

“EVERYONE DESERVES  
A SECOND CHANCE.  
IT'S LIKE THE DEJ  
PROGRAM, IT'S OUR  
SECOND CHANCE.”



+

T LAB



TIPPING  
POINT  
COMMUNITY

*T Lab, Tipping Point's R+D team, tests new pathways out of poverty by prototyping ideas in partnership with non-profit organizations and the Bay Area communities they serve.*

## T LAB REPORT: PROTOTYPING PHASE

# Exploring Alternatives to Incarceration with Fresh Lifelines for Youth

The second phase of this project was an opportunity to reimagine the FLY Law program for transitional-age youth (TAY) based on the insights from our research phase. We made the time and space to explore a wide range of ideas before we introduced the constraints of a high-fidelity pilot.

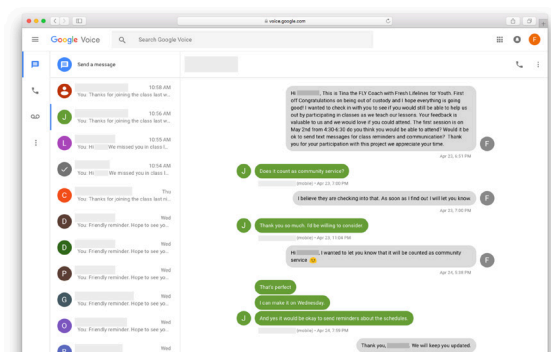
Our concept development focused on building agency and self-advocacy through legal education in Santa Clara County's Deferred Entry of Judgement (DEJ) pilot. Developing these critical social and emotional learning (SEL) skills as youth become adults will lead to the long-term success of TAY.

## CREATING CONCEPTS THAT ARE RESPONSIVE TO TAY NEEDS

The research phase highlighted several TAY needs that we hypothesized would ensure a successful re-entry experience, such as the need for **consistency** across service providers, **belonging** to positive communities, and having their **voice** and contributions valued by others.

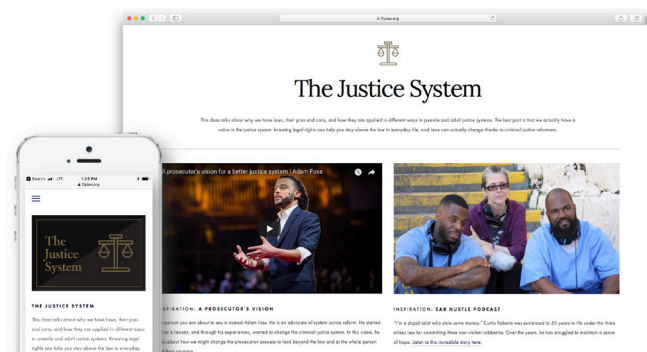
In order to maintain a participant-centered focus as we shifted into the prototyping phase, the team organized regular feedback sessions in juvenile hall with TAY and maintained an advisory group that met every few weeks to provide feedback and advance concept development.

To address the need for **consistency** across providers, we created a coordinated communications strategy to drive attendance and maintain engagement with TAY out of class:



#### Concept: TAY + FLY Coach Text Messaging

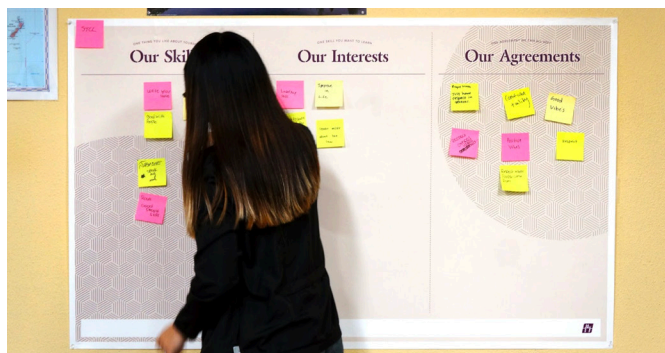
We utilized Google Voice to maintain an open line of communication with TAY to see if it contributed to attendance, and to explore opportunities for encouragement via text message.



#### Concept: Class Content Hub

We posted all class content and additional local resources on a website to learn if and how TAY wanted to engage out of the classroom.

To address the need for **belonging**, we introduced tools to strengthen relationships between participants during classes:



#### Concept: Opener and Closer Reflection Activities

We created opening and closing activities that reinforced agency, individual strengths, and community norms.



#### Concept: Tone and Voice

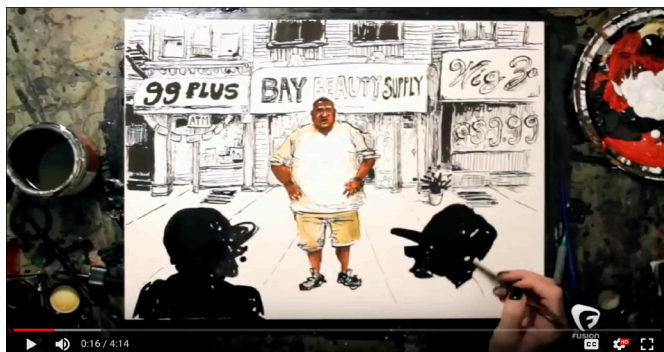
We developed a visual and verbal identity that utilized motivational adult language and imagery to inspire TAY to take action.



#### Concept: Class Companion Book

We created a small companion book with content that expanded on the themes discussed in class and provided space for independent reflection.

To address the need for building confidence and developing personal **voice**, we ensured class activities were designed to engage a range of learning styles:



**Concept: Video and Audio Clips**

Media was used at the beginning of class to frame the discussion and during the class to provide specific examples and tools for putting personal power into practice.



**Concept: Experiential Activities**

Existing activities were reimagined to promote positive physical and verbal interaction between participants and prioritize SEL skill development.

## PUTTING CONCEPTS TO THE TEST

In addition to testing a new curriculum that incorporated needs related to **consistency**, **belonging**, and **voice**, classes were delivered in different learning environments to understand the context that would best suit our curriculum.

Facilitating classes in Santa Clara County's YA DEJ program, both in juvenile hall and while TAY were on probation out of custody, provided an understanding of how the curriculum is suited to similar diversion and re-entry programs.

For comparison, we also provided the same classes to TAY enrolled at San Jose Conservation Corps (SJCC), a non-profit with tailored programming and education for opportunity youth, including justice involved young adults. This provided insight into the constraints and possibilities for delivering the curriculum to TAY who are not in a specific re-entry program.

### PROTOTYPE TESTING SCHEDULE:

PREP WEEK	TESTING WEEK 1	TESTING WEEK 2
TAY ADVISORY OUTREACH		TAY ADVISORY CLASS 1
SJCC OUTREACH	SJCC CLASS 1	SJCC CLASS 2
SCC YA DEJ OUTREACH	IN CUSTODY YA DEJ CLASS 1	IN CUSTODY YA DEJ CLASS 2
SCC & YA DEJ TAY OUTREACH + Recruiting phone call and introductory text message	OUT OF CUSTODY YA DEJ CLASS 1 + Text message class reminders + Access to Class Content Hub	OUT OF CUSTODY YA DEJ CLASS 2 + Text message class reminders + Access to Class Content Hub



## WHAT WE LEARNED

Over a two-week testing period, three TAY groups received a total of 14 hours of instructional time. Those groups included eight YA DEJ participants, eight SJCC students, and five members of the TAY Advisory Group. They provided essential feedback to determine what would make the program successful and how to refine, change, or eliminate concepts.

Consistency, belonging, and voice were woven into each of our concepts. Feedback on these concepts surfaced new insights about the overall **instructional design** of the program, the demands of **in-class facilitation**, and the challenges of **out-of-class engagement**. The following are select learnings across these categories:

### 1. Instructional Design: Pinpointing the drivers of SEL development

We tested many instructional strategies that developed agency and self-advocacy. However, they competed for the same instruction time and ultimately prevented facilitators from delivering complete sessions. We made micro-adjustments from class to class during the prototyping period to identify which instructional strategies would help facilitators efficiently and effectively deliver course content. One participant compared two prototype classes by offering the feedback:

*"This class was much better than the first one. It had more activities and discussion... the videos were great!" – Young Adult*

Another refinement came from observing how students related to complex social topics like the school-to-prison-pipeline or systemic bias. It became clear that we could not simply relate these topics to the everyday experiences

participants might have, but we also had to highlight reform and advocacy initiatives that are addressing these problems in the real world. When we did not incorporate relevant current initiatives, we observed less class participation and a mood of hopelessness. As we develop additional classes, we are intentionally linking current initiatives and ways to immediately take action into every legal and social concept discussed.

### 2. In-Class Facilitation: Balancing learning outcomes and critical dialogue

We believed that critical dialogue—conversation that surfaces questions, consequences, and solutions—with participants is essential to developing SEL skills, but in practice this was a challenge due to the constraints of classroom time and facilitator skill sets.

*"I wish I had someone with deep knowledge of the history of the justice system right there with me to help incorporate the right information at the right time." – Facilitator*

We observed that shaping critical dialogue with TAY takes both practice and high familiarity with a topic. However, the more we facilitated critical thinking through dialogue, the harder it became to control the length of activities and class focus. Moving forward, we will develop a robust facilitator training while clarifying the class topics and activities that are foundational for participant development.



FLY facilitator delivering a prototype class at San Jose Conservation Corps.

### 3. Out-of-Class Engagement: Keeping contact while TAY transition back into the community

In effort to maintain consistent service delivery as TAY transitioned out of juvenile hall and back into the community, we hypothesized that text messaging with participants would be a low-barrier communication channel and ensure out of custody attendance. Our brainstorm sessions with TAY also highlighted the potential value of making legal resources from classes available online on a mobile-friendly website.

We reached out to 13 participants with initial text messages and invitations to the first class. Five participants replied and three attended. We learned that this low level of contact was due to unexpected or unpredictable cell phone use or preferences for communication over social media.

*"One student uses their parent's phone, several others switched their phone numbers, and a few people just never responded." – Facilitator*

Low attendance out of custody also resulted in limited opportunities to refer people to the website that was populated with legal content and resources. The site had one visit from the three participants who attended out of custody workshops and could access this content.

Moving forward, we will complement text message reminders with a social media stream that provides class information instead of being reliant on phone numbers alone. Furthermore, we will not pursue posting content online in order to focus on instructional design and attendance.

### HOW THE PROTOTYPE RESULTS WILL INFORM THE MICRO-PILOT

The prototyping phase has allowed the team to explore a variety of approaches to a new law related education program for TAY navigating the justice system. The process highlighted which ideas were essential, optional, or irrelevant to moving forward. We will incorporate the following conclusions in the micro-pilot – a full 8-class curriculum to be delivered in the Santa Clara County YA DEJ program:

1. The program will focus on integration with re-entry programs. This phase reaffirmed our hypothesis that timing is a boon for the curriculum. FLY can provide this intervention where other services might leave a gap in the continuity of care during re-entry and when TAY need support most – as they transition to independence and adulthood.
2. Ensuring class attendance in community-based classes will require a more comprehensive plan than text reminders alone. Moving forward, we will address needs such as transportation to classes, more dependable communication channels, and encouragement through incentives like community service hours.
3. Delivering the curriculum in person is more critical than delivering it online. While TAY voiced the desire to access resources online, the website was not referenced by participants. We will prioritize in-person delivery for the micro-pilot and revisit the role of digital resources for full-scale program implementation.
4. Developing agency and self-advocacy skills can be a long journey and cannot reliably happen through a handful of classes. This phase revealed the need to focus our instructional design on developing foundational SEL skills, such as self-awareness and social awareness, instead of teaching more complex skills like agency and advocacy skills outright. With time and practice these more complex skills will emerge from foundational SEL skills.

Stay tuned for the results of the micro pilot phase in the coming months. Follow along [here](#) for updates, and feel free to email us at [tlab@tippingpoint.org](mailto:tlab@tippingpoint.org) to learn more about this project.



**T LAB**

**Tipping Point** works to break the cycle of poverty for individuals and families in the Bay Area by focusing the resources of our community towards nonprofits and public systems providing housing, education, early childhood wellness, and employment services. Since 2013, Tipping Point has invested in Research and Development to fill gaps in the nonprofit sector and develop new poverty-fighting ideas. **T Lab**, Tipping Point's R+D team, tests new pathways out of poverty by prototyping ideas in partnership with non-profit organizations and the Bay Area communities they serve.