

## The Design Studio / Mini-Conference Cycle

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- **Design Studio:** a summer intensive lasting one to two weeks, forming a collaborative research and development “think tank” focused on the development of technology-rich long-term projects within a content area such as environmental science.
- **Mini-Conference:** a year-end gathering to present, share, critique, expand and extend the innovative, R&D work of Design Studio participants.

The following model assumes a project collaboration between districts and central coordinating agency (“**Coordinator**”) organizing, coordinating, and providing services.

### DESIGN STUDIO

Design Studios bring together teachers, technologists, content experts, and students for extended, multi-session workshops on the development of curricular applications of networked multimedia. Each Studio includes a series of lecturers to provide substantive content, mixed with time for hands-on work with computers.

Teachers find Studios most successful when content-based development strategies are the primary focus, along with best practices for employing collaborative technologies for researching and designing learning activities together. What participants learn to do in a Design Studio they can then more effectively model and support in a 1:1 environment back at school.

Design Studio activities include:

1. **Presentations** by content experts (university historians and those affiliated with the digital archive which serves as the project focus);
2. **Demonstrations** by instructional technologists (staff who collaborate with teachers on a wide array of projects across disciplines);
3. **Roundtable discussions** (of issues inspired by presentations and demonstrations, or arising from the work at hand);
4. **Work periods** (where faculty explore communication and presentation tools, finding resources on the Internet and incorporating these into the first drafts of their curriculum additions and project activity plans for the upcoming year); and
5. **Group Presentations** (where work groups share their discoveries and evolving plans, developing the collegial relationships that will be sustained during the upcoming year).

Beyond the two-week intensive, a Design Studio initiates an annual “action research” cycle of development, implementation, documentation, evaluation and mini-conference sharing, with technical assistance provided throughout as-needed.

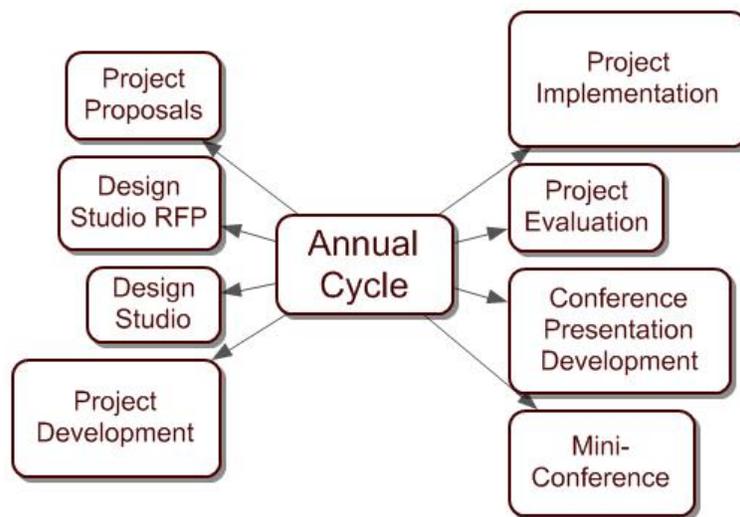
A Studio emerges from the relationship between the Coordinator and one or more long-term partner school districts engaged in a deep transformation process, typically including the adoption of 1:1 models. The workshop is held in the community of this school, while other

participating schools may send teams from a distance or participate online.

## MINI-CONFERENCE CYCLE

Design Studios are not “standalone events”, but the result of a commitment to an annual cycle of project research, development, implementation and evaluation. What happens BEFORE the Design Studio matters almost as much as what happens AFTER.

The singular capacity of the Design Studio to inspire exploration and experimentation is due to its intense concentration of resources, both human and electronic, and the ease and informality of the work space during the two-week period. To maintain some of this collaborative design culture after the end of the intensive, the activity and energy of Studio work groups are sustained online through collaboration and project management technologies like GoToMeeting, Google Applications and Basecamp.



## SELECTING SCHOOLS

A **competitive enrollment plan** allows the Coordinator for a Studio to select schools most able to support the commitment required for a full Design Studio cycle, producing high-quality work that adds value to the mini-conference. Prospective school partners should be asked to submit proposals in response to an RFP, identifying a team of representatives who will take the training that include teachers, administrators and ideally students as well.

**School partner proposals** establish early buy-in, and provide preliminary information for developing the Studio around schools that would potentially be part of the project. This selection process also allowed for a clear statement of goals and expectations for the project, which facilitates communication during actual implementation. Individual project RFPs can be the result of an **In-Service** process (described later on) if time permits.

The support and participation of the principal of each participating school is essential to the ultimate success of the project in each school, and thus to the overall value to all participants. Each school principal controls scarce resources needed by the participating teachers, including

money for technical equipment and release time, and making the most of the opportunity by aligning the work with the school's technology plan. The principal sets the tone for teachers regarding how technology is viewed and to be used for educational purposes.

## **CREATING A STUDIO CYCLE**

In the early stages, the Coordinator identifies an existing partner school or district with which to organize a Studio Cycle, and determines the content focus and scale (and thus opportunities for other partners) by January. The Coordinator develops and circulates a request for participation to other potential school partners. Responses to this RFP come in two stages: an initial expression of interest by the school or district by February, and a follow-up detail of the composition and goals of teams being sent by May.

For the February responses, schools responding to the **Partner RFP** will include a separate page or packet for each project team being sent, identifying:

1. Identification of School or district goal or initiative supported by the Studio Cycle.
2. Number of teams being sent (typically 3-5 people per team).
3. Key facets of the target learning environment.
4. Local tech support and tech integration staffing levels.
5. Commitment to the various stages of the project, including the mini-conference.

[Note - this is a very initial and tentative list - MBM]

## **PROJECT TEAM PD**

A May detail response should specify the makeup and goals of each team being sent, per team:

1. Key state learning standards to be addressed by project outcomes.
2. Facets of the target learning environment in each classroom
3. Indications of how the project team plan to involve new technology in an integral way
4. Time frame for development, implementation and evaluation.

While each school can circulate a request for proposals from teacher teams and select from among these for its response to the Coordinator RFP, this may limit proposers to "early adopters" who feel comfortable doing so independently. Alternately, this is an authentic opportunity for In-Service professional development, offered by the school staff or by the Coordinator. Such a course might meet weekly for a period of weeks, with teachers developing proposals individually or in teams.

Below is an excerpt from an introduction sent to course registrants for such an in-service, before the first meeting, which conveys some of the "cultural change" addressed by this process:

Our district leadership approved a Technology Plan last year, which called for three million dollars of expenditures to adopt an ambitious set of teaching and learning goals for all classrooms and students as part of a 1:1 adoption (attached). For most of us, the 1:1 environment of networked computers is a new world - full of promise and peril.

We are not all ready to set up civilization here, even if given the tools: the territory must first be settled. There are stages we need to go through - learning the territory, trying out some activities with handholding, developing our own activities, and reflecting on our work to distil basic principles about what works for us and our students.

A school or district review committee made up of representatives from the curriculum and technology planning committees might review the proposals developed through this In-Service Course, along with those submitted independently by early adopters "Pioneer" faculty, to determine who will be included in the Studio. In addition to stipends for summer attendance, each project proposal should be accompanied by an initial budget for equipment and software, and carry some "implementation support" funding to the extent that Coordinator staff may need to supplement local tech support and integration staff. Projects that meet the criteria and can be funded would be part of the final proposal submitted to the Coordinator, with an overall budget that represents the partner's commitment to follow-through.

## POST-STUDIO WORK

Following the Design Studio, project teams would proceed, based on their course sequences, with the development, implementation, documentation, and evaluation of their projects, including web-based showcases, with EC support. This activity results in developing team presentations for a local (or online) mini-conference, included as part of the Studio model. This would ideally be an all-day conference held in the same community as the Studio, which any teachers (not just project participants) may attend. [Click Here](#) for an example of an assortment of presentations for such a conference (from 1999).

Along with the web showcase, each project team develops a 30-minute presentation to share their work (materials, student work, evaluation), followed by taking questions and comments from their peers who will score each presentation using a rubric like the one below and submit these for tabulation and analysis. This mini-conference would be a precursor to sharing in regional conferences, which distribute the benefits of the work to other schools (and promote the EC Design Studio model).

## HISTORY

The Teachers College Institute for Learning Technologies first developed the Design Studio model to implement, according to constructivist principles, real-world projects using multimedia and network technologies to enable sophisticated learning environments, and to sponsor exploratory development and participatory design efforts to discover and document the potential of emerging technologies to transform public education.