

You did a lot of hard work in Module 3. You drew a site map. You identified key people at your site. You watched play and made observations about what you saw. You did interviews with adults and kids.

Nice work.

Now, in Module 4, you'll take all you learned in Module 3 to make a play plan for your site. What kind of play program will it be? What games will you start with? Where will you play them? Who will play? Will they like the games you've planned? How do you know?

In Module 4, you'll be using the principles of Design Thinking. Design Thinking is used at Stanford University's Design School and in many of today's most successful business start-ups.

The most important consideration in Design Thinking is this: design your product to serve the needs of the customer. In other words, start with the customer's needs and build everything around them. That's the best way to be successful.

The Reflection and Planning Sheet for Module 4 will take you through six steps of Design Thinking. By the time you are done with Module 4, you'll be leading play and trying to figure out how to do it in the best of all possible ways.

Here's a preview of the six steps of Design Thinking.

Step 1: Get In Their Shoes

The first step in the Design Thinking process is to "Get In Their Shoes." A word commonly associated with this step is "empathy." Those who have empathy look at the world through other people's eyes. They feel other people's pain. At Lead2Play it is essential to put yourself in the shoes of the kids you serve. What kinds of play do they like? Dislike? What kinds of play are they capable of? What might frighten them? What play experiences might they grow into? How hard should you push? Look at the world through their eyes, not yours. Empathize. Get in their shoes.

Step 2: Find Patterns

Step 2 is detective work. Remember, in Design Thinking the most important consideration is identifying customer's needs. What are they? What are the patterns of needs that you can see? These are needs that you encounter more than once. They are common needs at your site, shared by a number of people. Find these areas of common need. Find gold. Because you'll build your whole program around them.

Step 3: Set Play Parameters

Now that you've identified the most important needs, you need to set play parameters. That means setting some boundaries around the type of play you will plan. For example, if your only play space is a classroom, one of your parameters is that all games must fit into a very small space and not disrupt nearby activities. Or, let's say you have 40 kids signed up for your program. A parameter is that you want all of those kids to be active in some way all the time. So, you will likely need to run more than one game at a time. That's a design criteria or parameter. Is the gym only available on Tuesdays? Set a parameter. You will only plan gym play on Tuesdays. Make sense? In Step 3 you evaluate your site. You consider the needs at the site. Then you set the design limits or parameters for your program.

Step 4: Brainstorm

When you brainstorm, you'll try to come up with as many ideas for your play program as possible. You won't judge. You'll generate a list of as many ideas, even bad ideas, as possible.

Then, after you brainstorm, you'll identify the best games possible. These are the ones that meet the most needs at your site.

Step 5: Lead Play

In Step 5, you'll do what you've been waiting for. Lead play. In this step, you'll learn through experience. If things work, you'll likely keep doing them. Meet failure? You'll learn from it. And you'll likely make some changes to improve.

Step 6: Lead Better and Better Play

The last step in the Design Thinking process is continuous improvement. You and your team never settle for bad or mediocre. In fact, you constantly try to improve, leading better and better play opportunities at your Lead2Play site.

You'll hear more about this step in the last module of the Lead2Play training program. Module 6 will help you with evaluation and improvement.

For now, I'll just say good luck as you work through the Design Thinking process. Good luck!