

# (Re)Imagining Together - Letting Our Dreams Come True

## A Social Innovation Action Lab

*How might we co-create opportunities  
for students to meaningfully participate in our schools?*



Wednesday, November 27 - Thursday November 28, 2019  
Gerðuberg Cultural Centre, Reykjavik, Iceland



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## Foreword

In January 2017, Reykjavik's city council launched a bold initiative to shape a vision for the future of educational development in the city - Education Policy 2030. What was most compelling about this work was the effort to crowdsource the development of the policy by engaging the public in an online platform called *Better Reykjavik*. To this end, the community was invited to respond to the question: "what skills do we want our education system to have provided our children by 2030?"

Between February and April 2017 five foundational competency domains were identified as development priorities: social skills, self-empowerment, literacy, creativity and health. The city council then further invited suggestions as to how to advance these five areas. The result was that from May to June 2017 approximately 10,000 residents contributed their ideas as to how to achieve these priority areas. Subsequently, the implementation program *Let our dreams come true*, was launched in January 2019 to support schools and leisure centres for the next three years (2019-2022) which included the creation of the Development and Innovation Fund of ISK200 million.

Thanks to a number of key individuals including the educational council and the city council of Reykjavik, this innovative community development initiative has moved from planning to mobilization. A steering committee, chaired by Skuli Helgason, coordinated the efforts to navigate this complex undertaking. Mayor, Dagur B Eggertsson, and other advisory experts led by educational policy expert, Pasi Sahlberg were champions for the work. Fríða Bjarney Jónsdóttir and her department colleagues continue to support implementation.

While Reykjavik's Education Policy 2030 reflects the particular perspectives of the community, it is aligned with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – a foundational document that is helping frame the commitment of governments to advance the development of the gifts and talents of children across the globe. It is this handshake between a local and global vision for the children and youth of Reykjavik that provides the rationale of bringing together students and teachers from Iceland's largest city to work with their peers from Edmonton Public Schools, in Alberta, Canada. The primary focus of this effort was to identify ways that students can play a more meaningful role in the development of their educational futures.

During the week of November 23-29, students from Reykjavik and Edmonton shared their perspectives on how to be engaged in shaping the development of their schools. Following two days in participating in Reykjavik classrooms, the Alberta contingent of 10 students accompanied by 4 teachers and school leaders participated in a two-day Social Innovation Action Lab (*Re)Imagining (Re)Imagining Together in Letting Our Dreams Come True*. This session was facilitated by a leadership team from Edmonton Public Schools, Jean Stiles, Julia Dalman and Noel Taylor. This report, prepared by J-C Couture, Researcher-in residence, Edmonton Public Schools, reflects both the processes and products of this two-day international gathering of 70 students, teachers, school and community leaders.

Ultimately the purpose of the Social Action Lab was not to prepare students for some distant far-off future. Instead it was devoted to involving them directly in shaping their future today as it relates to their experiences of the national curriculum and the city of Reykjavik's policies and practices in schools, and recreation and youth work.

In reviewing this report, we invite you to consider these students voices and more importantly, their commitment to champion alongside their broader local and global community, practical efforts to achieve a future where sustainability, equity and human dignity are lived every day.

[Press here for watching a video from the Lab.](#)

Jean Stiles  
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Edmonton Public Schools

Helgi Grímsson  
Director of School and Leisure  
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Canadian students visiting Reykjavik city



Anna and Freyja participating students in a radio interview at The Icelandic National Broadcasting Service

## Introduction – Letting Our Dreams Come True

This report describes a two-day Social Innovation Lab supporting the bold and creative school development initiative of the city of Reykjavik’s Department of Education and Youth. Students, teachers, school and community leaders from Breiðholtsskóli, Hólabrekkuskóli and Laugalækjarskóli took part in the workshop, together with ten Edmonton Public students and their teachers. The School and Leisure Division and the Argyll Center in Edmonton, Canada, were jointly involved in this two-day workshop held in conjunction with the implementation of educational policy *Let Our Dreams Come True*.<sup>1</sup>

The primary focus of the workshop was to advance the role of students as leaders in advancing this educational policy initiative. The students as leaders in co-creating a ‘dream school’ represented the shared aspiration for the 70 participants in developing innovative solutions for a peaceful learning community where every student has a role to play in shaping the school experience.

Facilitated by the leadership team of Argyll Centre using the tools of the Social Innovation Lab (SIL), the two-day workshop was part of an ongoing effort to support reflective inquiry in ways that engage students as catalysts for positive change. A series of previously published Social Innovation Action Lab reports are available upon request.<sup>2</sup> As with previous Action Labs, the partnership of the Argyll Centre and the City of Reykjavik involved boundary crossing work not only between school jurisdictions but across international borders to create conditions where “there exists a cross-sectoral process of negotiation”<sup>3</sup> (Biesta, 2019, p.1). This dialogic approach emphasized the agency of students, while engaging teachers, principals, parents, community members and organizations; thereby, strengthening the participation of the learning community in advancing the educational policy *Let Our Dreams Come True*.

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<sup>1</sup> Both the policy document and discussion platform are available at <https://betrireykjavik.is/community/725>. For a full discussion of the development and implementation of the Education 2030 policy see <https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/case-study/crowdsourcing-better-education-policy-reykjavik/>

<sup>2</sup> For further information and background materials contact Jean.Stiles@epsb.ca

<sup>3</sup> Biesta, G. (2019). Public education between innovation and conservation: What kind of society does the school need? A paper presented at the European Educational Research Conference, Hamburg, 3-6 September 2019 (Social Innovation in Education Symposium).

## Day One – Wednesday, November 26

### “Who is in the Room?” Creating my LEGO Story

The day opened with the facilitators welcoming the participants and offering a brief overview of the goals for the two-day Action Lab. Framing the work, the facilitators reminded the group that Action Labs are about engaging difficult societal challenges by exploring root causes while avoiding jumping to quick conclusions. This involves creative exploration to generate solutions *with* people not *for* them. These efforts mean finding out what might work through testing little experiments called prototypes, a process of experimentation and exploration that allows innovative ideas to grow into potential solutions.

It is engaging complex questions that an openness to “How might we questions” offers promise and possibility. Given the context of the City of Reykjavik’s education initiative and the invitation for students to participate as leaders in co-creating a ‘dream school’, the facilitators introduced the following question: *“How might we create invitations to meaningfully participate in developing student voice and leadership in order to co-create vibrant learning communities (with teachers, students, principals, and community members.)”*



To both explore the question and better appreciate who was in the room, participants were invited to create a story using LEGO about an experience they had when they felt they had been meaningfully involved in their community (school, work, youth centre).

The scenes and examples created by participants were shared at the tables and signalled a wide range of the lived experiences about what being ‘involved’ and ‘connected’ meant. These LEGO artifacts included a rich variety of images and stories including:

- a school building “with colours showing the variety of people in my school”
- the Icelandic flag representing “where I am from and feel I belong”
- a protest sign capturing “my concern over the climate crisis”
- “my first school where I learned Icelandic and felt I now belong as an immigrant”

### Conversations First – Diving into a Systems View of a Dream School

Following the morning comfort break and picking up from the LEGO stories generated in the previous session, the facilitators revisited the diversity and complexity of the promises and challenges in the room. To underscore the need to proceed thoughtfully when thinking about “A Dream School’ it was important we consider the diversity of perspectives in the room, the community at large and the interrelationships among all of those connected to schools and the community as a complex living ecosystem. To highlight this point, the video *A Cautionary Tale - Cats in Borneo*, offered a reminder that complex systems require a sensitivity and openness to uncertainty.<sup>4</sup>

When starting the path of Action Lab work, distinguishing between simple, complicated and complex situations is critical. Simple challenges such as baking a cake involve applying readily agreed upon processes to solve a problem. Complicated work such as reaching the moon, relies on proven expertise to unravel problems and apply tested solutions. Complex challenges and opportunities such as raising a child requires applying a variety of perspectives to a situation where



there is no universal consensus on how to act. Complex systems such oceans, forests and our planet involve many agents and actors and therefore require us to be responsive and responsible given that when one part of the system is acted upon, the effects are pervasive and often unpredictable. It is through engaging complex questions that an openness to “How might we questions” offers promise and possibility, especially when we consider our shared global environmental and equity challenges.

To dive deeper into the experience of feeling connected and involved in the school and/or community, the facilitators invited participants to consider the question: How are you invited to meaningfully participate in the school? What are the connections you have to schools? To unpack these rather broad questions two more specific considerations were poised by the facilitators to invite conversations: 1) recall times you were invited and, 2) recall times you wish you were invited/missed opportunities

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17BP9n6g1F0> While largely a fictionalized account of actual events, the video is regarded as a useful tool for introducing key concepts in complexity theory.



Following the five minutes given to jot down their reflections on ‘stickies’ at their table groups, participants shared their examples, including situations where they wanted to be involved but were not.

The conversations across the table groups included the following threads and themes:

- Feeling tied to the routines and flow of the school day
- Not knowing how to ask for change and nor knowing what alternatives there are
- Wanting to be involved but too busy being kept busy by others (the school/parents)
- Connection to sports and recreation activities are good
- Lots of ways to be connected and involved but these come and go quickly like the weather



As the conversations unfolded at the tables, the facilitators shifted to a positive lens, inviting participants to think about a ‘dream school’ using the Action Lab tool “Visual Explorer.” Scattered on a table, were a variety of photographs that participants were asked to select an image that spoke to them about school as a place where “you can pour your heart into” (or in Icelandic “hella hjarta þínu í það”). Participants shared their impressions of how the image spoke to their ‘dream school.’ A sample of responses and reflections emerging from the photographic images included: *having a voice, everyone is included, lots of books, a place where being different is ok, I matter to other people.*

### Rich Picture Mapping – A Dream School

The afternoon opened with an introduction to the foundational activity of the Action Lab - Rich Picture Mapping. To set the context for this work, the video, “Dream Song”<sup>5</sup>, produced by Department of Education and Youth in support of their educational development initiative. Sung by Jón Jónsson the song captures fourth graders’ responses to the question: What are my dreams for myself and for others? The video was a powerful reminder that having students involved in the creating a dream school is essential.



<sup>5</sup> Jón Jónsson singing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JS9w5xnmhVg> The preschool children singing the song: <https://raudhollinn.is/leikskolinn/myndskeidh-leikskolinn-raudholl>

The facilitators introduced the Rich Picture Mapping activity grounded on four questions:

- What does your dream school look like, feel like & sound like?
- What are the ideas that are most exciting and promising?
- What supports do you need?
- How can I support you?

These questions, in groups of 6-8, required participants to draw or write on a large poster and to be as descriptive as possible while is chatting, sharing and writing. Through discussion and deliberation, “Insights’ were generated through a process called ‘ZIP analysis’:

ZOOM: What could be magnified and explored more

INNOVATION OPPORTUNITY: Or way to intervene to improve system

PROBLEM AREA: Or tricky areas to navigate

Following approximately 45 minutes of activity, the groups shared their maps. A summary of the key findings of each of the eight groups follows.

### A Dream School Would Look Like, Feel Like

### Supports We Need

<p><b>Group 1 (students)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate youth about substance abuse, especially younger children</li> <li>• More travel and field trips including other countries like Canada</li> <li>• Help us with our body images</li> <li>• Sex education (by people who feel comfortable being uncomfortable)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One person to be a key contact or champion</li> <li>• More teacher development</li> <li>• Principals to support us</li> </ul>
<p><b>Group 2 (students)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If we have the space and time to learn about wat we want to learn about - we will be more willing to learn about what we <i>have</i> to learn about</li> <li>• More flexibility and spaces for students</li> <li>• Learn more about world issues</li> <li>• Listen to us more carefully</li> <li>• Do not judge people based on differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach students more about others’ beliefs</li> <li>• Teach people not to be judgmental</li> <li>• Develop personal responsibility.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Group 3 (adults)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rethink school as an inclusive environment</li> <li>• Continue “Dreams Come True”</li> <li>• Education is about preparing for a future we do not know</li> <li>• Active voice and listening</li> <li>• A democracy and representation that responds to our concerns</li> <li>• Interplay of technology and nature needs to be considered</li> <li>• Connecting schools through technology such as virtual reality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global classrooms</li> <li>• Alberta and Iceland classrooms in both face-to-face and virtual spaces</li> </ul>

<p><b>Group 4 (students)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redesigning the school library (on the roof)</li> <li>• Anti-bullying</li> <li>• Address the climate crisis</li> <li>• Promote equality and human rights</li> <li>• Access to resources such as books</li> <li>• Create a safe environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the skills of young people</li> <li>• Funding to support psychological and social issues facing young people and adults alike</li> </ul>
<p><b>Group 5 (adults)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication between school and community</li> <li>• Heart of the school based on care and respect</li> <li>• Support creative arts</li> <li>• Develop people's strengths</li> <li>• Values drive what we do</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community needs to bring students and public together</li> </ul>
<p><b>Group 6 (students)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More online classes</li> <li>• Better computer access and Wifi</li> <li>• More field trips and travel</li> <li>• More choices about languages studied</li> <li>• Better access to gym classes</li> <li>• Anti-bullying to counter normalized bullying behaviors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Just take three ideas and make them happen</li> <li>• Stop compulsory languages: give us choices</li> </ul>
<p><b>Group 7 (students)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-purpose spaces co-created with students</li> <li>• Build furniture and spaces ourselves</li> <li>• More practical activities and thematic school learning</li> <li>• Promote equality and human rights</li> <li>• More school staff with specialized skills such as architecture and design to help us better use or resources and spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire specialized teachers and/or resource people who move between schools</li> <li>• Gardens on our schools for food and décor</li> <li>• Local resources in the city already here just need to be better distributed</li> </ul>
<p><b>Group 8 (students)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing our own food</li> <li>• More flexible spaces</li> <li>• Open curriculum with more flexibility</li> <li>• More trust between students and teachers</li> <li>• Time for social activities in the school day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look inside our current resources</li> <li>• Being open to change</li> </ul>

Following the presentations from each of the eight groups highlighting reflections from their Rich Picture Maps, the day concluded with the facilitators previewing the work for the next day ahead: creating prototypes and concrete examples of what the might be possible to advance meaningful involvement of students in a 'dream school.'

## Day Two – Thursday, November 27

### Rapid Ideation – Bringing together systems, design and futures thinking

The facilitators welcomed the participants back together by introducing a ‘synthetic thinking’ activity that would prompt divergent thinking and considering new possibilities in a creative process. The activity involved two steps: 1) List the products you would find in a 10-11 convenience store (a common commercial enterprise in Reykjavik); 2) Identify the qualities of a nice person. The task assigned was: in five minutes combine the two lists by identifying new brands and/or products. The quick brainstorming activity yielded a rich array of divergent innovative ‘products’: *creative pasta; non-judgemental toothbrushes; loyal toilet paper; supportive ice cream, protective condoms; friendly vanilla essence; funny biscuits; warm frozen berries; funny lollipops; loving Oreos; positive pregnancy tests.*

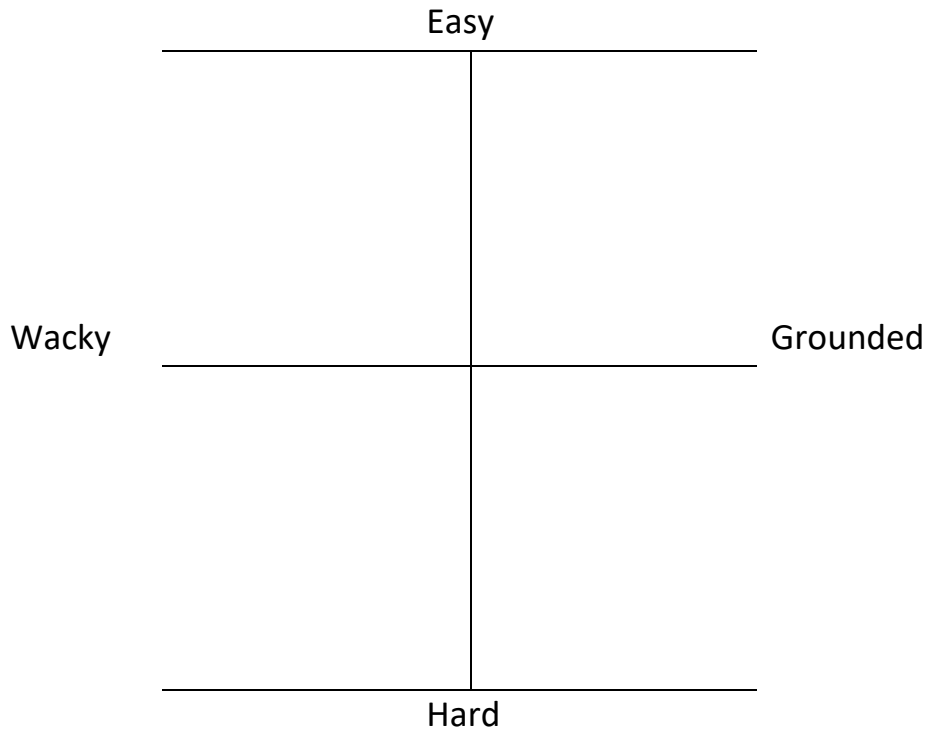
This rapid-fire warm-up provided the context for moving into the main morning activity: identifying candidate ideas for developing prototypes through the process of “Storyboarding.”

The facilitators invited participants to consider the following prompts:



- What are you excited about?
- What are you personally willing to work on?
- What might meet 2 out of 3 needs of student voice in terms of generating excitement and improving your school

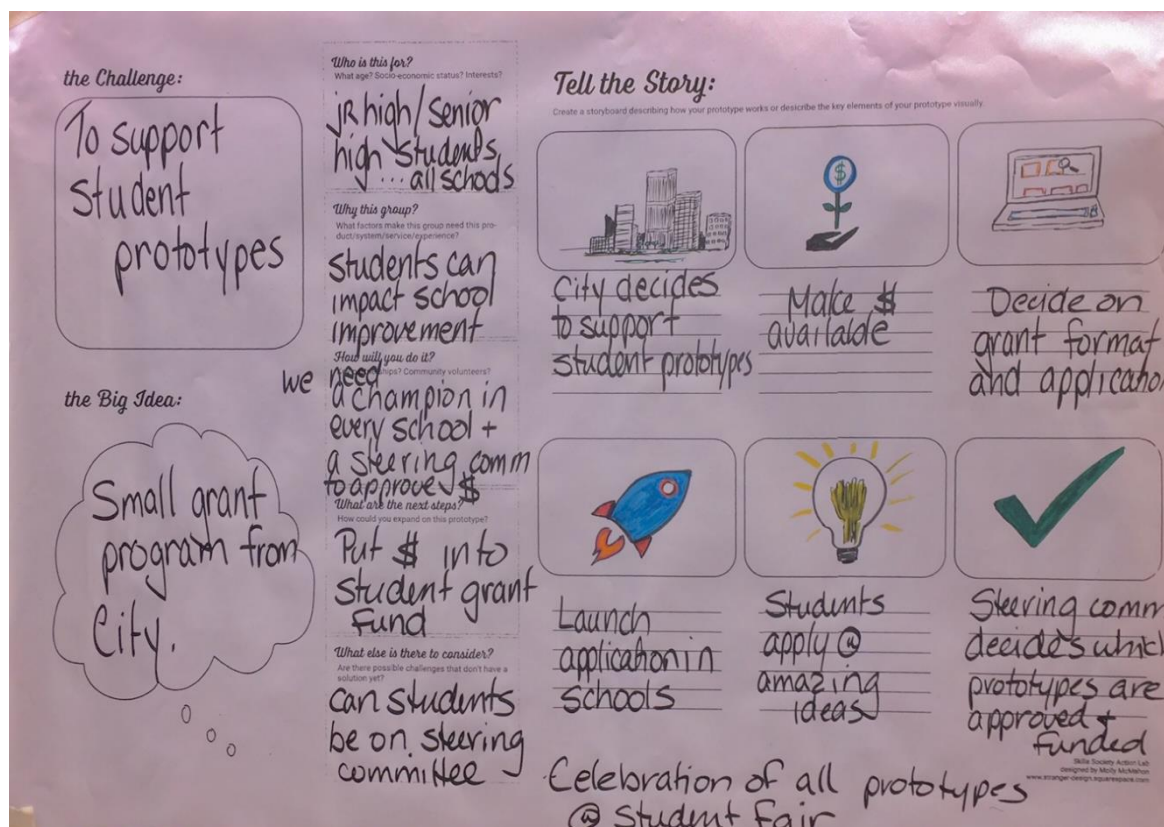
To initiate the process, participants were invited to note their ideas on ‘stickies’ (Post-It-Notes) and locate them on a four-corner matrix below ranging from ‘Easy to Hard’ (vertical axis) and ‘Wacky to Grounded’ (horizontal axis). The result of this rapid brainstorm allowed participants to reconsider previous ideas and generate new ones - while be mindful not to eliminate nor reject any suggestions out-of-hand.



The facilitators introduced the “Let’s Storyboard” activity with the graphic organizer below. In modelling the initial steps of prototyping, participants identified the “Challenge” and “the Big Idea” then proceeded to the following “5 W’s” process questions: *Who is this for; Why this group?; How will you do it?; What are the next steps and What else is there to consider?*

<p><i>Who is this for?</i> What age? Socio-economic status? Interests?</p>	<p><i>How will you do it?</i> Key partnerships? Community volunteers?</p>	<p><i>What else is there to consider?</i> Are there possible challenges that don't have a solution yet?</p>
<p><i>Why this group?</i> What factors make this group need this product/system/service/experience?</p>	<p><i>What are the next steps?</i> How could you expand on this prototype?</p>	

Using an example of one idea generated in the session, the facilitators offered the following mock-up of what a completed story board might look like.



Working in groups of 2-3 until the lunch break, participants completed their story boards, while being encouraged to consider three criteria: 1. Student voice; 2. Being excited about the idea; 3. Willingness to work on the initiative. Following the lunch break and an ice-breaker activity, The Icelandic Wool Game, offered a reminder of the individual strengths each person brings to our schools and communities.

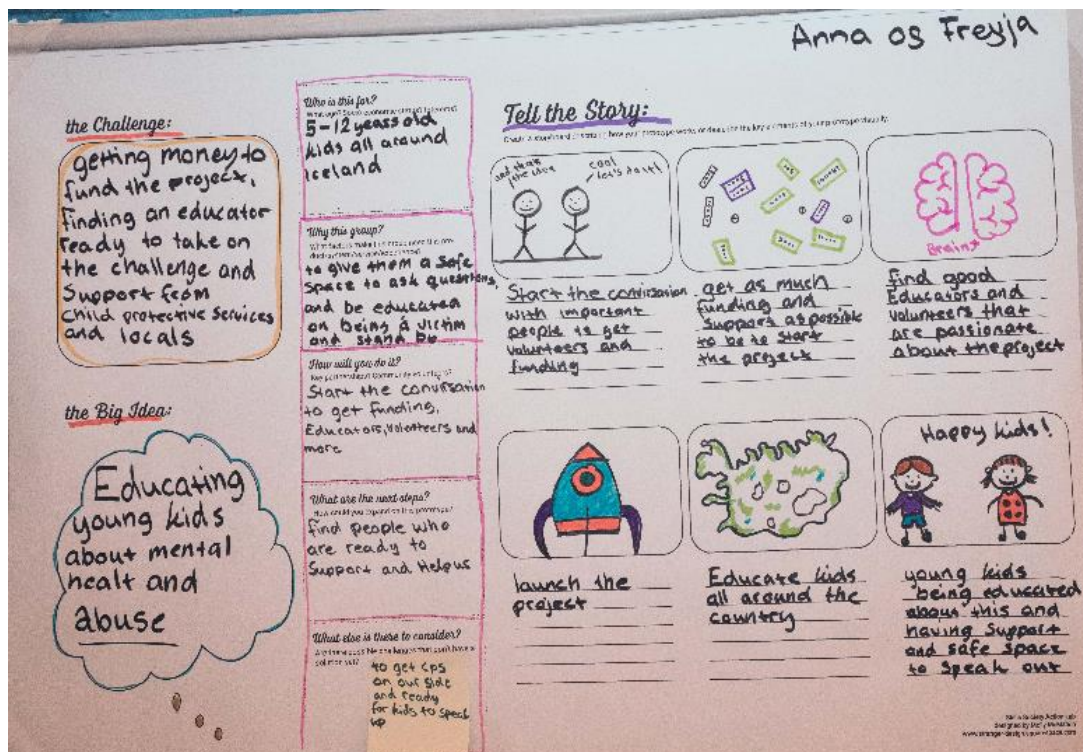
In the presentations and the gallery walk that followed, participants shared their prototypes in Storyboards by 'making a pitch' and "being sure to identify your challenge or problem you are designing for, big idea, why?" The sharing of the 18 prototypes included three rounds in a gallery walk:

- A clarifying round /Spurningar til að spyrja
- Here is what I like about it / það sem mér líkar
- Have you considered...? / Hefurðu hugleitt?
- Ideas that might help / Hugmyndir sem munu hjálpa

The following 18 challenges were generated through prototyping:

1. To help young children dealing with abusive situations.
2. To make children's books for young readers that engage difficult issues such as mental wellness and bullying.
3. To allow students to choose the third language they learn (besides Danish).

4. To persuade the authorities to broaden the number of languages being taught using technology to support this.
5. To have the opportunity to learn and explore Canada and its schools.
6. To reduce the use of plastics by schools and the community.
7. To reduce the amount of homework in schools, instead offer support to students who are struggling with their current schedules through mentoring programs.
8. To improve the quality of food offered in schools.
9. To change the design of the classrooms to offer more flexibility in learning environments.
10. To allow students more opportunities for physical activity such as field trips.
11. To make the more effective use of playgrounds and gymnasium facilities to offer more flexibility.
12. To create a vegetable garden for students and broaden choices for nutrition.
13. To implement more collaborative discussion spaces to facilitate open dialogue and conversation.
14. To help students get more comfort zones in their classrooms and schools.
15. To teach about the challenges related to substance abuse, sexual abuse and mental health by working with students.
16. To construct new learning environments that met the diverse needs of students.
17. To educate young people about the issues related to mental health.
18. To support student prototypes through a grant program from the city.



Capping off the sharing of the challenges, the facilitators reminded the group of the key question: ultimately who will; be the champions of the work?



The closing activity invited participants into the Sharing Circle, where they were asked, “What will you take away? What really strikes you?”

The following captures the reflections on what participants took away from the two-day Action Lab experience:

- The wonderful ideas and the power and the energy
- The teachers here are doing great work and need support to continue
- The power of new ideas and ways of looking at what we take for granted
- Working with young people brings energy and good ideas
- Thankful to have a voice in this important platform
- Making a friend who shares my commitment to change
- The power of collaboration
- While we produced many ideas that will not flourish, many great things will happen.
- Finding out that I am not the only one who believes in change
- The change from our start yesterday and how much we have grown
- Teamwork is important
- So many amazing ideas and amazing people
- How effective and powerful the group became
- The importance of championing the ideas – taking them with me to my school
- We need to work together in spite of the many layers and boundaries in our system
- Inspired by the young people here and the facilitation methods used
- I made a teacher-colleague friend and we will work together
- The program and collaboration shown by everyone here
- The importance of communicating and letting the students speak up
- No idea is too crazy or wonky
- There are no limits to the creative process



- How everyone has been present here – we did not know what would happen but we were brave and took a chance
- Coming from a leisure centre background, I am excited about the ideas generated here
- The power of group work and the importance of listening to youth attempt to advance the 12 UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child
- Thanks to the students and the great ideas and for the translation in Icelandic
- Wonderful to hear so many new ideas and make new friends
- That I did not previously appreciate the possibilities for generating so many new ideas and different ways of thinking
- How engaging the students were and my new ‘step-daughter’ from Canada
- How the Icelandic students were able to bring their voices together with the Canadian students
- Two lessons: the power of collaboration and how to ensure that these good ideas actually are implemented
- I am humbled in my heart for the tools that were brought to us and I will do my best to follow through
- It matters so much what we are doing here and we are committed to act
- Thankful for the strong voices and the powerful experiences
- Flying to a different country is a powerful experience and helps us believe that we share a commitment to changing the world
- This was a lot fun and good learning experience
- How similar are challenges and ideas for change are
- My ‘home students’ were on neutral territory yet were able to express themselves
- Anybody can be creative given the right opportunities
- It is great that we are here and hope the Action Lab will continue
- Wonderful to see students creating new ways to challenge the way we do things and the ways that adults see the world
- This experience is something unique and we should have more of this in schools
- Iceland is in my heart and I thank you
- Both that deep and thoughtful insights and ideas require time to develop – this Action Lab gave ourselves the permission to do this important work
- Happy to be doing something so different
- Iceland has taken my heart and I would gladly come here to teach and learn

Closing the two-day Action Lab, the facilitators thanked the group and reminded them that nothing happens if we do not individually and collectively take risks. Icelanders took a risk inviting Albertans into their space and Alberta took a risk entering and sharing these complex conversations. We should be proud of the work we have undertaken and two tasks remain to champion the work ahead:

1. Take the storyboards and share them at your school; 2. Tell people about what happened here and the power of the conversations.

## Facilitator Reflections on the Action Lab

*We need a school that understands that it stands in a double history where, on the one hand, it needs to serve society but where, on the other hand, it also needs to offer resistance and be obstinate, precisely in order to show that not everything that society desires from it is desirable – for the school, but ultimately also for society itself.*

Biesta, p. 12, 2019.<sup>6</sup>

Having completed a number of Social Innovation Action Labs over the past three years, Biesta's reminder concerning the 'double history' of educational development speaks powerfully to us once again as we reflect on the two gathering of Icelanders and Canadians. While the goal of the city of Reykjavik's Education 2030 Policy is admirable, as with any education enterprise in a truly egalitarian and democratic society, the mobilization of policy and resources in the spaces we consider 'public education' – our schools - is always going to be somewhat in conflict with itself. By definition, if we take Biesta seriously, the heart of public education is always a conflicted one.

While public policy makers in a democratic society might legitimately claim that they exercise their mandate and mobilize resource in the interests of future generations, the cold undeniable mathematical logic of demography reminds us that young people will spend considerably more time in 'the future' than the older generations that develop educational policy and the teachers and school leaders that implement these policies through their daily practices. It is in this spirit that we see Social Innovation Action Labs such as the one outlined in this report, as an important educational and community development tool. By meaningfully engaging the ideas and energies of young people through deliberate and proven facilitation processes such as Action Labs, practitioners and policy-makers can avoid the temptation of rushing to pre-determined solutions driven by a frenetic impulse to 'fix things' for other people. Again, our sentiments echo the broader global sensibility of Gert Biesta (2019) who argue that we need "not an impulse society that just wants the school to 'perform and deliver' but rather a democratic society that understands that not everything that is desired or emerges as a desire can and should be pursued" (Biesta, 2019, p.12). The voice of young people can play a key role in distinguishing between the policy drivers of impulse vs understanding.

We hope that that this Action Lab in some small way can contribute to *Letting Our Dream Come True*, and achieve for the city of Reykjavik some of the aspirations set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child – a goal we share for students back home in Canada.

*The Action Lab Facilitation Team*

*Jean Stiles, Julia Dalman, Noel Taylor (Edmonton Public Schools)*

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<sup>6</sup> Biesta, G. (2019). Public education between innovation and conservation: What kind of society does the school need? A paper presented at the European Educational Research Conference, Hamburg, 3-6 September 2019 (Social Innovation in Education Symposium).

## Epilogue

What strikes me most about Iceland is not the coexistence of the hot volcanoes and the cold sea. While I continue to be thrilled about the sagas and the magic of the history, there is something else that makes Iceland a special place. I am always impressed when I think about how people in Iceland view education as a fundamental element of survival and community, and a condition of good life. What anyone arriving to Iceland needs to understand is that these people can have a very different idea about what education is for and what kind of schooling we do need in the future.

It is exactly because of this different meaning of education that the joint work between educators and students in Iceland and Alberta that is illustrated in words and images in this report is so significant. If one paints a picture of how Iceland's education system performs vis-à-vis the rest of the world, it would mostly be done using dark colours. For example, OECD's PISA study repeatedly ranks Iceland well below of international averages in 15-year-olds reading, mathematics and science literacies. But if you dare to visit this land of dreams and storytelling you soon realise that behind those big data there is another world that can only be described through conversations, stories and narratives. Iceland has helped me and many others to better understand how numbers and statistics can lead to a limited understanding of what is really happening in social systems and lives of people.

So, what do they mean when they speak about good education? At the heart of the answer is view to education that is much broader in scope than what PISA and some other international indicators address and measure. As I see it, in Iceland good education refers to process that engages children as essential partners in learning and values their voice as an



important part of the learning process. Good education aims at children's and adults' wellbeing, resilience and happiness, not just high scores in knowledge tests and examinations. The way Iceland helped their youth to live healthier and better just few years ago by engaging them in activities, offering them challenging opportunities to keep away bad habits, and giving them a chance to lead the change is such a great success that the new Finnish Government now speaks about the Iceland Model to be used to help teenagers in Finland to do the same.

In 2017 the City Council of Reykjavik kicked off a process that they named "Let Our Dreams Come True". I had an opportunity to be there with wide range of colleagues and friends when this initiative was created. It was natural, from the outset, that the process like this would make only a little sense without engaging young people directly to speak about their perspectives, hopes and dreams.

Courageous leadership by the Council, Mayor and his team has been the main reason why I have stayed as a supporter and friend of that process. Jean Stiles, Jean-Claude Couture and other educators from Edmonton, Canada, have brought invaluable insights to the work in Iceland that not just asks students what they want but how they would like to change the world.

In October, 2017, “More Than Your Evidence” was a theme that emerged from a Reykjavik summit attended by young people from Iceland, Alberta, Norway and Finland as they were working on to understand their identities, roles and places in their societies and the world. The Social Innovation Lab in November, 2019, continued to engage children and youth in building their futures. The main outcomes and discoveries of that process are outlined on the pages of this Social Innovation Action Lab Report.

My sincere wish is that this report and incredible work by young people and adults in Iceland and Canada leads to further efforts to continue the involvement of students in changing the world that is much for them than us. I remain a strong supporter of that work wherever I am. For the sake of your children.

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