Elevate Englewood is a city-wide group made up of citizens who are learning about the different local power structures in the city (city departments, school district, and schools). Members were invited by the district to help brainstorm ideas specifically around student enrollment and ways to create more opportunities for community involvement. The program also sought feedback on how to share information with the community about the great things happening within the schools. Englewood School District is experiencing declining enrollment and they sought to tap into the community to brainstorm ways to share information about choice enrollment and what makes the small district so unique with its small community feel.

The school board president, superintendent, DAC co-chairs, district community liaison, and the district instructional technology coordinator all helped lead the design thinking in collaboration with the city manager of Englewood, who formed the Elevate Englewood group. The collaboration included using the design thinking process (mind mapping) with the group around four essential questions.

1. What type of communication would be beneficial from Englewood Schools to promote the district/schools and reach new families?
2. How should we best communicate with the greater Englewood community that does not have children (i.e., which platforms)?
3. What types of stories are important for community members to hear from the school district?
4. What are the potential volunteer opportunities to bring Elevate Englewood into our school communities?

The process is simple, yet brilliant! Mind mapping is a protocol often used in the classroom. Four posters were placed around the room (one poster per question), and participants rotated through each poster. During the rotation, participants silently reflected on the question and then wrote an idea/response on a sticky note and added the note to the poster. This occurred at each poster for two-three minutes each. Next, participants were assigned to posters and asked to categorize all the ideas into general themes. For example, some sticky notes said, "increase presence on Facebook", "Instagram" and/or "create more Twitter posts." Those stickies would be sorted into a "Social Media" themed group. This part of the protocol was critical to the organization of everyone's ideas. This was where collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communication really flourished. After, participants heard a brief summary of each group's approach to organizing. Finally, each participant went around the room and voted on two themes per question/poster that they felt would best address the question. This gave those leading the activity very clear next steps that honored the participants' thinking and ideas.

After reviewing the top two choices for each question, the model moved into the design phase. During the design phase, each group looked at the top two "solutions" to the challenge question and designed a plan associated with the solution. In that plan, the team considered several factors, including the implementation plan, timeline of project, budget, and a contingency plan (if needed). The district acknowledges that the biggest challenge is the implementation and follow through

of these ideas. They wonder how they can be sure they get the right people on board to lead the right parts of the project. Execution of each plan will require collaboration, careful budgeting, and detailed logistics to ensure its success.

The advice Englewood School District gives to other districts trying to replicate this practice is to connect and build relationships with your community members. Stronger schools mean stronger communities and stronger communities mean stronger schools. It is truly a symbiotic relationship that is mutually beneficial for the community and the school. Listening, gathering input, and adjusting how you connect will make your school district stronger.