

SEE YOUR SUPER POWER

Proving visually impaired teenagers with a stage to build their confidence, from pretend to reality.



Wenqi Zheng
wzheng2@sva.edu
www.wenqizheng.com

Table of Contents

1. Preface
2. Research
3. Findings
4. Ideation
5. Prototypes
6. Pilot
7. Intervention
8. Monitoring and evaluation
9. Next step

1. Preface



PASSION

One day while walking for the train, someone hit me from behind. I nearly fell and turned back to yell at whoever had done this. He looked around 17-years-old. He was holding a cane and walking cautiously. He was visually impaired. In that moment, I was glad I was there to block him from falling into the tracks. What if WW I hadn't been there? Empathy resonated with me; From that moment on, I thought maybe I could do something for this group. So I started to focus on teenagers who are visually impaired.

PROBLEM CONTEXT

Visual impairment, also known as vision impairment or vision loss, is a decreasing ability to see to a degree that causes problems not fixable by usual means, such as glasses. Findings from the 2017 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) established that an estimated 26.9 million adult Americans (or about 10% of all adult Americans) reported they were visually impaired.

Teenagers with visual impairment remain relatively behind regarding social development as compared to sighted children. Social skills play a critical role in the learning process of a person especially in the case of students with Visual Impairment. Teenagers who lack these skills may be excluded from positive interaction with peers and may have problems in relationships with their teachers, which can lead to the risk of poor academic achievement. This will influence their psychosocial development, and they will lack cooperation and communication skills, as well as the ability to respond positively to peers and the ability to develop friendships.

For the aforementioned reasons, I want to focus on visually impaired teenagers and improve their social skills.

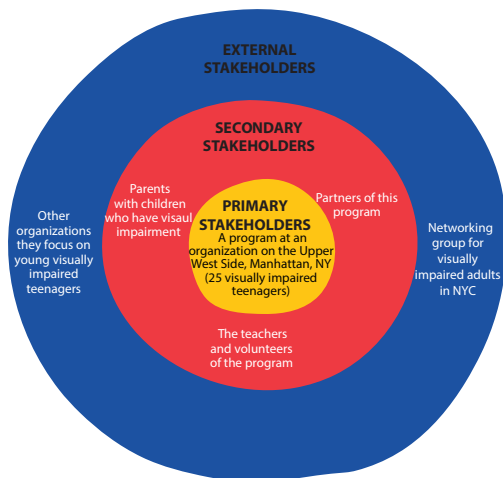


2. Research

2.1 Secondary Research

These resource created my knowledge base, as well as a handle on relevant language and topics ranging make good use of a period in which early project momentum was slow as we sought to build relationships.

2.2 Primary research



I reached out to contacts at MANHATTAN FFB Networking Group and FFB-NYC Queens Networking Group, as well as 2 other major centers of excellence for visually impaired in NYC.

I attended public symposia, relevant seminars and workshops that social workers and researchers conducted, and followed up with those leaders for one-on-one interviews. I conducted outreach to community visually impaired support organizations operating at local, national and international levels, including those primarily serving people still in treatment. We also reached out through personal networks.

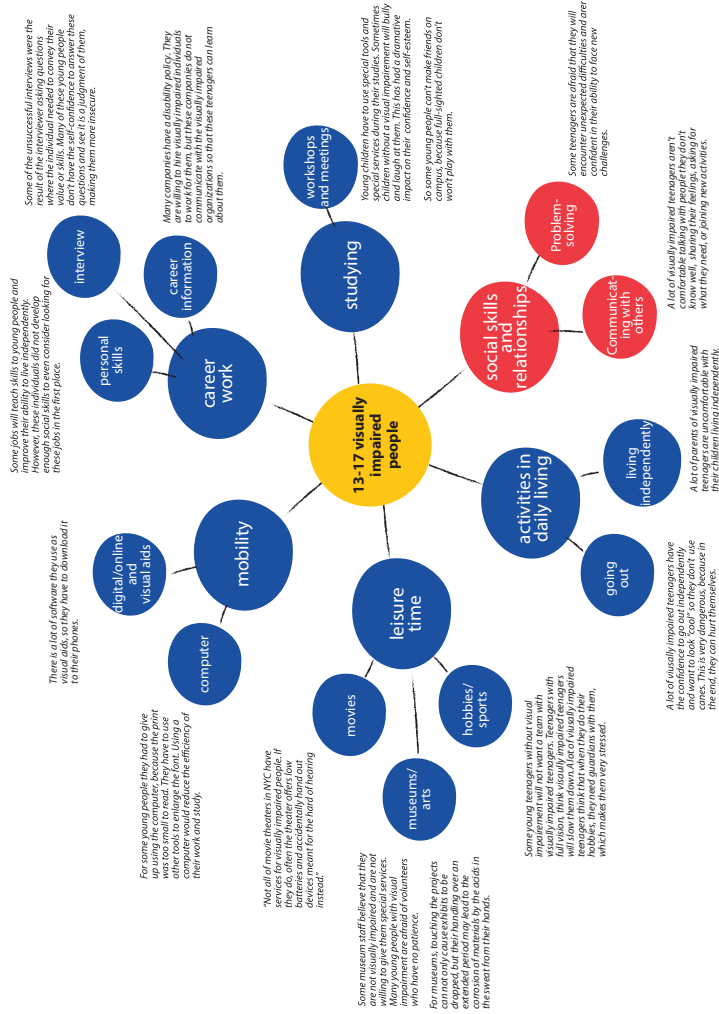
To present, the final tally of semi-structured interviews we conducted includes 26 'experts' (doctors, nurses, social workers, researchers, therapists, human resources professionals etc.), 3 organizations, 5 networking groups (each varying between 10 and 14 participants), 52 visually impaired people (29 were teenagers), and 7 parents of visually impaired teenagers.

I sought and received permission in all interviews to take notes and share responses publicly where needed, with assurances that we would anonymized all information and would not show their images.

3. Finding

3.1 Framing the insights

Prior to determining the best means to help a teenager who is visually impaired develop better social skills, it is important to understand specifically what a teenager who is visually impaired can and can't do. It is crucial to assess and classify the nature of a teenager's social skill deficits in order to devise and implement the most appropriate intervention. The insights gathered from secondary and primary research were translated in research findings. The findings were used to map out the problems of the young visually impaired teenagers are facing now.



3.2 Understanding the Audience

Primary research was conducted to collect data that could lead to potential insight resolving the research questions. In-person and phone interviews with the target audience and an online surveys were used to collect primary research data.

However, my hypothesis is contrary to the findings. Teenagers who are visually impaired need independence, but the biggest challenge they face now is how to improve social skills and confidence. Because self-confidence is the first step towards independence.

Since many finding were discovered through the framing of the insights map, there was a need to shift the focus on social skills. The insights gathered from secondary and primary research were translated in research findings.



3.3 Opportunity to Design for improved Social Skills

Research helps me identify design opportunity that are anchored in teenagers who are visually impaired. By looking at their current situations, the problems they face is visually impaired teenagers lack the communication skills and confidence to build relationships with their peers, who express bias against them.

So, my problem statement is **“How might I help visually impaired teenagers to build relationships with their peers by focusing on improving their communication skills and self-confidence through a designed intervention?”**



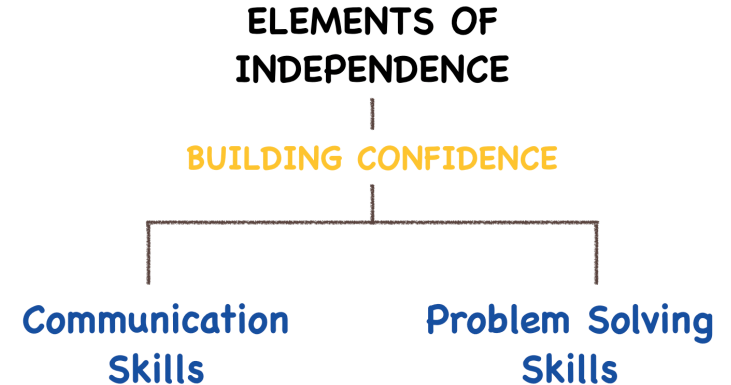
There are three insights based on my research:

- **Isolated from peers**
Disability makes them feel different from their peers
- **Afraid of rejection**
The fear of rejection from their peers makes them afraid to communicate with others
- **Afraid to go outside comfort zone**
They have not been encouraged to go outside their comfort zone

“Even though they are 17 year olds, their social skills are only those of a 12 year old”

These fears and perceived “differences” prevent them from building the confidence needed to gain social skills and be independent.

All these teenagers need is to build their confidence.



These teenagers need confidence to achieve their ultimate goal of being independent. During prototyping I learned that to help them to do this is to first build their comfort communicating with others, then reinforce this, but building problem solving skills.

“How can I help them get out of their comfort zone and feel free to express themselves?”

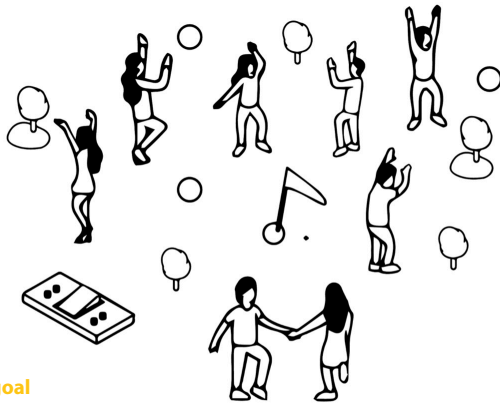


4. Ideation

Design Goal



4.1 Idea-1



● Intervention goal

Reverse the roles where the visually impaired teenagers have the advantage and are needed to lead the game. This can help with both their social skills and being more active. And also eliminate bias from teenagers without visual impairments.

● Who

Sighted and visually impaired teenagers

● How

In the dark, a sighted child is blind and unable to navigate the obstacles in the room.

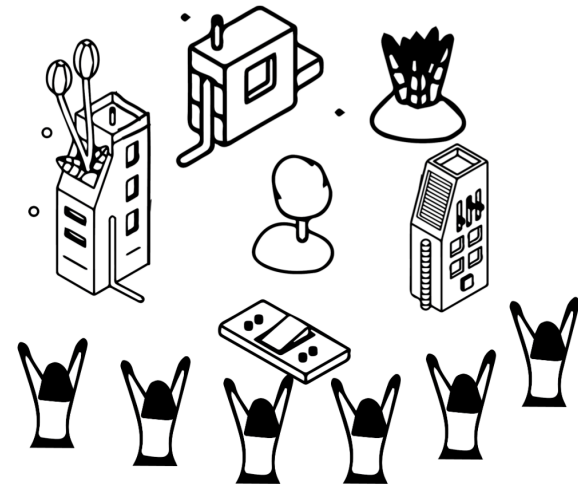
A race between the sighted and VI teenagers to see who can get out of the room without knocking anything over.

The VI teenager could teach the sighted teenager tips for navigating the obstacles - they then race again.

Teenagers with visual impairment as guides lead young people with normal vision to feel touch and smell objects in the dark environment.

“(Nose) Which aroma do you identify?/ (Ears) Where are the 5 stones?/ (Hands) What is behind the wall?”

4.2 Idea-2



● Intervention goal

Art Studio where VI and sighted kids work together and use art as the vehicle for connecting them.

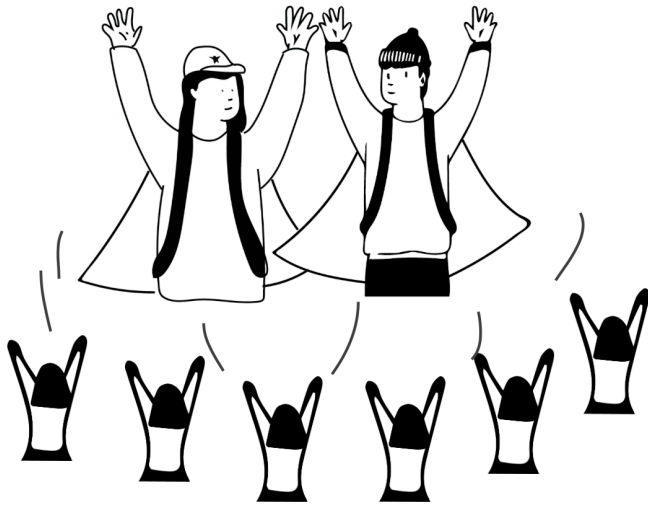
● Who

Sighted and visually impaired teenagers

● How

The teenagers work together using easy to access materials (like recycled bottles) to create art that could be showcased at school.

4.3 Idea-3



● Intervention goal

Using theater as tool to help VI teenagers build confidence. It also will help the VI and sighted kids interact in a meaningful way and eliminate bias between them.

● Who

The teenagers who are visually impaired invite teenagers without visual impairments

● How

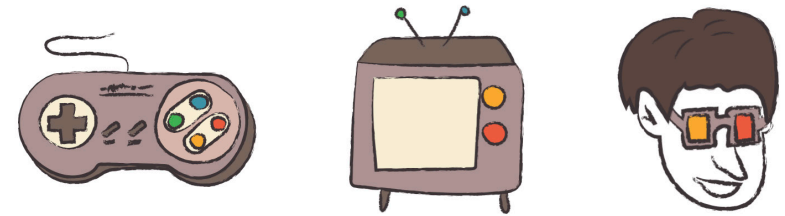
"If you have a superpower, what would it be?"

The teenagers share with each other based on Superman's story and their own experiences. They discover their own superpower by designing their own superhero.

Create a play (working with their drama teachers) and perform it for other teenagers and parents.

4.4 Final Idea

Using drama and superheroes as tools to help visually impaired teenagers build confidence. It will help the visually impaired and sighted kids to interact in a meaningful way and eliminate bias between them.



Why superheroes ?

I was inspired by the interests these teenagers shared with me, which included video games, cartoons, and even role playing. To match these I designed a superhero themed intervention, where they could bring some of that fantasy into it.

The highlight of superheroes is that they represent both reality and fantasy. In most cases, these are very normal men and women in real life. They have a job, friends, and a rather ordinary life. But thanks to their great power, they can be stronger than reality and overcome any obstacle. Identifying with a superhero gives visually impaired teenagers confidence, and it allows them to overcome the obstacles of everyday life. Moreover, the superhero is hidden, and no one knows who he really is behind the mask.

Why drama?

Choosing drama as a tool for my intervention can offer a safe environment for visually impaired teenagers to try on other roles and express their feelings.

Also, creative drama stimulates creativity and self-expression. In addition, role-playing can help visually impaired young people build empathy and have the opportunity to support others.

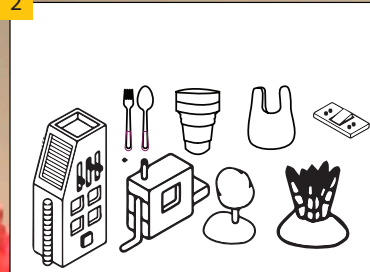
Finally, through planning, rehearsing, and then performance, the visually impaired teenagers have a great sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

1



Become a superhero, give themselves a name and describing what superpower they have.

2



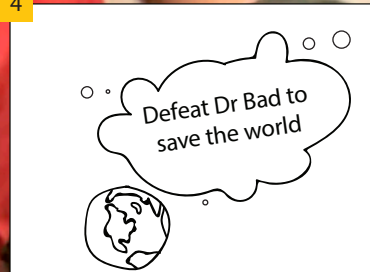
Superheroes need go to store to buy things and replenish their energy.

3



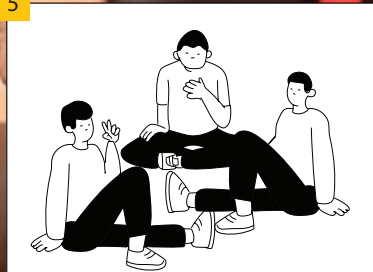
Superheros should share each other how the stuff that they get could help their superpower.

4



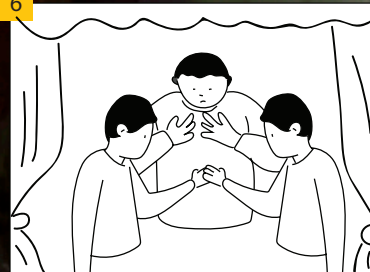
Impromptu performance

5



Students have 7 minutes to discuss time, and the heroes dress themselves up and negotiate a script to perform.

6



Show time and got feedback!

5.2 Prototype 2

● Hypothesis

Visually Impaired teengagers could improve confidence through this drama performance.

● Goal

Understand how time, number of people, boys and girls mix, vi school and traditional school positively affect visually impaired teenagers

● Number of teens

15 visually impaired students divided into three groups (perform at different times)
 Group 1: four girls (three study at vi school and one study at traditional school)
 Group 2: six boys (three study at vi school and three study at traditional school)
 Group 3: two boys and three girls (two study at vi school and three study at traditional school)

● Time line

5 mins: Create drama character
 7 mins: Teamwork: Create a script
 30 mins: Team Performance
 3 mins: Feedback
 Total: 45 mins

● Measuring result

Active participation
 Confidence and bravery
 Problem solving and learning new skills
 The creativity of the plot

● Learning

A number of 3-5 people make them more engaged

Mixing different school backgrounds help to promote communication and understanding.

In the mix group of boys and girls they have higher level of discomfort.

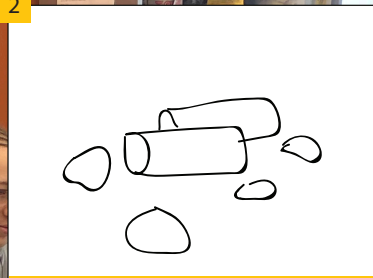


1



Become a superhero, give themselves a name and describing what superpower they have.

2



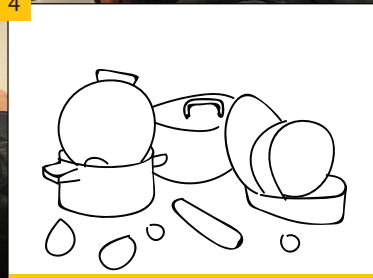
Help each other cut clay to get hero energy.

3



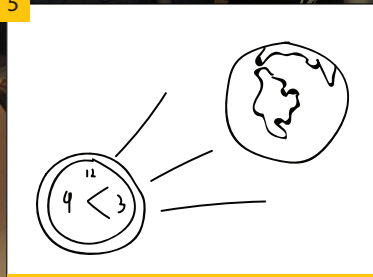
Like Dragon Ball, when they are collected together, they will summon energy.

4



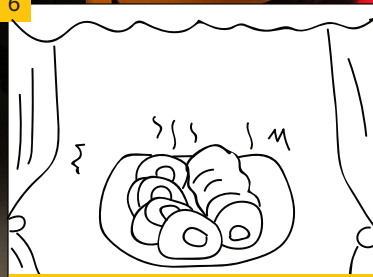
When the superhero collects full energy, they will get the kitchenware as a prop.

5



Superheroes need to work together to make sausage rolls in 30 minutes to save the planet at risk of poverty.

6



Superheroes have 7mins discuss, create their own script and cooking food to save the world.

6. Pilot



6.1 Pilot

For feedback with other teenagers, they have mentioned See your superpower stage offers me a safe environment to try on other roles and to express feelings. Also improve their creativity and enhance their self-confidence.

The role-playing of drama can help visually impaired teenagers improve their creativity and enhance their self-confidence. But how do I transfer this sense of accomplishment and confidence gained through dramatic role-playing into real life situations?

So I Used drama skills, just transitioned the setting from a fake backdrop to the real world. This intervention helped to build their confidence in a protected environment and then took the stage away so they could continue growing their skills where they'll need it most – outside the school walls.

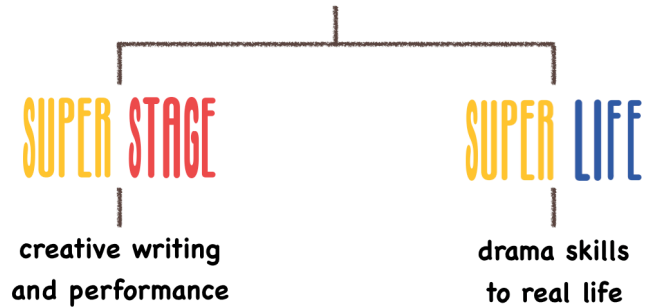


7. Intervention



SEE YOUR SUPER POWER

building confidence



“See your superpower” project through “Super stage” and “Super life” used drama to guide visually impaired teenagers through a process of building confidence, building skills from pretend to real life.

SUPER STAGE

“Super stage, is the part of my intervention focused on helping these teenagers build their communication skills

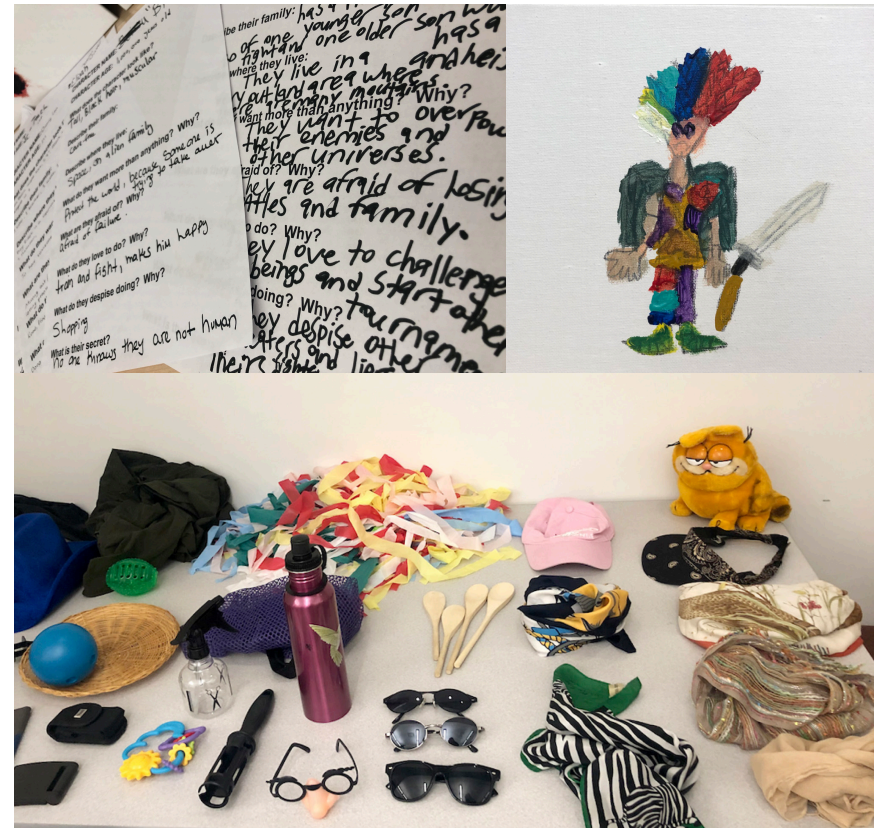
SUPER LIFE

“Super life, is the part of my intervention focused on the teenagers building their problem solving skills.

7.1 Intervention-1

SUPER STAGE

Goal: Build Communication Skills



7.2 Intervention-2

SUPER LIFE

Goal: Build Problem Solving Skills



“Super stage, is the part of my intervention focused on helping these teenagers build their communication skills

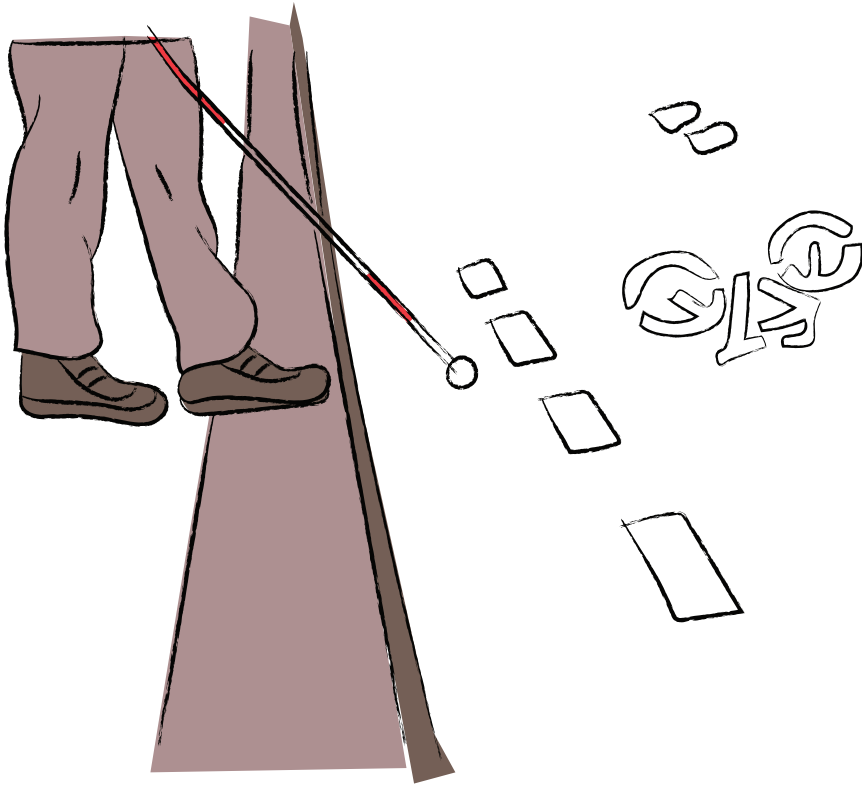
My intervention was informed by the three areas that VI teenagers struggle with most. The first 2, Isolation and fear of rejection are both feelings that can be improved with better communication skills.

During the first intervention, teenagers were asked to create their own superhero characters and share out what they came up with. They then chose what superpower they would have and why. After this, they would role-play as their superhero and go to the “Super-power”

store to buy their role play their characters and went to superpower store to buy some stuffs images and explain why these stuff could help them get more energy. - They then explained why they chose the different accessories.

I provide them a scene story, based on the story, the visually impaired teenagers discussed and created their own scripts, after this they performed their own scripts. For feedback with other teenagers, they have mentioned See your superpower stage offers me a safe environment to try on other roles and to express feelings. Also improve their creativity and enhance their self-confidence.





“Super life, is the part of my intervention focused on the teenagers building their problem solving skills.

The second part of my intervention was informed by third area where VI teenagers struggle most. The fear of going outside their comfort zone, a feeling that can be improved with some practice with problem solving skills.

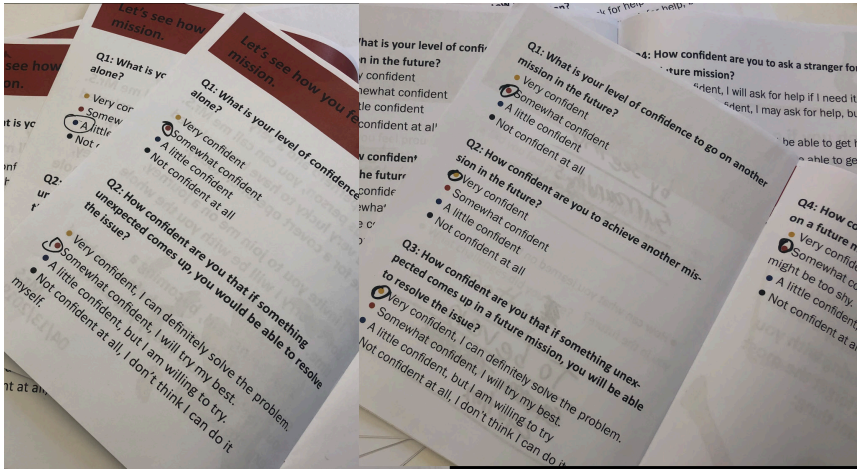
This intervention helped to build their confidence in a protected environment and then took the stage away so they could continue growing their skills where they'll need it most – outside the school walls.

“You’re a superhero now. You should try

something you’ve never done before.”giving the visually impaired teenagers a new identity. For example, one visually impaired teenagers “mission” was to get to central park. While on his way, he realized he wasn’t sure where he was and needed to find out how to get to central park from where he was. He practiced his problem-solving, but first asking help from a stranger - but then going into a shop and asking the store owner where to go. He was also able to practice, going outside his comfort zone when he typically is afraid to cross the street.

Through these details teenagers could know how to finger out solve the problem and became a brave and confident one.

8. Monitoring and evaluation



I designed the survey to measure my intervention and here is my result.

Before the "Your superpower" I asked 25 VI teenagers to rate their level of confidence that while they were out on their missions, they would be able to ask a stranger for help. 0 teenagers said they felt very confidence. 3 said they felt somewhat confident, 10 said they feel a little confident and 12 say are not confident at all.

After the "Your superpower" project 1 visually impaired teenager who could feel very confident and only two teenagers think they are not confident at all for their communication skills. They have more confident to ask a stranger for help on a future mission.

For the problem solving skills, Before they go out 10 visually impaired teenagers think they feel a little confident and 3 visually impaired teenagers think they are not confident at all if something unexpected comes up, they would be able to resolve the issue.

When they come back, 2 people feel very confident, that if something unexpected comes up in a future mission, they will be able to resolve the issue.

7 teenagers feel not confident before the intervention they have lower level of confidence to go out alone. After the "your superpower" project, 4 teenagers feel very confident and no people feel not confident after this intervention. They have a high level of confidence to go on another mission in the future and achieve another mission in the future.

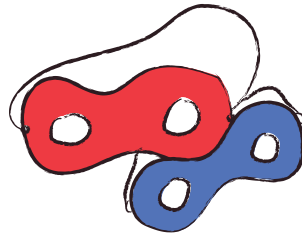
9. Next step



"Your superpower" project through "see your superpower" and "show your superpower" used drama to guide visually impaired teenagers through a process of building confidence, building skills from pretend to real life. But this project is not over.

I hope more kids can step out of their comfort zones like Kevin. The next step is to take the mask off and show that they are a hero through their self-confidence and improved independence.

Finally I would love to share a quote to the people who are visually impaired. and tell them "you're not alone in this world. in real life, even if you don't have superpower, you can still be a hero"



"In real life, even if you don't have a superpower, you can still be a hero."



SEE YOUR SUPER POWER