



**OPEN WAY**  
LEARNING

# **IMPACT REPORT**

**Prepared for  
OWL's Donors,  
Supporters, and  
Partners**

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# ABOUT US

## OUR WHY

We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit with a singular mission to co-design innovative school cultures.

We do this because our vision is that every student can change their world and innovative schools are making that happen today.



## OUR HOW

At Open Way Learning we provide an "Open Source" Framework for Innovation.

We fundamentally believe that everyone has the creative capacity to improve the world around them. It is with that belief that we use Open Design processes to boldly approach every challenge without necessarily knowing how it will be solved.

Our work with schools is never based on cookie-cutter, one-size-fits all programs. Rather, we employ an empathy driven approach that is grounded in the core principles in the above model - what we call the ingredients of learner-centered innovation

## OUR CAPABILITIES

# WHAT WE DO

Below are some of our most popular offerings, but not an exhaustive list of our services or expertise. For that, see the link to the right.

For more, see our deck:  
[bit.ly/OWLsupport](https://bit.ly/OWLsupport)



### DESIGN SPRINTS

Customized workshops that use the design process to help schools and districts identify, adapt, and refine learner-centered strategies



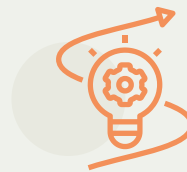
### SUSTAINED SUPPORT

Targeted coaching, study visits, and co-design that leverages local assets to build in-house capacity



### PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

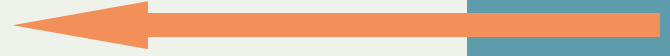
High Quality PBL workshops and instructional support to ensure best practice implementation



### INNOVATION

Assisting schools and districts with their own plans to create more innovative, learner-centered school cultures

# BY THE NUMBERS



OUR IMPACT IN THE PAST YEAR

**150+** **Schools Served**  
In 15+ districts across 8 states

**Teachers Impacted**  
Through workshops, coaching, & events

**500+**

**15,000+** **Students Impacted**  
Through direct support elevating their voices  
and teachers who participated in our programs

**Donated Services**  
To ensure equity of access to our services

**\$21,000+**



OUR TEAM

# WHO WE ARE

STAFF

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**ADAM HAIGLER**  
CO-FOUNDER & COO



**BEN OWENS**  
CO-FOUNDER & CIO



**LAURA GAINES**  
DEVELOPMENT &  
COMMUNICATIONS LEAD



**BEN PENDARVIS**  
OUTREACH DIRECTOR



**JIM MCCUE**  
FACILITATOR & COACH

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**NATHAN STRENGE**



**DOMINIQUE STONE-  
MADDIX**



**ARIA CHERNIK**



**AMY JUNGE**



**MARY JO DECK**



**SYNA SHARMA**



**BRYAN BEHRENSHAUSEN**

OWL FELLOWS

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**MICHELLE  
TAYLOR**



**MARGARET  
BORDEN**



**WESLEY  
DAVIS**



**RICKY  
SINGH**

Not pictured:  
Mack McCary  
Maureen Dwyer



**AMANDA  
CLAPP**



**JENNY  
O'MEARA**



**JENNIFER  
LOVE**



**GLORIA  
PAINTER**

A FEW OF...

# OUR CLIENTS

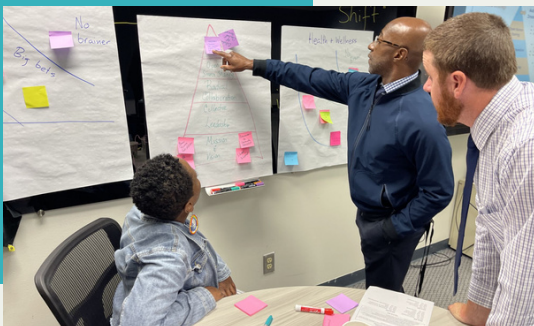


## WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT US



"WHAT I APPRECIATED WITH OWL WAS THAT IT WASN'T RUSHED. OWL GIVES RESOURCES AND INFORMATION IN PIECES SO THAT YOU AREN'T OVERWHELMED. BY THE END OF THE YEAR, THEY ACCOMPLISHED EVERYTHING AND MORE AND I WAS SURPRISED BY HOW THE TEACHERS EMBRACED THIS NEW PARADIGM."

**Jennifer Love**  
Macon County Schools, NC



"OWL DID A DESIGN SPRINT OF THE PD WE WANTED TO DO WITH BOARD MEMBERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND ANY TEACHER IN THE DISTRICT INTERESTED IN BEING A PART OF IT...IT WAS EXACTLY WHAT WE WANTED AND NEEDED, AND NOBODY ELSE DOES THAT."

**Amity Goss**  
Guilford Public Schools, CT

# CASE STUDIES

## STORIES OF IMPACT

Our small, but mighty organization has been establishing deep partnerships with districts and schools around the United States to shift the paradigm of learning, help establish collective visions, and leverage local assets to catalyze innovation and transformation. Read on to find out more about our impact.



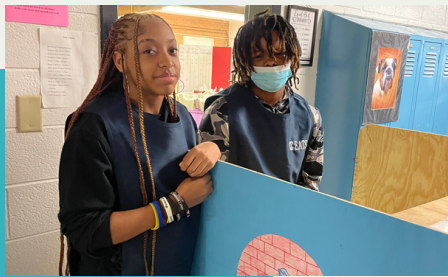


## PROJECT GOALS

Halifax County seeks to build on a culture of student engagement and achievement through rigorous, community-connected Project-Based Learning (HQPBL), following high student excitement and engagement with pilot projects and exhibitions across grade levels and student interests in the last year and a half.

## RESULTS

After co-designing two powerful makerspaces at the district middle schools, all secondary teachers and schools are building community-connected projects with their students. OWL facilitators co-design with educators and leadership to showcase these high-quality projects in district-wide PBL community exhibitions that lay a foundation for greater achievement and post-graduation economic success.



"WHAT DID YOU LIKE BEST [ABOUT THE PROJECT]?"

"EVERYTHING!"

"WOULD YOU WANT TO DO IT AGAIN?"

"ABSOLUTELY!"

### Student Interview

**HCS Empowerment Zone "EZ Eats" Food Truck Project**

# 1,000+

District students demonstrating their project learning to adults across schools and community roles



## IMPACT

HCS secondary schools have developed many successful models of PBL that emphasize student voice, agency, and deep learning. These bright lights across the 'Lighthouse District' helped improve attendance rates, student productivity, and changed the paradigms for what the students (and their community leaders and businesses) thought possible for their own abilities and future!

Meanwhile, school and district leaders and OWL Champions plan to co-design and scale HQPBL into all elementary schools with new partners that emphasizes a growing student-centered maker culture!

## PROJECT GOALS

CCS started last school year with two major grants. OWL led design sprints to improve educational opportunity through local stories and community action planning, while initiating student-led Profession-Based Learning projects (ProBL) with CCS teachers, Caldwell Community College (& Technical Institute) faculty and staff, local business and community partners, coordinated with a nationally-known local leadership organization called Stronglead.

## RESULTS

Both projects created public-facing materials showcased in [an impressive website](#) to raise awareness, educate and inspire the community to continue the work co-designed across community roles, including a 5-year community action plan elevating students' and underrepresented communities' voices in new initiatives along with several projects helping students solve critical problems, drive local leadership capacity, and catalyze high-impact collaboration.



**"THIS WORK HAS COMPLETELY CHANGED THE WAY I TEACH."**

**Participating Teacher  
King's Creek School**

# 240+

**District students collaborated on local projects with their teachers, higher ed, and community mentors**



## IMPACT

Innovation Moves Caldwell headlines both of the efforts that Caldwell County Schools sees as critical steps in building an educational innovation ecosystem benefiting all students and families. Major leaders and organizations from business, industry, government, workforce development, and higher education agree that it helps strengthen their local communities, including their own pipelines! Over the next year, OWL will facilitate more ProBL partnerships and projects that continue leveraging local capacity for collaboration, communication, and impact, especially for those historically underrepresented.

# ASU LAB SCHOOLS ACADEMY AT MIDDLE FORK

## PROJECT GOALS

Appalachian State University's Lab School, Academy at Middle Fork, in Winston Salem, NC, requested assistance in telling their story using data that could show the overall impact of their model on more than test scores. Additionally, the Academy wanted help creating an innovative mission and vision, then bringing that to life through Professional Development.

## RESULTS

The first project was a data dashboard and evidence-based outreach materials for the school that looked at all aspects of student, teacher, and parent satisfaction. The second project resulted in OWL co-designing a mission & vision with teachers, students, and stakeholders that lays out a bold path for innovation. In this new school year, another project emerged to strategize implementation and support of a common instructional framework.



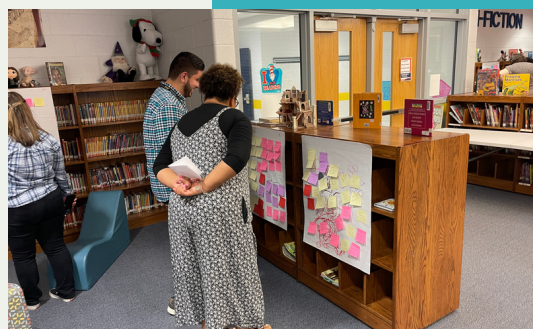
"[THE BEST PART WAS] COMING TOGETHER FOR A COLLECTIVE MISSION AND VISION."

**Teacher**

**Academy at Middle Fork**

# 60+

**Teachers,  
stakeholders, and  
students involved**



## IMPACT

The two projects resulted in a variety of positive outcomes. First, the data dashboard and outreach materials helped the Academy tell its story to stakeholders who renewed the school's charter for another 5 years, while also providing a framework for it to continue tracking a variety of data to assess its ongoing impact.

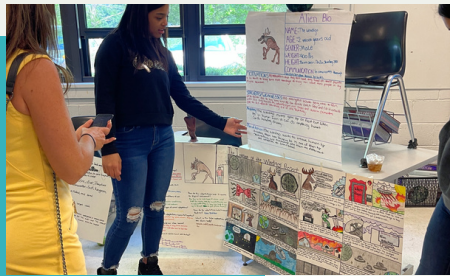
The mission and vision work created a culture of collaboration that has driven leadership to co-design a common instructional model starting with the faculty and staff to fit a highly innovative and student-centered vision that will ultimately have roots in their entire learning community.

## PROJECT GOALS

In addition to helping the district prioritize ESSER funding through facilitating a design sprint, OWL collaborated with Union Academy (now Bartram Academy) to help them design and facilitate cross-curricular, community-facing PBL as a way to catalyze a learner-centered culture at the school. Meanwhile, Macon Early College witnessed the results and invited OWL to co-design new instructional and design thinking innovations for their learning community.

## RESULTS

Union Academy began achieved impressive school-wide, interdisciplinary PBL for the 2021-2022 school year. Students are far more engaged, show more self-confidence, less disciplinary issues, and demonstrate greater enthusiasm for their work. In the Early College, disparate project planning and school design issues surfaced to elevate the need for school-wide student-led design sprints prototyping solutions.



"LAST YEAR IT WAS DIFFICULT TO GET THEM TO DO ANYTHING. NOW THEY ARE DRAWING, SCULPTING, AND TALKING TO EACH OTHER. I SAW AT TIMES WHEN ALL WERE ENGAGED. THEY FEEL EMPOWERED, THEY ASKED FOR A STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM. "

**District Leader**  
**Macon County Schools**

# 100%

**Of students in the focus group reported improved grades and greater well-being.**



## IMPACT

Bartram Academy (formerly 'Union') is now leading the way in experiential learning for the entire Macon County school district and, consequently, is changing the paradigm from how a "school of last resort" can become an exemplar of how a learner-centered school should look.

In addition, greater collective efficacy among teachers and an open-source model offers the possibility of scaling these collaborative efforts at Bartram and Macon Early College to other classrooms and schools across the district (and perhaps beyond!).

## PROJECT GOALS

This Spring, OWL commenced a partnership with Albuquerque Public Schools, a district that serves over 80,000, or about 25% of students in New Mexico. The collaboration involved supporting around 20 teachers in designing Summer STEAM Experiences that integrated makerspaces, outdoor education, High Quality Project-Based Learning, and Design Thinking.

## RESULTS

The work resulted in a highly successful summer program for hundreds of students that has subsequently garnered major attention, having been featured by the local news and APS communications department multiple times. Inspired by the program's success, many teachers from the summer cohort are now beginning to bring these strategies into their classrooms to create new and exciting learning opportunities for their students!



**“EVERY TEACHER IN APS NEEDS OWL AS A RESOURCE AND EDUCATIONAL MOTIVATOR!”**

**Participating Teacher  
Albuquerque Public Schools**

# 100%

**Of teachers agreed OWL provided highly customized, professional support that listened and respected all voices and needs!**



## IMPACT

Albuquerque Public School leaders invited OWL to submit a Request for Proposal outlining the potential to provide a multi-year design thinking culture to scale learner-centered, experiential strategies and support. Efforts to scale the practices and inspiration from current cohorts into new cohorts are underway this fall!

## PROJECT GOALS

OWL's work at the West Hawaii Exploration Academy enters its third year, building on foundational work to help the school develop collective efficacy and deeper, interdisciplinary collaboration within and across the tiers (WHEA's name for grade levels).

## RESULTS

In addition to co-designing experiential learning projects with individual teachers, OWL and WHEA are focusing their partnership on four areas: refining the school's prototype Portrait of a Graduate as part of a student design sprint, scaling a competency based framework that math teachers have been piloting, developing a Decision Making protocol that aligns with the school's status as a Teacher Powered School, and developing the essential elements of a Common Instructional Framework as an outgrowth of the WHEA Way.



"THIS IS THE BEST START TO A SCHOOL YEAR WE'VE EVER HAD"

**WHEA Teacher**  
After July 2022 Workshop

100+

**Students and stakeholders involved in focus groups that have guided innovation efforts**



## IMPACT

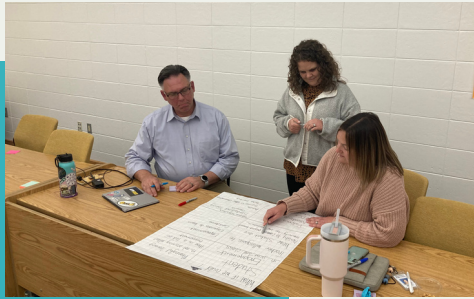
Honoring OWL's commitment to driving positive change through the design process, all of these initiatives stem from a series of student focus groups and meetings with the school's community stakeholders. Further collaborative problem-solving and iteration with staff & stakeholders helped formalize roles and distribute leadership, center the student experience in each tier's place in the whole journey, and adapting current innovations to align with a common vision.

## PROJECT GOALS

A cross-section of teachers from all the schools in Clay County Schools (NC) met August 15-17 for an engaging, 3-day intensive of collaboration, learning, and application facilitated by Open Way Learning. These teachers used the Human-Centered Design Process to develop and refine engaging, hands-on, experiential activities, lessons, and projects that they will launch with students this fall.

## RESULTS

This highly interactive workshop allowed the teachers to model the experiential learning process by researching proven learner-centered strategies, reflecting and sharing through collaborative protocols, visiting members of the local community to bring experts into the activities, and then customizing and applying these approaches to their own prototypes.

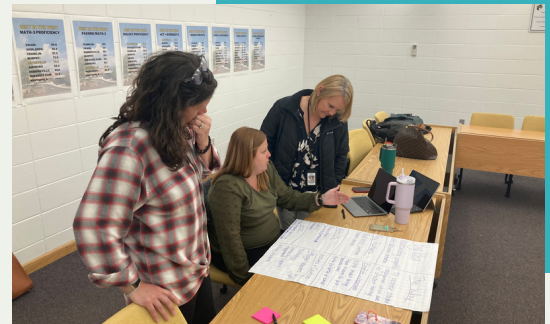


**"[THIS WORKSHOP] GAVE ME THE TOOLS, CONFIDENCE AND INITIATIVE TO CREATE A THRIVING CLASSROOM!"**

**Participating Teacher  
Fall 2023 Design Workshops**

# 39%

**Of district teachers volunteered to work with OWL to implement learner-centered strategies from strategic planning!**



## IMPACT

This summer intensive was part of a larger project funded by a Dogwood Health Trust grant that began in January, 2023 with a series of community interactions, student focus groups, and design sprints to help catalyze Clay County Schools' renewed strategic plan. The project's overarching goal is to implement innovative and relevant instructional strategies across the district that not only align with the North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate, but leverage community assets and needs.

## OUR NETWORK

# HOW WE'VE GROWN

Below are some of the most exciting and mission-aligned opportunities we've enjoyed over the last school year:



### DESIGN SPRINTS

OWL values the invitation by NC State's Kenan Fellows Program and the Dudley Flood Center for Educational Equity & Opportunity to work with their staff & Fellows, respectively, in strategic design sprints



### PARTNERSHIPS & WRITING

OWL team members collaborated with a teacher in Macon county and a professor of elementary education at UNC-Wilmington to co-author blogs on our impactful work with design thinking.

### OWL FELLOWS

OWL brought on a team of Fellows in NC to provide high-quality expertise and diversity of perspectives to our work with partners. Pictured at our summer retreat learning and growing together.

Click on the images to read!





**5** Ways to Use Design Thinking as a Solutionary Educator

Elizabeth O. Crawford and Ben Pendarvis





## GET IN TOUCH

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