



Case Study

REFRESH

Redesigning Education for Racial Equity & Social Healing

*Building Leadership, Racial Consciousness,
and Grassroots Change*



equity



About Creative Reaction Lab

Creative Reaction Lab's mission is to educate, train, and challenge Black and Latinx youth to become leaders designing healthy and racially equitable communities. We're challenging the belief that only adults with titles (e.g. mayors, CEOs, etc.) have the power and right to challenge racial and health inequities. *However, we are conscious that it's not just the work of the people that have been historically underinvested to dismantle oppressive systems. Therefore, we are rallying an intergenerational movement of Redesigners for Justice™.*

A Case for Equity-Centered Community Design

Equity-Centered Community Design™ (ECCD), created by Creative Reaction Lab, is an award winning, unique creative problem solving process based on equity, humility-building, integrating history and healing practices, addressing power dynamics, and co-creating with the community.

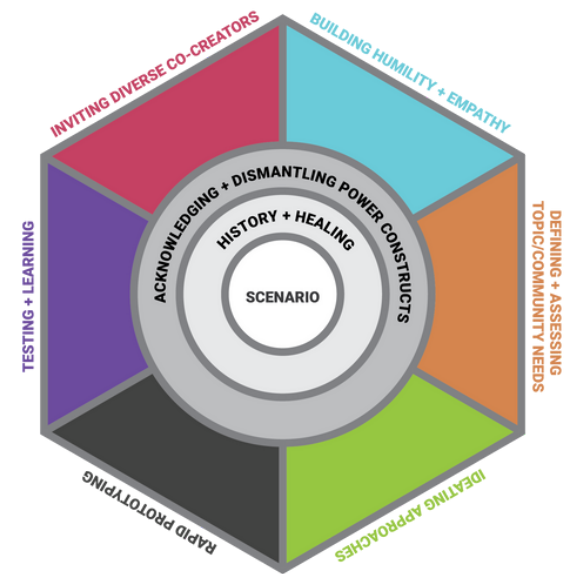
This design process focuses on a community's culture and needs so that they can gain tools to dismantle systemic oppression and create a future with equity for all. Creative Reaction Lab's goal is to share Equity-Centered Community Design™ to achieve sustained community health, economic opportunities, and social and cultural solidarity.

ECCD™ highlights communities' culture and needs while assessing what needs to happen to create lasting change.

Unpacking ECCD™

While design thinking has become a more widely accepted field in creative problem solving, many practitioners and general adopters have challenged its neutral and incomplete approach in applying its practice to wicked social problems.

I love your visuals. I love that you have concentric circles with the different elements and I think the more we can help people see that things are not linear, that things are interconnected, that things are layered and complex, but don't have to be messy in a certain way. – Jazmine Mora, Program Manager, National Equity, Inclusion & Diversity



Additionally, people looking to intentionally design equitable solutions (not just improving diversity/representation) are calling out most institutional approaches as theory-based, performative, or non-existent. Since 2017, CRXLAB has pioneered, launched, and tested a framework in which the assets and application of "equity" and "design" approaches are unified: ECCD™. Sector agnostic, ECCD™ has been practiced in media departments, technology platforms, educational institutions, healthcare, philanthropy, and more.

The ECCD™ problem solving process centers the people with lived experience as the Living Experts with whom we should co-create to design interventions that are equitable, sustainable, and meet people's needs. Within this context, practitioners understand that if we are to build equitable interventions, there is significant value in seeking and understanding historical context and the need for healing practices, along with acknowledging and dismantling power constructs throughout a design process.

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REFRESH 2021



About REFRESH

Redesigning Education for Racial Equity and Social Healing (REFRESH) is an intergenerational and national civic engagement program for youth and educators. This program brings together educators of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous youth to co-create classroom and community interventions for racial and health equity. Educators and youth will learn from Creative Reaction Lab's youth-centered curriculum, *When We Create: Building Leadership, Racial Consciousness, and Grassroots Change™*, to adapt it to their learning spaces to amplify and shift power to young leaders.

Through this program, Creative Reaction Lab trains and coaches educators of Black, Latinx, and Indigenous youth to understand their roles in designing healthy and racially equitable outcomes, amplify and shift power to young leaders, and collectively shift education structures to support social healing.



REFRESH Learning Objectives

- **Gaining 21st Century Skills:** Educators learn how to develop and implement the When We Create: Building Leadership, Racial Consciousness, and Grassroots Change™ curriculum. Youth engaged in the program gain skills necessary to become Redesigners for Justice™ through focusing on creative problem-solving, cultural history and healing, civic leadership, and entrepreneurship. Each youth participant develops 21st-century skills such as teamwork, creativity, curiosity, critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership, cultural awareness, civic literacy, and more.
- **Power Shifting + Inclusive Co-Creation with Youth:** REFRESH promotes principles of culturally responsive teaching, as this pedagogy acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates the importance of including youth's cultural references in all aspects of learning. The program also focuses on building educators' own capacity to shift power to amplify and center youth voices and experiences.
- **Social-Emotional Learning + Anti-Bias/Anti-Racist Curriculum Project-Based Learning :** Rather than relying solely on lecture-based learning, educators facilitate youth learning through project-based learning and real-world application of lessons from When We Create™. From introspective and interpersonal exercises on power and identity to community-centered research and analysis, youth participants will be prepared to develop approaches that create policies, programs, and projects to create equity and justice in their lives.
- **Project-Based Learning:** Rather than relying solely on lecture-based learning, educators facilitate youth learning through project-based learning and real-world application of lessons from When We Create™. From introspective and interpersonal exercises on power and identity to community-centered research and analysis, youth participants will be prepared to develop approaches that create policies, programs, and projects to create equity and justice in their lives.

Program Elements + Support

- When We Create Youth curriculum
- Adaptation + implementation for learning space with CRXLAB support
- Youth co-creation of interventions + access to pool of funding.
- Community of practice and network support for continual curriculum integration in youth programs and classrooms.
- Virtual Equity and Design Coaching with Creative Reaction Lab team members.
- Opportunities to continuously co-create a dynamic civic engagement curriculum with fellow educators.

Educator Overview

- Dedicated to shifting power to youth.
- Value equity and embrace that it's messy + complex.
- Value working collaboratively through the lens of failure.
- Comfort in admitting "I don't know." + engaging humility.
- Dedicated to an ongoing learning journey alongside young leaders + others.

Educator Benefits

- Understanding and coaching on how to integrate equity-centered, social-emotional learning (SEL), and anti-bias/anti-racist (ABAR) practices into their work.
- Integrating power-shifting practices into your learning space.
- Building and growing within a community of educators who aim to equip future civic leaders.
- Access to prototype funding to implement and test youth projects.
- After program graduation, educators will be eligible to continue to license curriculum (+ other perks) for their learning communities.



Youth Overview

- Youth Ages 13-26
- While CRXLAB has a particular focus on Black, Latino/a/e/x youth, we do reach a wider audience, ensuring that intersectionality (identities) is centered in this work

Youth Benefits

- Building and growing within a community of current and future civic leaders.
- Developing 21st-century skills of teamwork, curiosity, critical thinking, creative problem solving, leadership, cultural awareness, civic literacy, and more.
- Youth-led interventions will be showcased regionally and nationally through Creative Reaction Lab's network.
- Connection to local, regional, and national opportunities through the Creative Reaction Lab network.
- Opportunities for post program involvement with Creative Reaction Lab such as Seeds of Power Fellowship Program and more.
- Building and growing within a practicing community of youth who are being equipped to be current and future equity-centered civic leaders.
- Opportunities to co-create a dynamic civic engagement and social justice intervention with fellow youth and their community.
- Access to specialized funding for youth interventions and projects.



When We Create™ consists of 10 units:

Through this curriculum, CRXLAB develops a project-based curriculum that presents youth across the country with an opportunity to co-create classroom and community interventions for racial and health equity, using Creative Reaction Lab's unique creative problem-solving framework, Equity-Centered Community Design™ (ECCD), as a guide. Thirteen educators across seven metropolitan areas implemented our pilot model in their learning communities during Spring 2021. Since then, we have over 40 Schools reached!

- **Unit 1:** Introduction and Program Overview
- **Unit 2:** Language Setting
- **Unit 3:** Introduction to Equity-Centered Community Design
- **Unit 4:** Self in Community: Consciousness and Community Building
- **Unit 5:** Case for Equity
- **Unit 6:** Leadership Development
- **Unit 7:** Topic and Research Methods
- **Unit 8:** Developing Your Intervention: Ideation
- **Unit 9:** Developing Your Intervention: Prototyping, Testing + Learning
- **Unit 10:** Program Wrap-Up: Reflections and Planning for the Future

REFRESH Interventions, Descriptions & Outcomes: Smith College



- **Educator:** Annie DelBusto Cohen
- **Learning Community:** Smith College
- **Topic of Focus:** Increasing Racial Diversity in the Education Sector
- **Intervention:** Race Meets Departments Smith College, Equity and Justice in Academia, & Who is an Expert? Interrogating Inaccessibility through Language in the Academy

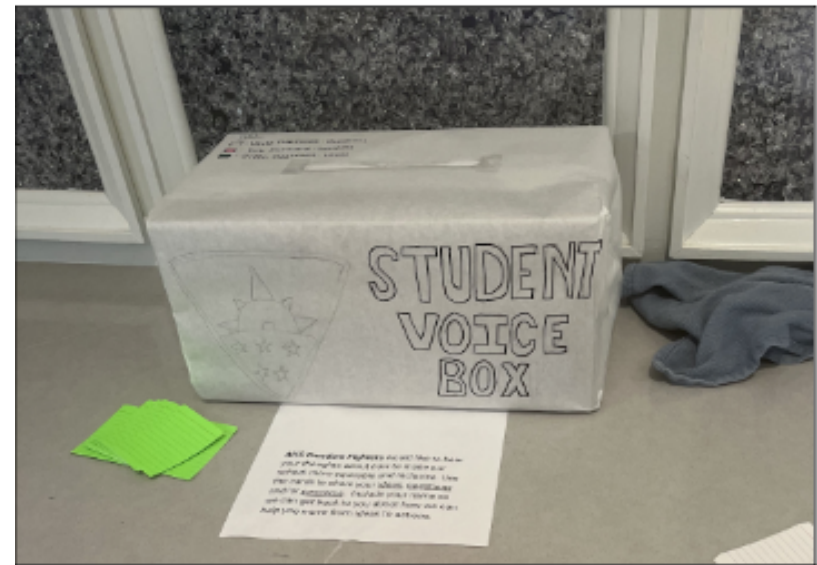
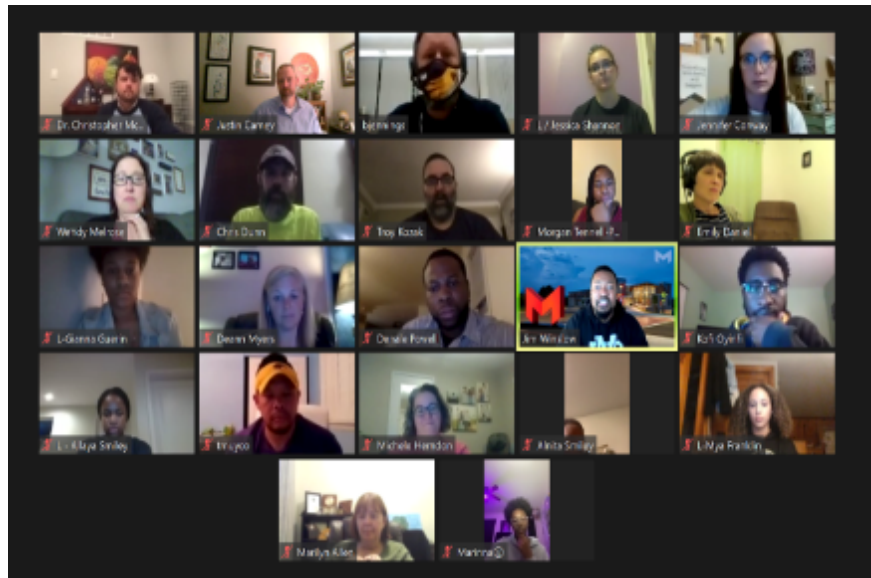
Description:

- **Race Meets Departments:** Smith College: A campus wide intervention to implement an institutional requirement to take a racial education course tailored to students' department of study.
- **Equity and Justice in Academia:** Realigning academic department goals and curriculum with larger equity and justice goals.
- **Who is an Expert?:** Interrogating Inaccessibility through Language in the Academy: Tackled elitism and inaccessibility in language throughout classrooms and conversations in higher academia

Participants were able to bring elements from the When We Create™ curriculum and integrate them into their course syllabi, which allowed students to explore and interrogate messages they receive regarding "isms" and how systems of privilege and oppression impact and inform ways of engaging in leadership .

To this day, CRXLAB continues engaging with Smith College by inviting their students to participants in a Summer Immersive Experience through our Associateship program. Students gain invaluable insight into the day-to-day workings of a social enterprise challenging racial injustices and health disparities using creative problem solving. Each Associateship is designed to challenge the candidate in their particular area(s) of interest through dedicated research and practice. Associates also lend support to the daily needs and greater goals of the organization. Each participant receives one-on-one mentoring and preparation for the next step in their career. Through team interactions, reflection and evaluation, associates work on honing personal and professional skills.

REFRESH Interventions, Descriptions & Outcomes: Affton High School



- **Educator:** Brian Jennings
- **Intervention:** Designing Sustainable Platforms for Student and Community Voices
- Affton High School in Missouri
- Programs Staff completed a site visit with the youth at Affton High School in Missouri. There were 7 Seniors, 2 Juniors, 2 Sophomores, and 2 Freshman.

Intervention Description: Students planned and hosted a Zoom community meeting focused on ideating actionable items to address equity, inclusion, and social healing with diverse stakeholders including students, family members, faculty, administrators and board of education members. Students established online platforms for students to speak on their personal experiences with equity and inclusion.

Affton High School youth, Kaniya, explained to staff that their after-school group facilitated a viewing of the Ferguson Rises documentary to their student body. In addition to the viewing, the group interviewed the director of the documentary and facilitated a black alum panel with the current Affton students where they discussed their reflections of the experience at Affton as a black student. The gatherings from the panel discussion illustrated the black student experience at Affton High School varied tremendously, "Before the event people were unaware of equity and what it was and the difference between equity and equality. Viewing the film avenged people's perspectives" (Mya, Affton High School Student). Many of the Black students attending Affton High School are bused from the city.

Educator, Cathy Cartier said, "I learned so much myself as we used REFRESH resources to clarify language and recognize our biases. I witnessed the effectiveness of shifting power to our youth as they designed ways to elevate every student's voice. I considered it a privilege to be a design ally in the process. Our youth planned and facilitated student discussions about the film Ferguson Rises during a day in February, Black History Month. They also worked to design ways for students to regularly share concerns and ideas with teachers and administrators. I am excited about what the next school year will bring!"

Intervention Impact

As an experiment for their efforts to raise student voices, the youth group created Student Voice Boxes along with a prompt to direct the conversation (pictured below). These Student Voice Boxes were placed in various locations throughout the school like classes, school library, and school entrance.

REFRESH Interventions, Descriptions & Outcomes: Linfield University

CreativeReactionLab replied
Araceli Cruz, M.A. @aortiz1018 · 1d
 Students presented their final equity centered community designed intervention projects focused on how to ↑ racial diversity in higher ed & support Latinx students post-covid. I will miss being in a learning space with all first-gen latinx students. #REFRESH



CreativeReactionLab



CreativeReactionLab @CRXLAB · 3m
 Congratulations!!! This is amazing!



- **Educator:** Araceli Cruz
- **Learning Community:** Linfield University
- **Topic of Focus:** Increasing Racial Diversity in the Education Sector
- **Intervention:** Article PK-202, Let's talk about it: Who Falls Through the Cracks?

Article PK-202 Intervention) The Linfield community provided backpacks to 25 local 6th graders who are all Latinx students with essential supplies necessary for the furthment of their academic success. The supplies provided helped enable students to be able to fully participate in their school life.

Let's talk about it Intervention) This intervention helped equip faculty, staff and students with the tools and language to talk about the importance of racial diversity on Linfield University's campus through 3 module videos done by living expert/DEI consultant that include classroom scenarios, challenging biased curriculum, and including more diverse voices in learning spaces.

Impact + Reach

REFRESH is an intergenerational civic engagement program for youth and educators (within the education system and at youth-serving community organizations) to co-create classroom and community interventions for racial and health equity. We challenged youth and educators to ask themselves-- What does redesigning educational structures to support racial equity, social healing, youth leadership and social emotional learning look like?

444

Youth /Students
Participants Served

40

Total
Schools Reached

13

States Reached

16

Educators

Testimonials

"REFRESH has allowed me to learn from a diverse set of co-creators from diverse educational institutions around the country. I have also experienced several mind-shifts during our time together and have learned a great deal about myself, the communities I exist in, and my role as an educator. Students who have been patiently waiting for a space where they can share their ideas and passion for making education more equitable and inclusive now have a permanent seat at the table." -Brian Jennings, REFRESH Educator 2020-2021

"I have been impacted by greatly increasing in my confidence of how to easily teach these concepts to younger people, possibly learning them for the first time. I also gained stronger affection for and confidence in youth."

-Anonymous REFRESH '20-'21 educator

"I want to take ECCD with me and apply it to every issue and industry and system that we have assumed need to remain unchanged. I really appreciate the emphasis on community support and empathy and healing."-Anonymous, REFRESH '20-'21 youth participant

"My youth taught me that they are very, very aware of the divisive atmosphere of the country, and that they see it as vital to be able to effectively communicate what equity is, and other terminology, in order to create a foundation of mutual understanding in order to create change with others."

-Cassie Bingham, REFRESH '20-'21 educator



Learn more about how you can redesign and reimagine
systems of oppression with support of
Creative Reaction Lab!
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