WORLD OF CHOICES DESIGN THINKING CHALLENGE

Imagine a room with a line of men and women in gray and black suits detailing the play-by-play of their daily work routine. Imagine your students listening and asking questions, but unsure of what questions to ask, likely hearing jargon-y terms that they may not know, and unable to fully understand what these professionals do. This is a typical Career Day at many schools.

Now, picture a room with professionals from various fields, each one working closely with a group of students over the course of the day. Picture students collaborating with peers from other schools to solve an actual challenge that the professional is facing.

In scenario one, students are spectators and passive participants in career exposure. In scenario two, students are engaged, empathizing with professionals and actively learning about prospective careers. Which would you prefer?

Career Day Meets Real-World Learning Career Day is a great concept – all too often students' classroom work does not relate to actual real-world work and students need exposure to different careers early so that they can figure out what makes their heart sing. However, the traditional setup of "professionals share stories, students ask follow-up questions" doesn't adequately meet the needs of either students or professionals. The professionals do not have a fair chance to paint a realistic picture of their career and students may get just a broad brush picture of the professional's work.

Career Day with a Twist: Design-Thinking Challenge Students will be placed into seven groups and each group will be assigned a professional who has a job-related challenge i.e Higher Education, Mental Health, Arts & Culture, Entrepreneurship, Poverty, On-Line Careers and Bioscience**.**

With guidance from designated facilitators, which included both education professionals, business professionals and high school students, students will use design-thinking to create a solution to the challenge. Challenges may be:

- How might we create a more sustainable city/community?
- How might we get students to stop seeing technology through a consumer lens and get more interested in being the inventor/creator of technology?
- How might we create a better way for young adults ages 18-24 who dropped out of high school to obtain their high school equivalency?

Empathize In the first phase, students actively listen to their professional speak about the challenges s/he faces with the goal of understanding the challenge as best as possible from the user's perspective. Students actively listened to empathize with both sides – the professional and individual(s) who would use the service or product.

Define Once students understand the user's perspective, they will work as a team to clearly define the challenge. In order to understand the issue in its entirety, students will focus on the user's needs in order to develop insights. At the end, students will use all the information they have received to make suggestions that would have an impact on the users' experiences.

Ideate Students will bust out markers, chart paper, and post-it notes to share a myriad of ideas without judgement. Facilitators are asked to encourage BIG ideas; this phase is all about creativity, fun, and quantity. Because of the no judgement rule, students can contribute more and think bigger without fear of their ideas being rejected.
The result of an intense brain dump session

Prototype In the next phase, students will work quickly to connect ideas together in order to develop a written prototype, sketch or model of their solution. Each team of Students will be asked to explain their prototype to a panel of teachers and professionals.

Test Ideally, students would go back to iterate after the test phase. Instead, it's up to the professionals to test out the prototypes in their workplaces and keep us posted on what develops!

Positive Outcomes

- Working in teams
- Making new friends from across the province (other students, other schools, other adults)
- Being able to work on real problems that professionals are experiencing in their work and presenting their solutions
- Creating pitches to share their prototypes
- Having the chance to create something meaningful
- School staff may be introduced to new strategies, and as a result it may assist them in improving real-world learning in their schools and most likely implement something they have learned from the World of Choices, Designed Thinking day.


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