



4K Project Summary

Lauren Morris, Spring 2023

WHAT IT TOOK

The Design Team

- **2 American Family Insurance team members** to navigate and support innovative process (1 Equity in Education Strategist and 1 Lead Product/Innovation Consultant)
- **3 Research & Innovation department members** to plan, facilitate meetings, and guide the team through the process (1 Innovation and Improvement Supervisor and 2 Research & Innovation Strategists)
- **5 hybrid (virtual and in-person) working sessions** for a total of 18 hours

From the Consulted Team:

- **2 Central Office Leaders** - Director of Early Learning and Early Learning Coordinator
- **3 strategy meetings** with R&I for a total of 2 hours
- **4 internal experts** - from the Research and Innovation, Early Learning, and Enrollment departments
- **One 3-hour session** for evidence collection and brainstormings

Overview

Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) currently offers full and half day 4K in 50 MMSD school sites and early child care centers across the city of Madison. However, due to the intricacies of 4K and the different programmatic structures, the process of learning about, enrolling and preparing for day 1 has been challenging for families to navigate. In order to create a positive experience for families with the 4K program selection process, MMSD's Research & Innovation department (R&I) partnered up with MMSD's Department of Early Learning (DEL) and American Family Insurance's Institute for Corporate & Social Impact in order to better understand the user (the parent/guardian) experience in learning about, enrolling and preparing their child for day 1 of MMSD 4K and find possible solutions that would create a positive and easy 4K program selection experience for families

Ultimately, the team decided to utilize innovative processes and tools to engage past 4K research completed by MMSD and Madison Education Partnership (MEP) and to gather user experience and learn from families about their experiences and narrow down some potential problems or opportunities that could improve the guardian experience. The team would then use this information to identify what is working and the largest pain point(s) experienced by families in this journey. From this, the design team planned to curate solutions to recommend to the DEL and potentially prototype and test, that could create a more positive and easy experience for families with the 4K program selection process (program selection meaning how families learn about 4K, make registration decisions and prepare for day 1).

What We Did

Using Liberatory Design processes and tools, the design team - composed of three R&I Strategists, an American Family Insurance Lean Agile coach and a member of the Institute's Strategic Partnership team - joined forces to tackle the goal of enhancing the process for families looking to learn about, enroll in and prepare for day 1 of 4K. To start, the design team reviewed past MEP reports on MMSD's 4K program, specifically looking at recommendations around family communications. The team also dug into the resources available on the website and interviewed staff members who are closely tied to 4K enrollment and had them walk the team through the enrollment forms themselves, where information is found, and how additional questions are addressed. After gaining a foundation of information around the 4K program selection process, the team then conducted five empathy interviews with parents of current 4K students who recently went through the enrollment process. While the team was not able to interview as many families as they had set out to, which limits the generalizability, some valuable themes did come out of the discussions.

The major realizations based on empathy interviews:

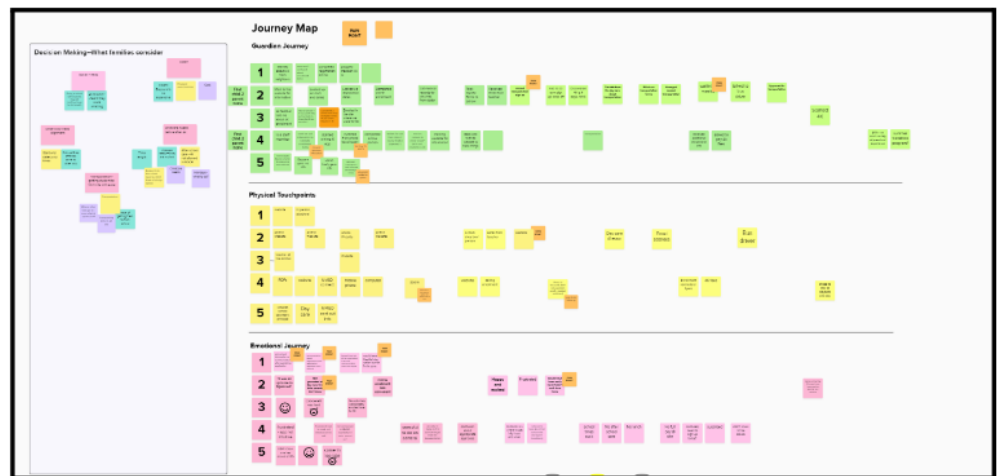
- First-time students and new to the district families have trouble getting information about 4K.
- People are going to the website to get information, regardless of how they learn about 4K. But with all of the information available on the 4K website, families still claim to not readily find the information they needed.
- There is some confusion around when to enroll, where to start in choosing a site, and that the 4K program is four days per week instead of the five days for a regular MMSD school week.
- Full day programming and the ease of getting to/from the site were the determining factors on where families decided to send their children.
- Guardians interviewed expressed difficulty with site-based enrollment follow-up. These families would also like more information on how to prepare kids for the first day.

From this preliminary work, the team created a problem statement to guide their ideation and prototyping work:

MMSD families of color with children entering into 4K need an easy way to access clear pre-enrollment information, MMSD and Early Care and Education (ECE) 4K program options, transportation information, and pre/post 4K child care options to make informed decisions about which 4K option best suits their family's need because school options and family situations are unique and complex.

We just moved here in the summer from San Diego who didn't have 4K programming so was unaware that it was a thing here...[It's] hard to get your ducks in a row when you're new to a district...[and] they probably didn't know we existed...

MMSD parent quote from empathy interview



Outcomes

Using the problem definition, the team ideated possible solutions, including: increasing information sharing locations and enrollment fairs, reworking the communication processes and adjusting the enrollment timelines, changing the website to include a “mailing list” option/button and a map of 4K sites. After sharing these solutions with DEL, the team learned that some are not feasible, and narrowed the list of solutions. The team used this refined list to build a couple of solutions out to minimal viable products (MVPs) and worked to determine the most critical assumptions that need to be tested around desirability, feasibility, and viability.

From our work, the Department of Early Learning (DEL) was able to recognize some spaces where the information that they were providing to families was not reaching them in the intended ways. Therefore, they are adapting some of the suggestions in hopes of better communicating and supporting families as they embark on their educational journey through MMSD. The department has kicked off this work by hosting one of the proposed Zoom sessions for families. Despite some technical difficulties and only one day's notice, they successfully engaged 22 families and are planning to host sessions again for enrollment next December.

Additionally, the DEL has also committed to adding a sitemap to the website for families and creating an information sign-up button on the website for future 4K families that will send more digestible info to families between Jan-Aug before passing off to school sites. The DEL is also looking more deeply at the

website and other materials to analyze how information is provided. They have now added a Community Coordinated Child Care, Inc (4C's) link to the website for people to gather more info about wrap-around care. Lastly, they plan to do more timely surveys of family experiences with information sessions and enrollment processes to gain insight on how to continue to improve the process.

[My] kid was getting close to that age and I didn't know enough about it. I would have rathered my kid go to 4K in the district, at the school nearby instead of at the daycare...but don't know which schools offer 4K. You have to dig and do research.

MMSD parent quote from empathy interview

