

A Design Studio Primer

More than a simple school tour, a Design Studio is a process that pairs a school visit with a strategic planning session. The format gives participants a hands-on learning experience on a school campus, and then follows up with facilitated planning time for visiting teams to reflect on what they saw and map out implications and next steps for their school. In addition, the Design Studio format includes an opportunity for visitors to provide detailed feedback to the host school in order to help them forward their reform efforts. Each Design Studio will have an overarching theme that will correspond with the goals and needs of the participating schools.

The main components of NAF Design Studios are:

1. **Preliminary Work** – meeting and work session with each participating school site to facilitate school preparation for Site Visit
2. **Site Visit** – a full-day visit to the host school that includes class visits, interaction with staff, and a debrief
3. **Design Session** – A facilitated planning session for teams to plan out how they will take what they learned during the visit and work towards implementing new strategies back at their home school
4. **Follow Up** – additional work with the participating schools to help maximize learning and implementation of new strategies

Design Studios vs. Site Visits

What do we mean when we say that Design Studios are more than a simple school visit? Glad you asked!

SCHOOL VISIT		DESIGN STUDIO
See how others do school	What is the purpose?	Launch your own change initiative by starting with a focused investigation of others who've tackled similar issues
Interested administrators and teachers, or anyone who is available	Who does the visiting?	A strategic team of 2-3 made up of an administrator and academy staff
Get a substitute; plan the carpool	What happens before?	Identify an area of focus – something your team wants to learn from the visit
Tour the school, visit classes, take mental notes of how your students compare	What happens during?	Dialogue with school staff, visit classrooms using innovative strategies, see students showcase their best work, collect evidence of key design principles in action, conduct a thorough debrief, give host school feedback on their change work
Return to school, make a 60-second report at a staff meeting, get inundated by the chaos that is school	What happens after?	Return for a second day to work with your team and plan how you'll take what you saw back to your school and launch a new initiative
Hard to tell	Long-term impact?	New practices are implemented at your school as a direct result of the Design Studio experience