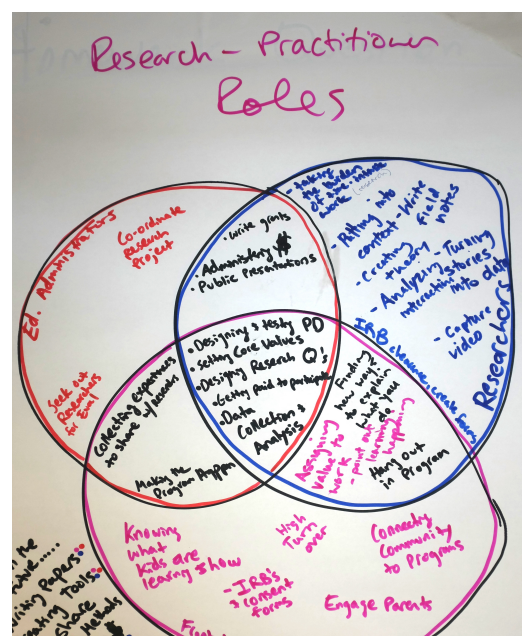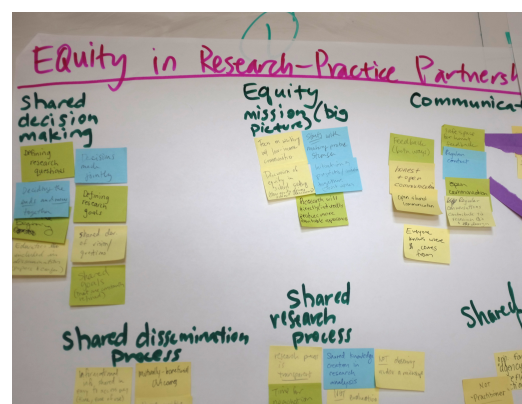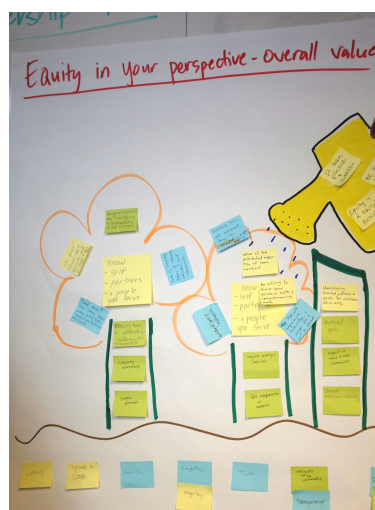# Value Mapping

An activity for surfacing power dynamics and diverse perspectives in research-practice collaborations

+ What and why value mapping?

Historically, research directions have been developed with little input from educators, program leaders, or community members who are ultimately charged with the task of using research results. Research-practice partnerships are meant to disrupt this imbalance to create more relevant and usable research. However, forming strong partnerships takes work. Researchers and educators often operate with different value systems, languages, and experiences that shape how they think about teaching, learning, and problems of practice. Value Mapping is an activity that addresses power imbalances by drawing out variation in stakeholder values regarding learning. This process supports collaborators in developing a shared investment in research questions and strategies.

By Jean J. Ryoo & Molly V. Shea

RESEARCH + PRACTICE COLLABORATORY

+ How to create a Value Map

You can use or adapt the Value Mapping guidelines below to produce a physical document that "maps out" the problem space in which the research will take place. The Value Map articulates—in shared language— areas of inquiry, issues shaping shared questions, and connections between elements in the educational system being addressed through research. This Map can serve as a shared touchstone for the research-practice project as it develops.

1. IDENTIFY

To begin drawing your collaborative Value Map, identify the shared activity, concern, or problem of practice that brought your research-practice partnership together. Consider writing these ideas on posters as focal points in the landscape of your inquiry. This could involve examining the partnership's initial research questions and collectively identifying the foci of each question. For example, if the group originally came together to answer, "What does learning look like in STEM-rich tinkering?" the foci of the question may be "STEM-rich tinkering" or "learning through tinkering." By identifying these foci, your group may uncover new dimensions, opportunities, or dilemmas from the combination of different perspectives.


2. SHARE

Begin physically mapping out why people care about the focal points (specific activities, concerns, or problems) identified in step #1. You may consider this process as drawing connections between the different focal points of your Value Map. This could involve a whole group discussion with a scribe recording ideas on posters, silent reflection on sticky notes that are then placed on posters for each project focal point, or other ways of surfacing stakeholders' ideas (see examples on page 3). For the focal point of "learning through tinkering," for example, emerging values may include things such as an appreciation for "student-driven learning" or "process over product" or "iterative design and redesign." Expect different terms and definitions to emerge (e.g., meaningful learning, STEM practices, etc.). This process may support developing a shared vocabulary and language for the collaboration.

3. REFLECT

Allow time for participants to read and reflect on each other's ideas, develop shared language around major themes, find commonality, and acknowledge difference across perspectives. These reflections can be thought of as "emerging markers" on your Value Map, making visible what various stakeholders value most across the landscape's focal points. Allow people to engage with this reflection process by facilitating a silent gallery walk and then breaking up into small groups that organize Value Map ideas into categories or themes that show important areas of overlap across the partnership, surface assumptions, and identify tensions.

4. REFINE

Following the Value Mapping activity, review the map as a group to refine the partnership's research questions, select shared themes for initial data collection and analysis, and create agendas for upcoming meetings.
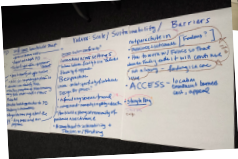
In February 2014, members of the [California Tinkering Afterschool Network](#) (CTAN)—including researchers, program leaders, and curriculum developers, several of whom also taught in the afterschool organizations—came together to kick-off a collaborative research project. The purpose of the meeting was to develop a shared understanding about the research questions, project agenda, and goals while also addressing power dynamics and variations in ideas about learning, teaching, and equity. The group began by identifying three main categories of shared work: 1) afterschool tinkering, 2) professional development, and 3) barriers to sustaining/scaling tinkering programs. Participants were given time to reflect personally on their values within each category and then members shared aloud as a whole group while one member recorded notes on a poster. **During the discussion, participants asked one another clarifying questions and built ideas off of each other, creating opportunities for both overlapping and differing opinions to surface and be acknowledged.** After the discussion, members reviewed the scribed poster notes in a "gallery walk" and individuals were asked to circle the top three values for each category that they would like addressed through the research collaboration. The annotated poster became a useful artifact for the group to refine research questions, create shared conjectures about teaching/learning, and conduct joint data collection and analysis.

+ Three examples of value mapping

In order to acknowledge and design with the diverse perspectives and experiences of all collaborators in mind, Value Mapping purposefully begins from the assumption that all members of the partnership do not share the same experiences or set of values. Through this activity, research-practice partnerships can explore places of shared interest before working together. These examples describe Value Mapping first implemented in a research-practice partnership and then adapted in different contexts for local needs.

In August 2014, Emilyn Green, director of the [CSW Network](#), adapted the Value Mapping activity for a professional development with afterschool facilitators to understand how their educational values and teaching practices varied and were shared across a geographically dispersed network. **The process supported diverse CSW educators in sharing their ideas about learning and pedagogy within their different afterschool contexts and articulating a shared vision for their work.** Educators were asked to write on sticky notes about what they valued regarding: 1) CSW program values, 2) facilitation practices, and 3) the physical space of their workshops. These sticky notes were then placed on three posters—one for each topic. After reflecting on all of the ideas, the group was divided into three groups to synthesize the ideas under each theme and create vision statements with the goal of including all ideas on the poster. At the end, each team shared their vision statements and discussed emerging themes across the network. This activity not only facilitated bonding across CSW educators from different cities, but it also supported one local workshop in revising their local vision statement.

In May 2015, twenty five educators, program leaders, and researchers convened at the Exploratorium for a working meeting titled: "Building Equity into Research-Practice Partnerships." The goal of the meeting was to develop tools that support equitable working relationships between researchers and educators. **Recognizing that attendees might define equity differently, Value Mapping was used to facilitate the development of a shared understanding of this idea.** Meeting attendees were asked to write down on sticky notes what they thought was essential to: 1) equity in research-practice partnerships; 2) equity in community research; and 3) equity in education. Individuals posted their notes on three separate posters marked with these topic areas. After a five-minute "gallery walk" during which people reviewed each other's notes, three small groups were created to organize each poster's sticky note ideas according to common themes or differences. Each group presented their key findings on each poster as a Value Map that facilitated group reflection about similar and different understandings of equity across the group. These Value Maps served as guides for the rest of the meeting. People would refer back to ideas shared on the Maps to help focus the need and purpose of various tools they were creating that could support more equitable research-practice partnerships.