

House Appropriations Committee Testimony

March 8, 2016

HFA Story

Background

- Established: 1997
- Located inside The Henry Ford
- Chartering Agency: WRESA (Mike Flanagan).
- Partners: Ford Motor Co and The Henry Ford

THF: Space, Curriculum, Expertise, services (maintenance, technology, accounting, shipping, human resources, security, food services, etc)

FMC: Start-Up capital, Curriculum Experts,

WRESA: Training, Curriculum Experts

Started with 100 students – Draw heavy from Detroit

Enroll over 500+ students - Graduated over 1,500 students to date

Three quarters of the population is African-American, about 20 percent is Caucasian and the remaining 5% is a mixture of Hispanics and Arab-Americans. We are finding that more and more of our students have only gone to charter schools and there is an increasing number of them that have been home-schooled K-8th grade.

Curriculum based on common core/state standards and delivered using projects, (major and minor) ones using resources of The Henry Ford and digital resources to bring the curriculum to life.

All of our students take a course called “Foundations of Innovation.” This is where freshmen learn a process called “Design Thinking” to innovate solutions to specific problems. The process is based on Stanford University Design School’s formula we call EDIPT (Empathy, Define, Ideate, Prototype, Test). Three times a year the entire school works on a Design

Challenge. Our freshman design a new carry-all, sophomores take a stab at designing a new Detroit. While our juniors and seniors create their own challenge based on what's happening in their local community. We invest in training, supplies, and staff time to make these Challenges happen. But it's well worth the cost when a student sees a concept go from a simple paper model to being printed out on the 3-D printer.

There are many things about the Henry Ford Academy experience that is different from a traditional high school, but what I'd like to use this time for is to share a graduation requirement that most schools don't have at all and that's a career prep experience we call the Senior Mastery Process. The SMP consists of 3 courses starting in the junior year. Juniors explore six career pathways using on-line tools like "career cruising", identify their strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, learn how to write a resume, and go through a mock interviews. They are taught the importance of networking and even learn cold calling techniques that many use to assist them in finding a practicum placement for their senior year. All of our students are placed in a 75-hour internship in a career pathway of interest to them during their senior year. While there they work on a related research question and design a product, using "design thinking" that solves a problem at the practicum site. When finished they write a 10-12 page research paper about the experience, defend their research, and put together a 30 minute presentation, similar to a college level defense, where they present their findings. Every graduate has completed this requirement, even our special needs students.

There are so many academic skills students learn from this experience, but more than that, they learn how to succeed in the world of work. Simple things like, getting to work on time, getting along with co-workers, working on a project with a team, communicating with superiors, or contributing to the success of a company. Our parents talk about how their student matures and how their self-worth increases during this experience. Even though this program is expensive to run, costing us 1.5 FTE in salary, we believe it is well worth it. For students who enjoy their practicum it confirms for them their career path and increases the motivation they have to go to college to pursue their goal. And for students who hate their practicum placement, they find out prior to spending four years in college, that this path is not for them.

Since I have this opportunity, I would like to leave you with an observation from an educator who has been in this business for over 40 years. I worked in Detroit and West Bloomfield which are total opposites. I've been in a high school that had 3,600 students and a charter school with a little over 500 students. What I know for sure to be true is that our students are coming to us with increasingly more emotional, social, and mental issues that schools are being asked to address. Our kids are hurting. They are hurting in the city, suburbs, and rural areas. The push seems to always be about making better test scores, and that must be done too. The ratio of counselors, social workers, and psychologists to students needs to be increased along with funding for these positions. I believe addressing the emotional needs of our students is just as important, as making them better scholars. Maybe more so. Just look at what we have to select from at the polls today. Academically sound, emotionally?....not so sure.

WHAT IS DESIGN THINKING?

HFLI's approach to redesigning how we learn includes Design Thinking, a creative problem solving approach that enables people to build skills for innovating, including the ability to think creatively, work collaboratively with others, and implement innovations. It provides a structured process for addressing challenges in all aspects of our lives.

HFLI, working with the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University ("the d.school"), has refined the Design Thinking process to explicitly develop young innovators and resourceful lifelong learners.

When integrated with core curriculum, Design Thinking makes creativity and innovation an integral part of the K-12 learning experience. Design problems and projects are woven into each area of academic instruction and students are challenged to apply the process to develop and test potential solutions. Through each Design Thinking Challenge cycle, students and their teachers learn to embrace experimentation and the ups and downs that are a part of the creative process. Learning is more compelling because students can see how core content is relevant to them and the world in which they live. HFLI developed the first K-12 curriculum in the U.S. that pairs work in core subjects with Design Thinking.

But Design Thinking can be used by learners of any age in communities and workplaces as well. We work with a range of organizations to help people be more innovative and creative in how they think and learn. Through their HFLI-led learning experiences, employees at Ford Motor Company, Edsel & Eleanor Ford House, Design West Michigan, Gleaners Community Food Bank, Usher's New Look, University of Michigan-Dearborn and other organizations have developed new skills and mindsets, as well as emergent applications of this powerful process to persistent challenges.

Contact HFLI at info@hfli.org or call 313.982.6027.

