

# Elevating Classroom Innovation: Illinois Educators Re-Imagine School

## We Must Capture and Scale Teachers' Innovations + + + + + + + + + + + +

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a reinvention of education. Since March, educators across Illinois have shifted instruction online, found new ways to connect with students and families, and worked thousands of hours to learn and adapt new strategies, approaches, and technological tools to meet student needs. Their efforts offer new possibilities for the future of learning.

Yet while educators innovated, our educational system has not kept up, because it was not built to efficiently identify or bring to scale those innovations that have had the greatest impact for students. **That's why Teach Plus Illinois, together with the Illinois Teachers of the Year, proposes a coordinated campaign to solicit great ideas from educators and recognize and elevate classroom innovation.** The aim of this campaign is to develop ways for schools to disrupt the status quo by replacing century-old patterns with sustainable, high-impact shifts in the structure of school and delivery of instruction that result in significant benefits for students.

## Our Approach + + + + + + + + + + + +

**Who:** Teach Plus and the Illinois State Teachers of the Year will develop a design thinking protocol and an innovation contest framework, encouraging all Illinois educators to submit ideas that help them teach and students learn. We will share the opportunity through our statewide partners in the education community.

**How:** Our two-pronged approach recognizes that there are multiple paths to innovation. Our innovation contest will collect great ideas already developed in the field, identifying the innovations teachers are already using successfully with students. As "necessity is the mother of invention," educators have been forced to break from traditional routines and reinvent ways to deliver content to students.

In addition to the contest, we will lead educators through a design thinking process to be intentional about inspiring forward-thinking creativity. In a series of 90-minute sessions built around a design-thinking protocol, we will bring together outstanding classroom teachers, school leaders, and innovators from other fields to share cross-disciplinary learnings and build out new ideas.

**What:** We will use the collected findings from both the contest and design thinking sessions to identify the most promising ideas for making education more equitable for students. Our award-winning educators will analyze the ideas generated in design thinking sessions to find common themes and promising solutions. They will also evaluate contest entries for innovation, sustainability, past success, and potential for future impact. Finalists will be publicly recognized and invited to an event in late spring 2021, at which we will share the most exciting and promising innovations, announce the contest winners, and award prizes.

## Leveraging Our Learnings + + + + + + + + + + + +

Ideas generated through both the contest and the design-thinking process will be published in a combined report offering school leaders multiple paths forward to student success, co-authored with our partnering organizations and released in conjunction with the contest awards event. Other ways to amplify and build knowledge based on the contest's learnings include:

- Video interviews with finalists to share their stories and ideas on social media
- Op-eds to promote the importance of innovation as we recover from the pandemic
- Presentation of our findings at professional conferences

## Our Ask + + + + + + + + + + + +

Partner with us to **inspire** innovation, **develop and select** great ideas to transform education, and **share** learnings so educators can leverage them to achieve results for students and build a more equitable system.