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Plan for Continuing Exploration

This course opened up my thinking about the ways I design for successful community building, how I approach sustainable practices, and how to design productive educational spaces. Through the series of sketches, I quickly found myself developing ways of thinking about design that I hadn't anticipated. In previous courses, I had found it difficult to articulate "principles" for the course, yet this course (in part because of the pacing) challenged me to quickly identify what exactly I believed was true about designing for a particular dilemma or scenario. What energized me most beyond this, though, was the ways the course supported me to build on initiatives in my own life that I cared about, so that my sketches ranged from personal to professional to political in nature.

Design Principles:

Several of the design principles that I developed or adapted will stay with me as I move forward:

1. Intentionally arrange space, people, resources, and time
2. Use magical thinking (that is - imagine what could be, not what is)
3. Take small steps *and* see the big picture
4. Don't design for the reaction/result, design for the cause/problem

Individually, these feel like only somewhat useful statements, but collectively, when applied, they challenge me to think about different angles or possibilities, as well as to revisit an idea or solution with a new lens.

For example, in the two sketches I worked on in regards to ending sexual violence, I shifted almost completely my thinking about these issues in order to design for the "cause/problem." By the end of my work on those sketches, I had internalized a different aim for my school year working with young men, which was to more intentionally utilize my ability to design curriculum for them in order to increase the likelihood that they would investigate their own trauma and potential for harm. While this was perhaps a more implicit aim in previous years, including conversations about masculinity and patriarchy, I feel more motivated to approach this as an explicit aim during the coming school year. This might also mean integrating design principle #1 listed above to intentionally bring in other people who might have greater impact on young men thinking about their identities.

A second way that a design principle really challenged my thinking in an unexpected way was after a classmate suggested using magical thinking to approach what could be possible. Although I've prided myself on tending towards divergent thinking in the past, this pushed me to go outside of my immediate assumptions and ideas to think more broadly for a solution. I believe that some of my best teaching has happened when I've been open to magical thinking in this way, so developing systems for doing it more frequently has positive benefits both in my community and in my professional practice. For example, as I've been planning for the AP course that I am being (somewhat) mandated to teach this school year, I've mostly followed the previous teacher's plan, including a routine get-to-know-you activity on the first day. When I think about applying magical thinking even to this small case, it makes me re-examine even that choice, so I'm currently thinking about what

more open, creative activity we are going to do in place of the classmate interview. This also fits with the design principle #3 to take small steps even with the big picture in mind.

One of my central aims in completing the CCT program (I'm a little over halfway through) was to be taken more seriously as a young professional educator. Through this course in particular, and partially through the development of these design principles, I've felt myself begin to cement some of the ways of thinking and being that have been present in my life and classroom. This slow crystallization feels like it is helping to lay the foundation for my professional (and personal) practice to translate more easily outwards, as well as to continue developing organically on its own. For example, as I began, in one early sketch, to imagine greater possibilities for my classroom space and how it could be opened up once quarterly, I started building on the development of a classroom culture that I've already cultivated, but broadened it outwards in completely new ways. Similarly, as I worked on synthesizing notes on the Youth/Poets project that I've been involved in for three years, I began imagining ways that the project's aims could have immediate applications (outside of the project) for my classroom this year.

Continuing Explorations:

I plan to seriously continue several of the proposals or parts of proposals that I sketched in this course as I move away, in addition to building on the design principles as articulated above.

→ Community Building for Anti-Gentrification in West Medford

- ◆ I plan to continue actively working to build community in my local neighborhood as one effective anti-gentrification strategy. This includes reaching out to and being supportive of local community members and neighbors (including “gentrifiers”) in order to preserve the feeling of community in West Medford and maintain the history of the neighborhood.
- ◆ This will ideally also include beginning to work more actively with local programs supporting the community, most likely the West Medford Community Center, by volunteering with my particular skill set (in this case, tutoring after-school).
- ◆ In the longer run (keeping the big picture in mind), I'd like to continue building my financial stability and capacity with my partner in order to move towards operating a community-owned land trust in 5-10 years alongside community members with similar means. This might also mean maintaining below-market rental properties in the meantime, as well as supporting young people in our community to become homeowners in West Medford before they are priced out.
- ◆ Eventually, this may also mean transitioning to teach at Medford High School, even though this would interfere with developing our financial stability.

→ Developing Anti-Patriarchal Spaces to Combat PTSD

- ◆ As I mentioned above, I am going to work (even) more intentionally this year to develop a safe, anti-patriarchal classroom space for my masculine of center students. This might include increasing conversations about the impacts of patriarchy on our lives, as well as having visiting artists or speakers come to work with our class on these issues. This may also include going on intentional out-of-school experiences to view art that discusses these issues, particularly with an intersectional lens.
- ◆ I will also continue to work as the co-advisor of my school's Gender & Sexuality Alliance, which develops a space for young people who identify as LGBTQ+ and/or allies who want to discuss issues of gender identity and sexual orientation.

→ Imagining Different Classroom Realities

- ◆ A bulk of my sketches address ways to shift or alter my current classroom space/practices to move them forward. I intend to follow-up with the following:
 - Writing a Youth/Poets paper and continuing with that project in the coming years
 - Developing quarterly community space with elder storytelling this school year
 - Implementing the activities articulated in my curriculum scope in sketch #6
 - Working intentionally with my colleagues to build my work outwards