

# NAIS – CASE STUDY –

NAIS | **STRATEGY LAB**

**RIVERSIDE PRESBYTERIAN DAY SCHOOL**

## Reimagining the Student Support Model at Riverside Presbyterian Day School

### **Project Level Innovation Design**

An iterative process that weaves together exercises and frameworks to help schools develop solutions to their challenges. The process starts with Unpacking Your Challenge, moves into System Thinking design, and finally ends with an Action Map to implement the prototype. A key tenet of this process is that all prototypes are designed with the demand-side lens in mind to ensure that schools are innovating in ways that will help them solidify or grow their markets.

Riverside Presbyterian Day School (RPDS) was founded in 1948 as the first coeducational elementary day school in Jacksonville, Florida. The school serves PreK3 through sixth-grade students with a mission to educate the mind, nurture the spirit, and foster the development of the whole child.

As part of the NAIS Strategy Lab experience, new RPDS parents participated in a Jobs-to-Be-Done parent survey. The survey results indicated that most of the school's parents were Job 3 parents, seeking support for their children to be well-rounded, productive global citizens. School leaders knew that this parent perspective aligned well with the school's mission and was in their comfort zone. At the same time, they recognized an opportunity to better serve Job 1 families, those who were looking to the school to address academic obstacles so that their children would succeed.

RPDS already had a solid student support team in place and an effective system for teachers to access that team to strategize and receive support. Despite this, school leaders realized that they were hearing about the same students' challenges year after year in Student Needs Committee (SNC) meetings.

After attending an NAIS Strategy Lab in 2019, RPDS leaders became energized by the Lab's **Project Level Innovation Design** concept as a way to escape

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## Demand-Side and Supply-Side Thinking

Demand-side and supply-side thinking describe two ways of considering a situation. When a school is considering innovation, it's important to consider both perspectives. From the demand-side perspective, the school would look at what a customer—the family—needs to accomplish. From the supply-side perspective, a school would think about all the activities it (the “supplier”) does and consider how to do them differently. The school also considers its own assets and capabilities when evaluating potential innovations. Considerations include how the school operates, what it produces, how it produces it, and how it measures its outcomes.

## Unpacking for Clarity & Action

This Strategy Lab tool helps a school identify a challenge and think about its causes and the ideas associated with it. The tool encourages individuals to share how they see the problem. Exercises then help the group come to a shared understanding about the problem they want to tackle so they can develop actions to address it.

the cycle in which the same students were mentioned at the SNC time after time. The school used **demand-side thinking** to retool how to address the challenges and opportunities of students in ways that aligned with what parents wanted and also produced clear outcomes and metrics the school team could track and communicate.

RPDS began by using the **Unpacking for Clarity & Action** tool; this tool helps the teacher clarify and define each student’s challenges and opportunities, after which the SNC then collaboratively designs support. To do this, one member from the SNC is assigned as the case manager for each student to coordinate the student support process. The case manager and the division director sit down with the teacher to discuss the student concerns. Guided by the Strategy Lab Unpacking Tool, the case manager facilitates the process of categorizing challenges until clarity emerges.

## UNPACKING YOUR CHALLENGE

AMBIGUITY & ABSTRACTION

CLARITY & SPECIFICITY

CHALLENGE

DEFINITIONS

CATEGORIZE

REDEFINE

PROTOTYPE

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

STEP 5

- Lack of organization
- Assignments not turned in
- Late to school
- Mom defensive
- Not working productively
- Seems stressed

- Lost assignments
- Homework not done
- Desk/backpack a mess
- Grades dropping
- Loses track of thoughts

- Executive function?
- Focus?
- Anxiety?

- Less about focus,
- More about anxiety or lack of executive functioning

- Address roadblocks relating to executive function skills that are interfering with student’s academic potential

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## Systems Thinking

Systems Thinking is a holistic and comprehensive way of analyzing any situation or solution. It focuses on the way all parts of a “system” relate to each other and how the system works over time.

The teacher then brings this unpacked challenge to the SNC, where the Strategy Lab’s **Systems Thinking** Map is used to design a plan that will enable the student to achieve success. One SNC member facilitates, documents the design thinking on a board, and guides the process of problem-solving using the systems map. Using the results of the Jobs-to-Be-Done parent survey, the SNC (including the teacher involved) identifies the parent’s primary Job. The completed systems map gives the committee, the case manager, and the teacher an innovative working plan to implement with clear outcomes, metrics, and work to be done.

## STRATEGY LAB SYSTEMS THINKING MAP

### EXTERNAL PRESSURES

What factors outside of your control might impact your ability to meet your outcomes and metrics?  
**Father travels, parents oppose medication, grandmother ill and moved in with family**

### RESOURCES

5. What current resources can you leverage? What new resources do you need to get work done?

**Testing on file**  
**Teacher tutorials**  
**Peer tutors**  
**Homework academy**  
**Psychologist**  
**Academic support specialist**  
**Counselor**

### PROTOTYPE

1. What’s your prototype?

**Demonstrate academic potential**

### OUTCOMES

2. What outcomes do you hope to achieve?

**Engaged in learning**  
**Demonstrates skills acquisition and proficiency mastery**  
**Increased confidence**

### METRICS

3. How will your school and parents measure success?

**Participates in class**  
**Completes assignments and homework**  
**Improves grades**  
**Self-advocates**  
**Verbalizes pride**

### PARENT JTBD

Which job are you designing for?  
 Think about how this job will impact the responses to the following questions.

**Job 4**  
**High academic expectation**

### THE WORK

4. What work needs to happen to effectively implement your outcomes and achieve your metrics?

**Targeted re-eval (executive function vs. anxiety), parent conference, layer in life skills/academic/emotional support, performance log, support tracking via apps**

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The Strategy Lab tools revolutionized the school's outcomes. By taking the time to unpack the challenges, school leaders were able to gain clarity. The Strategy Lab systems map and the parent Jobs-to-Be-Done survey allowed a shift in the problem-solving conversation away from storytelling and rote solutions to innovative, creative work to be done. The discussion around resources that are available shifted from what the school has in place to innovative, creative ideas about what else could be done.

External forces that are beyond the school's control, such as the parents' lived experience, student diagnosis, inability to use medication, personality factors, and financial influences, were noted on the systems map but no longer dominated the conversation. Identifying specific outcomes and metrics of success guided the work to be done, and the parent Job perspective informed conversations with parents, allowing the team to connect and work collaboratively with parents.

Since adopting the tools from the Strategy Lab, RPDS reduced the number of students being followed by the SNC from 67 for the 2018-2019 school year to 38 for the 2019-2020 school year. Of the 38 students who are being supported this school year, only 12 of them are students who were followed by the SNC last year.