosystem, always searching and building toward harmony, inclusion, and sustained energy exchange. EDesigners look for intersections and connection points—places of strength and support. They show us where the tension is being held and distributed.

4. Safe and Brave Spaces

Safe and brave spaces are essential components of learning environments and systems. From our earliest memories and experiences as children, carried well into our adult years, we learn how to protect ourselves from the slings and arrows of the world. We learn to be guarded in our interactions with others. We learn how to avoid risks and mitigate damage in our conversations or contributions that may cause others to think poorly of us within our professional and personal lives. Most of us avoid offending others. We become overly cautious when deciding when to speak up and speak out, especially in diverse social settings. Our familial and cultural upbringings and experiences guide our internal processes of when and how it is considered agreeable or disagreeable to speak up or to stay silent. As educators and EDesigners, we must cultivate the courage to push through into moments of bravery. Depending much on the cultural, linguistic, and familial norms of our upbringing, we develop varying comfort levels with conflict and conversation, diving in headfirst or standing back at a safe distance. As EDesigners, we need to cultivate both safe and brave spaces. In a safe space, judgment is suspended. We all must be able to express our identities and ideas, which in the safe space exist and are affirmed without the fear of repercussion and without the pressure to change and assimilate into a dominant culture or perspective. In equal measure, a brave space is where courageous dialogue is encouraged. Differences are recognized, honored, and celebrated. Each person is held accountable to do the work of sharing and come to new understanding.

Authors Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens (2013) first discussed the need to create conditions for both safe and brave spaces inside of crucial conversation in chapter 8, "From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces," of *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators*. We often talk about creating spaces where people can feel safe from bias, stereotypes, and assumptions. However, we also need places where we can be brave and vulnerable enough to confront our own participation in systems that create oppression and imbalances of power. In brave spaces, we can find and advocate for cultural humility.

EDesigners must develop the ability to be brave in hearing difficult feedback about a design or prototype. They must learn to argue and banter and brainstorm with one another inside their team and organization. Designing is often a messy and wonderfully creative process, and it opens opportunities for brave conversations to happen. EDesigners work to create conditions within the prototype and feedback process that provide safe and engaging spaces for participants to be honest.

5. Play and Prototype

The play and prototype step helps us release the innate and incredible freedom we all experience when we play. Children and adults alike know the difference between menial tasks and unbounded playtime. Play is the freedom to think, tinker, explore, and ideate with little to no interruption or authority. We are free to create new worlds through our imagination and consider ways to make dreams a reality. Play is the space where the impossible becomes possible and the place where prototypes begin. For designers, play is essential because it frees up their minds from the constraints of "what is" so they can move into the free-thinking space of "what might be." Innovative and influential artists and designers Charles and Ray Eames often talked about stepping away from their design room debates and going out to their play spaces to free up their minds to think about a particular design dilemma in a different way. Inevitably, this led the Eameses not only to design incredible furniture but also to create groundbreaking toys, games, movies, and photographic art. And so we must play with that which we do not understand. We need our learning communities and ourselves to have joyful learning experiences where everyone feels connected, included, and innovative. Prototyping and play are interconnected. Prototyping brings ideas from play into real life as we begin to experiment with real-world materials, situations, and people to test out our theories and designs, all the while gathering feedback that will inform the next round of design.

DEPTHS OF PRACTICE: DISCOVERING HOW YOUR DESIGN PROCESS UNFOLDS

The DiM Depths of Practice (DoPs) are central to the third Micro-Cycle in your 3^5 SPRINT. The DiM DoPs help you and your team to measure the strength and sustainability of your overall design process and are structured to help you assess both your design thinking and your design doing. The DiM DoPs are the roots of your design process. The deeper you stretch yourselves to strive for authenticity and ingenuity in your designs, the stronger and more sustainable your design roots will become. The roots of our design choices anchor us in describing and defending our decisions and should be reinforced with sound theory, research, and personal experiences. We encourage EDesigners to think now as you read through the DoP definitions about where you are in your current design decisions and how you might make different choices in your design practice moving forward.

Design in Mind™
SEED: System for Equity, Equality, and Design
Discover: Depths of Practice
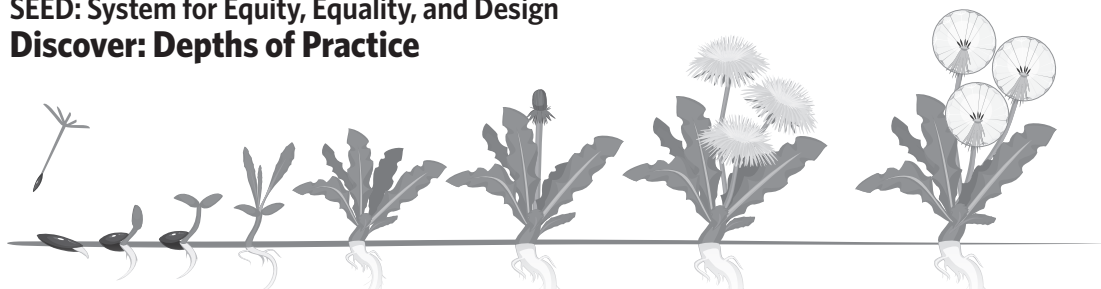
Duplicative	Substantive	Integrative	Iterative	Regenerative
Duplication, or replication of someone else's work, requires very little (if any) inquiry, critical thinking, or connection to your design audience or your own understanding of the design process.	While substantive design has taken some extra steps beyond a strictly duplicative design, there are few or no major modifications to the original design, which was researched and analyzed by someone else.	An integrative design starts to take on a life of its own across multiple contexts in the learning ecosystem. Designers recognize how an adapted design that works in one area of the classroom or program might work in other contexts or locations.	The iterative stage is the onset of innovation within the design process. The design team members are not only able to adapt original designs and integrate them across multiple contexts, but they have also begun the deeper work of growing new branches of thought and possibility as a result.	When the design process has reached the regenerative cycle, the design team is ready to share its story of discovery. The design story fosters critical reflection and connection with others as well as a deep connection to your own process of discovery throughout the design experience.

1. Duplicative

Duplicating what we see is an easy way of showing an appreciation for some-one else's idea or design. Replicating someone else's work requires very little (if any) inquiry, critical thinking, or connection to your audience or your own understanding of the design process: intention, empathy, intersectionality, safe/brave spaces, or play/prototyping. Inside of the duplicative DoP, someone else has done the deeper work of thinking and designing, and you are duplicating those efforts. It is an important first step, in that we are able to recognize that the process worked for someone else and perhaps will work for us. However, duplicating other people's designs does not mean they will be valid in our classrooms or learning communities. Design duplication does not consider the socio-cultural values of a specific local community; thus it may not be responsive to or supportive of the specific strengths or challenges experienced on a local level. Duplication is only surface deep: the design might look good, but it has little to no depth or strength to stay rooted in times of challenge.

Note: Even in the duplication phase, all designers maintain professional integrity and give credit where credit is due. EDesigners never take credit for ideas that are not their own. We always name and give credit to those whose ideas and designs inspire us (Kleon 2012). #StealLikeAnArtist

Example: Using a lesson plan from a "boxed" curricula or an idea shared on social media sites such as Pinterest will often focus on narrow or limited perspectives. Both curricula and Pinterest allow us to scan for what looks and sounds most appealing. However, education is complex, and it can't be captured in a "pin" or a curricula card.

2. Substantive

A substantive design is one that has taken its ideas from someone or something elsewhere and asked: "I wonder if there is something else we can do to change it just a little for our team/classroom." While a substantive design has taken some extra steps beyond a strictly duplicative design, there are few or no major modifications to the original design, which was researched and analyzed by someone else.

Note: Making adaptations to someone else's design process is still considered surface-level work and is in no way considered to be a substitute for walking through the entire design process from start to finish.

Example: After seeing an idea on Pinterest or other social media, instead of replicating verbatim, make simple changes by adding a few materials to be more representative of your community. However, keep in mind you are still using the activities and ideas created by someone else, just adding or adapting a few of the original design ideas with your own artistic and culturally responsive touch.

3. Integrative

An integrative design starts to take on a life of its own across multiple contexts in the learning ecosystem. Designers recognize how an adapted design that works in one area of the classroom or program might work in other contexts or locations as well, with some minor modifications. A level of sophistication and metacognition begins to come into play at the integrative level of design. Designers are beginning to think more deeply and broadly about the who, what, where, when, and how of the design that will be experienced by others. The DiM Framework supports EDesigners to deepen their understanding of how and in what ways design thinking can be integrated into their program.

Example: Educators recognize how a particular curricular design has deeply engaged students in one of the classroom areas and begin to wonder together about integrating that design across the entire learning ecosystem, both indoors and out.

4. Iterative

Design iteration is the onset of innovation within the design process. The design team not only adapts original designs and integrates them across multiple contexts, but has also begun the deeper work of growing new thoughts. New considerations are emerging within the learning ecosystem, and the design team uses the DiM system to generate new ideas for playing, prototyping, and planning. The atmosphere of the learning ecosystem vibrates with synergy and enthusiasm. The debate and development phases help build trust and creativity, which in turn help EDesigners iterate new ideas and solutions.

Example: Educators and administrators work together to define the strengths and challenges within their program. Design team members actively seek to defend possible avenues for development, based on the success of previous designs used in the classroom, curriculum, professional development, or personal growth.

5. Regenerative

When the design process has reached the regenerative phase, the design team is ready to confidently teach others how to use the DiM Framework and coach or mentor others through a 3^5 SPRINT. Every EDesigner has a story within a story within a story, and this is how designs and ideas perpetuate creativity, opportunity, and accomplishment. Regenerative designs compel us to encourage others to dig deeper into their own journeys. The process is about building the capacity in others that can sustain programs and practices to keep growing, moving the work beyond ourselves and our immediate surroundings. As a result, our stories have the power to move beyond us and our lives and into the future. Our regenerative design stories and strategies can become the ideas-seeds of hope and possibility for others.

Example: Reflection and analysis are critical components of preparing for design regeneration. Designers must learn how to distill the morass of data compiled within the design cycle and find the most salient bits of learning to share with others. EDesigners are able to identify key moments of discovery that can help others make connections, build schema and scaffolds, and find inspiration in their own endeavors. When design ideas become contagious, one person's learning has the power to shift the learning of others and create a chain reaction of positive change in their lives and quite possibly positively effect change within entire ecosystems as a result.

STORIES: HARNESSING THE POWER TO PASS ON HOPE, IDEAS, AND INSPIRATION TO OTHERS

Storytelling is integral to being a designer. Design STORIES are like seeds: once shared, they begin to take on a life of their own. Advice on how to create a simple design story can be found in Micro-Cycle 3 of the 3^5 SPRINT process. The next several chapters show how each of the Micro-Cycles work together to support EDesigners in creating a meaningful and complete design story. As authors, we want to encourage all EDesigners to make plans to share their design stories throughout and at the end of their DiM 3^5 SPRINT. Sharing your story of discovery and transformation will inevitably give hope and courage to others. By sharing your struggles and successes within the design process, you will pass on ideas to other EDesigners who may be experiencing similar difficulties and problems of practice. We invite EDesigners to share their design STORIES with others and help transform, organize, reshape, and ignite our educational systems for a better tomorrow.

Location • Style • Content • Audience • Interactive Reflection

Creating a DiM storyboard: Discovering the true power of DiM STORIES

Storytelling has connected the human race since time immemorial. Stories are a vehicle to express emotions, share ideas and information, and simplify complex mysteries into everyday concepts and connections. Stories engage us in community and are a heart-centered cornerstone of how we build trusting relationships. Many of us can attest to the trust that is engendered the moment someone shares a personal story of triumph, heartbreak, or vulnerable discovery. Stories are a gift, one that connects our collective experiences. Recent research on the "science of story" was published in the *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, demonstrating that no matter how a story is expressed—through words, gestures, or drawings— our brains neurologically relate to the feelings and experiences of the characters within a story. Moreover, it is also well documented how the experience of sharing or receiving a story activates the body to release dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin; that is, the neurological hormones related to well-being, belonging, and euphoria (Hammond 2014).

We use the basics of storytelling every day, anytime we share our thoughts with others, whether it be through the written word, conversations, art, or actions. Stories help us connect with the people we admire and care about. Humans are social creatures who depend on interactions for survival, happiness, and making meaning in our lives.

Creating a design storyboard that makes your DiM STORIES visible as your design process unfolds is a means of synthesizing the most salient bits of data the design team encounters during its research and prototyping phases. It becomes the space where everyone contributes. Here are five key considerations for EDesigners when creating a community board for design STORIES (or design storyboard):

1. Location: Where will your DiM STORIES live? On a wall or online? Who will be curating the story and items/evidence included? Who has access and opportunity to add details along the way?

2. Style: What are the aesthetic qualities you and the EDesign team feel are most important to include/reflect? Is text typed, handwritten, or both? Are there computer-produced items only? Hand-drawn items? Symmetry? Asymmetry? Dimension? Color scheme? Texture?

3. Content: What content are you going to include? Successes, surprises, breakthroughs, and mistakes? All three DiM Micro-Cycles? The DiM SEEDs? Not everything can fit—make editing decisions and test out what others see in your DiM STORIES.

4. Audience: Who is your audience for your DiM STORIES (storyboard)? Is it for other educators? Families? The public? Make sure your language choices are appropriate for of the audience you are seeking to inspire.

5. Interactive reflection: Are there ways for your audience and others to interact or provide feedback (appreciations, questions, inspirations)? Think about how your audience might interact through comment cards or online comment sections.

Reflection questions and cycle considerations: Staying open to the possibilities

Reflection and inquiry are critical aspects of professional practice for educators and designers alike. So it should be no surprise to any EDesginer that reflection questions are part of every aspect of the design process throughout the DiM Framework. EDesigners and readers will find a series of what we call the Simple Six questions (who, what, when, where, why, how) located at the end of each of the DiM 3^5 Micro-Cycle chapters. Using the Simple Six questions in your design

practice is the same process journalists and researchers use to establish articles. These simple inquiry questions make complex connections visible and work to deepen your understanding of what surrounds your design dilemma. Asking yourselves and one another reflective questions about your design decisions will provoke connections that you might not have considered if you had not entered into a deliberate and reflective discussion. We encourage readers and EDesigners to use the reflective questions at the end of each chapter to spark conversations *and* to develop individual Simple Six questions as well.

Equally important for EDesigners is to consider how to include both equity and equality within the design process, design prototypes, and eventual design story at the conclusion of the 3^5 SPRINT. The reflection and consideration sections at the end of each of the 3^5 Micro-Cycle chapters invite EDesigners to foster an ongoing collaborative process that keeps inclusion at the center of the decision-making processes, start to finish. For the purposes of this book and the overall DiM Framework, we define *equity* as the precursor to equality. Equity in its simplest terms means that members of a given group or community who have historically been denied access, opportunity, voice, choice, or resources that were otherwise afforded to others must now receive priority in being heard, actively included, and given true and authentic equal opportunities. Once equity has been structurally accounted for and made visible, EDesign teams work to ensure there are authentic equal opportunities for team members and your design community to participate in the process. Equity and equality work hand in hand to ensure the long-term sustainability of your design. In addition to the Simple Six questions, at the back of each of the next three DiM Micro-Cycle chapters, you will find considerations for including equity and equality. As EDesigners, you will want to keep these considerations at the heart of all your design efforts, and it's important to include what you discover in the final design story you share with others. Remember, what you learn throughout the design process can hold the seeds of hope for someone else's story.

Design in Mind™
Simple Six Reflective Questions and Critical Considerations for Including Equity and Equality, on Purpose by Design

Who	What
1. Who will be most affected by the design?	1. What are our agreements and commitments to this process and to each other?
2. Who are the most critical people to have as members of the design team. Why?	2. What are our most honest and earnest motivations for taking this process on right now?
3. Who has historically been left out of design decisions and discussions. Why?	3. What are the barriers we will need to design around in order to be most successful?
4. Who are the design team facilitators? Is this a role that is shared or determined by the group?	4. What is most important to remember before we start, while we're in the middle, and after the process ends?
5. Who will benefit from the design?	5. What ideas do we want to prototype?

Where	Why
1. Where is the most practical space to start this design process?	1. Why is your dilemma "a thing"? Did you name/identify it for yourselves? Did someone external identify it for you? Do you have any strong feelings about this that need to be surfaced before moving on?
2. Where will the design storyboard live? Who will be adding to it, and when?	2. Why is it important to take on this dilemma now rather than waiting for the future?
3. Where were the sticking points in this process? What was most difficult?	3. Why are you part of this organization? What keeps you coming back?
4. Where were the breakthroughs in the process? How did you recognize them?	4. Why do you feel strongly (or indifferent) about the outcome(s) related to this design process?
5. Where will you implement your prototype?	5. Why is the idea the team selected important to implement?

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DiM Story
Winter Traditions

We would like to offer the story of one school's DiM design journey as staff worked together to become empathetic EDesigners, creating a winter celebration experience that was inclusive and representative of their school's racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse community. Located in Pleasant Hill, California, [Center of Gravity](#) is an early education lab school affiliated with the I³ Institute. The school was founded by Michelle Grant-Groves in 2015, and Miriam Beloglovsky is a seated member of the school's national academic advisory board. CoG educators came together to research and discuss with families and educational advisers how they could create an authentically inclusive celebration where everyone within the community felt honored and excited to come together during the winter holiday season. The following story is told through a first-person narrative, but it is inclusive of many voices and perspectives from within the lab school community.
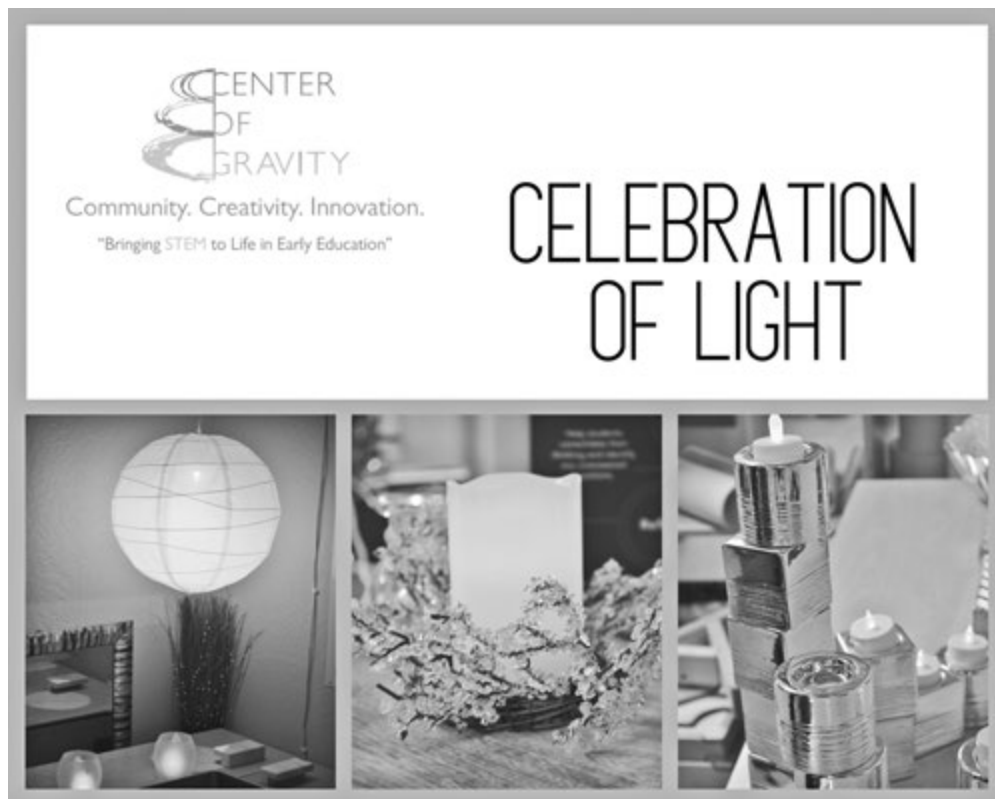
WEAVING DIVERSITY THROUGH THE CELEBRATION
OF OUR COMMON CENTRAL VALUES

Within our founding school community, we decided that at the Center of Gravity we will strive to create a physical and social environment that reflects the beauty and strength of the multidimensional diversity at our school. We actively support children in learning and engaging with various points of view, cultural heritages, languages, and traditions. Rather than celebrating traditional winter holidays, we have instead sought to celebrate family histories and the meaning behind many cultural traditions. We have come to see traditions as an integral part of identity for families, ourselves, and our school. Approaching seasonal celebrations in this way has generated a profound sense of belonging, unity, and continuity for our school collective. Families sharing traditions and stories has a profound influence on children's identity and self-confidence. And because we value and want to honor our families, we invite them to share family and cultural traditions throughout the year (i.e., seasons, family celebrations and traditions, stories, songs, recipes, guest visits and interviews, all documented digitally and in shared classroom journals).

DiM CORE VALUES IN ACTION

As we began to explore the possibilities of how to design inclusive traditions at the school, we wanted to first walk through a collaborative and inclusive process that encouraged our founding team to define our core values together. At CoG, we found beauty and meaning in examining and defining each of the DiM Core Values (inquiry, aesthetics, authentic connections, critical reflection, and praxis) together. The following definitions are examples of some of the defining conversations we had over a number of weeks in our founding year that included input and perspective from school leadership, our family advisory board, and a majority of our faculty.

Inquiry

Each of us have roots within a culture that provides us with an innate sense of becoming and belonging, be it our culture(s) of origin or culture(s) we have embraced. Our root cultures encompass our heritage, language, celebrations, values, traditions, perceptions, and beliefs. Culture shapes our identity, our language choices, and the way we experience and express the world around us. It helps us make sense of complex connections, and at its best it supports us in building new relationships that can cross-pollinate our humanity. As early childhood educators reflect on our own cultural contexts, we learn new ways of valuing and honoring the cultural identities of the children and families in our programs. Even if everyone on the team seems to have the same culture, it's still worth examining that culture closely and interrogating its core values. Here at Center of Gravity, we examine complex cultural identities and are becoming better at evolving practices that are culturally responsive and honoring in order to build a broader sense of belonging across our school community. Seasonal celebrations are excellent design

dilemmas—full of possibilities—for EDesigners to work collaboratively on rethinking the who, what, or how of celebrating traditions throughout the year. At the Center of Gravity, we worked hard to take a "we" approach versus a "me" approach in designing our winter celebration at the school and continuously asked ourselves these questions:

- How will we design a winter celebration that is authentically inclusive of our entire school community?
- When will we begin the process?
- What common elements can we find that will ensure that we are inclusive and able to honor the diverse celebrations represented within our school community and beyond?
- Who can we engage as thought partners in our efforts to define, design, and discover?
- Where and when will we hold the celebration?
- Why is creating an inclusive and representative winter celebration such a critical decision for us as a school community and early education faculty?

Aesthetics
We looked at the beauty of the winter holidays and sought to identify a common element of beauty and belonging that we could center our winter celebration on. In collaboration with our families, faculty, and educational advisers, the common element of "light" quickly emerged as our central aesthetic design. From the science of the solstice to the flames of bright candles, light and the bringing of light became the center of our celebration. As we examined dozens of winter celebrations and traditions around the world, including the scientific aspects of the solstice, every tradition included an element of light. During Christmas, families traditionally decorate their homes with many lights (indoor and outdoor) for both secular and religious reasons. Hanukkah is known as the Festival of Lights, as Jewish families light candles for eight days to commemorate the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Kwanzaa is a celebration of the harvest when families light a kinara, or seven-space candleholder, to represent the original stalk from which all African people originated. Yule is an ancient pagan holiday, still celebrated to this day on the solstice, observed by burning a log that represents the impermanence of the year past. During Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, houses, shops, and public places are decorated with colorful lights and small oil lamps called diyas. During the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan (which varies when it's celebrated from year to year) lights are hung or put in high places in the home. Scores of other cultures and traditions invite research and honoring in their winter celebration designs as well. Light is a simple and beautiful way to celebrate our shared humanity as the world's light returns from its darkest days. Identifying "light" as a universal theme of beauty and aesthetics is also an inclusive way to show everyone within our community that they belong and can always find a way "home" in the dark.

Authentic connections

At the Center of Gravity, we seek to build traditions that create and sustain a sense of community among children, families, and the staff. We know this comes with its own set of challenges, including the "holiday dilemma." Holidays can bring pleasure in many ways, but if we celebrate some without including all, it forces children and families to become immediately "othered." Children, families, and staff who do not share or celebrate the holidays feel excluded, isolated, and invisible or conversely can feel overstimulated. Creating school and community traditions that are centered on unifying themes has required us to listen and observe closely so we can honor the diversity in our school. Instead of focusing on the specific routines or ritual aspects of holidays, we have found joy in sharing the gifts of relationships and making children the center of our Center of Gravity community. We encourage families to share personal histories and to bring experiences into the classroom related to their specific cultural and familial heritages. Instead of limiting traditions to specific times of the year, we instead seek to include, highlight, and create traditions year-round. We build on the empathy that we have for children of all backgrounds, and we have made a profound commitment to ensuring every child, family, educator, and staff member becomes part of a culturally responsive and inclusive community.

Critical reflection

After the first celebration of light, we gathered as a community and reviewed photos, families' comments, and educators' insights. Through dialogue and critical reflection, we decided to create a core tradition here at CoG to inclusively honor global winter celebrations that are centered on a variety of aspects of light. The central intention was and is to create a school-wide tradition that brings families together across shared values. We now gather every winter to share in the traditions of light that bring us together during the winter holiday season and reflect every year about how we can continue to honor and evolve this tradition.

Praxis

Through reflection and understanding of the theories that guide our work as educators, we have committed to gather as a community each December to celebrate the beauty of our differences and the unity of our similarities, including our shared humanity. Each year we pay close attention to the experiences of families throughout the celebration and gather feedback through our family advisory board to refine the celebration for the next year. We have learned that sharing traditions is a powerful way to bring our diverse community closer, recognizing that we are all together but not the same.

Design in Mind™
Simple Six Reflective Questions and Critical Considerations for Including Equity and Equality, on Purpose by Design

Who

1. Who will be most affected by the design?

2. Who are the most critical people to have as members of the design team. Why?

3. Who has historically been left out of design decisions and discussions. Why?

4. Who are the design team facilitators? Is this a role that is shared or determined by the group?

5. Who will benefit from the design?

What

1. What are our agreements and commitments to this process and to each other?

2. What are our most honest and earnest motivations for taking this process on right now?

3. What are the barriers we will need to design around in order to be most successful?

4. What is most important to remember before we start, while we're in the middle, and after the process ends?

5. What ideas do we want to prototype?

Where

1. Where is the most practical space to start this design process?

2. Where will the design storyboard live? Who will be adding to it, and when?

3. Where were the sticking points in this process? What was most difficult?

4. Where were the breakthroughs in the process? How did you recognize them?

5. Where will you implement your prototype?

Why

1. Why is your dilemma "a thing"? Did you name/identify it for yourselves? Did someone external identify it for you? Do you have any strong feelings about this that need to be surfaced before moving on?

2. Why is it important to take on this dilemma now rather than waiting for the future?

3. Why are you part of this organization? What keeps you coming back?

4. Why do you feel strongly (or indifferent) about the outcome(s) related to this design process?

5. Why is the idea the team selected important to implement?

Design in Mind™
Simple Six Reflective Questions and Critical Considerations for Including Equity and Equality, on Purpose by Design

When

1. When are we agreeing to meet, and how often?

2. When are the target start and end dates? Remember, no more than nine weeks!

3. When were you most excited about this process? Most frustrated? Why?

4. When will we commit to sharing our design discoveries with others and where?

5. When we will test the prototype?

How

1. How will we make decisions together? Especially when we disagree?

2. How will we protect the design, discussion, decision, and discovery conversations?

3. How are we taking multiple perspectives into consideration?

4. How are we shifting our thinking/mindset as a result of this process?

5. How will the prototype be implemented?

Equity

1. Who will need to have an amplified voice/choice in this process (due to previous or historic exclusion in the design/decision-making prior to this process)?

2. Who will deliberately need to take a strong listening stance, due to positional or situational power/influence?

3. How will the design team ensure that those who need more or different access or opportunity get the support and scaffolds they need to be meaningfully included?

4. How and in what ways are you as a design team or team members learning and changing?

Equality

1. Who are the team champions who will ensure there is an ongoing sense of shared and adaptive leadership throughout the design process?

2. Who is responsible for ensuring everyone's design development time is protected in equal measure?

3. How will the design team ensure that everyone has an equal voice, choice, and opportunity to weigh in?

4. How and in what ways has the design process strengthened the team's sense of shared humanity? What can you do to ensure that this experience continues?

A crucial tool for creating sustainable change

Educators face a myriad of sticky problems every day that requires them to think critically and differently. In **Design in Mind**, Miriam Beloglovsky and Michelle Grant-Groves introduce educators to the concept of design thinking, a collaborative, human-centered approach for engineering solutions based on connecting with others to problem solve and create more sustainable systems.

The Design in Mind Framework

- **encourages educators to think deeply about their practices and existing ecosystems**

- **pushes educators to apply continuous collaboration and democratic decision making**

- **provides educators with new language to better describe the need for equitable early learning ecosystems**

- **keeps an emphasis on rapid, learning-based action**

Design in Mind facilitates the process of finding innovative solutions to complex systemic challenges, with inquiry, equity, equality, and inclusion at its core.

Miriam Beloglovsky, MA, is a professor of early childhood education and the coauthor of the popular award-winning Loose Parts series.

Michelle Grant-Groves is the executive director of the I3 Institute: Inquiry, Intention and Innovation, a design and education consulting firm.

"Design in Mind is the users' guide for a new and better future."
—JIM KNIGHT, SENIOR PARTNER, INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING GROUP

"Through the intersection of design thinking and adaptive leadership, this powerful framework represents a breakthrough moment in early childhood educational reform. The idea of 'digging beneath the surface' as the initial step of the change process is where professional inquiry begins and seeking to solve problems for which there are no apparent solutions is where the adaptive leadership process begins. We should celebrate this game changing educational innovation!"
—MAURICE SYKES, AUTHOR OF _DOING THE RIGHT THING FOR CHILDREN: EIGHT QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP_

"As an educator in the field of design, I truly understand the lasting benefits of the Design in Mind process. Through guided steps and contextual examples, the authors clearly demonstrate how facing any dilemma from this solution-driven framework embraces multiple perspectives and gives rise to actionable change."
—DIANE M. SPAHN, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, KODO KIDS