

Adam Stankiewicz | Senior Design Systems Engineer

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SUMMARY

Design systems engineer with 9+ years building the platform around the design system, not only its components: tokens, documentation, adoption tooling, and the design and engineering handoff. Led **Paragon**, the open-source React design system for Open edX, across **40+ consuming projects and 5.9M+ npm downloads**, with a documentation platform at **500+ monthly actives** and the telemetry and support intake that set its roadmap. Primary point of contact for Paragon support, and on the enterprise engineering on-call rotation. At MagicSchool, built the design system's MCP server so designers can verify resolved token values before handoff and coding agents stop inventing components, raising first-attempt component correctness from **36% to 88%** in a controlled evaluation run before rollout. Former HCI researcher, published in ACM venues.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

MAGICSCHOOL AI

Senior Design Systems Engineer

Remote, NH

Jul 2025 - Present

Spellbook is the React design system behind MagicSchool's AI platform for K-12 educators, used by ~8M people across ~36,000 schools.

Design system and accessibility work delivered from inside a product squad that consumes it.

- **Designed and built the Spellbook MCP server** so AI coding agents can carry a ticket through implementation and review without inventing components, and designers can verify resolved token values before handoff. **TypeScript and Node.js**: nine tools over 70+ **React** component specifications, resolved tokens, icon catalogs, and curated examples, plus a manifest regenerated from source on every release and a compiler-backed validator that type-checks agent-generated JSX against the real component APIs. Prototyped generative UI on the same contract, so AI-generated interfaces are assembled from system primitives rather than invented markup.
- Measured it before rolling it out, with a controlled evaluation across 25 production UI tasks and three model tiers on an identical harness: the baseline agent already had full filesystem access to the design system source, and the treatment added only the MCP tools. First-attempt component API correctness rose from **36% to 88%** on the model with the strongest unaided baseline; on models that do not read the source themselves, the gap is wider. Total inference cost per task, counting the rework it avoided, fell 35 to 41 percent.
- **Rebuilt the design system's token layer on a DTCG pipeline**, generating theme CSS from primitive and semantic token sources instead of hand-maintained stylesheets, with a CI gate that fails the build when generated output drifts from source. Introduced a Playroom-based sandbox where designers and engineers compose directly against live components. Building the internationalization pipeline now, from build-time message-ID injection through an automated quality gate that scores machine translation before release.
- **Extended components through composition rather than new props**, so consuming teams could build what the library had not anticipated without waiting on a release: a slot-based table-actions API for the data grid, with the decision documented against the prop-based alternative, then row selection and bulk actions built on it. Authored five component families end to end, including a file dropzone, a composable chat-shell input, and an animated assistant character.
- Led the accessibility remediation behind the company's **first VPAT**, which unlocked enterprise deals, pushing fixes into the design system rather than patching call sites so every consuming surface inherited them. Automated the accessibility checks that catch regressions in code review, running axe-core through Playwright on every pull request and diffing against the main baseline so the author sees exactly what the change introduced. Serve in the company's accessibility guild, conducting reviews alongside product teams so they remediate their own work.
- **Tech lead for a product squad that delivered five projects from ideation through rollout in a single quarter**, delegating day-to-day project leadership while owning project scoping, architecture, and final decisions: a configuration-driven module engine that let separate squads build homepage modules in parallel against one contract, an information architecture and routing redesign across the Next.js App Router, unified chat history, and one shared client-side analytics layer replacing per-feature tracking. Primary reviewer for the squad and for the cross-team design system guild, conducting design and code reviews for partner teams and supporting production incident response.

2U / EDX

Principal Software Engineer

Cambridge, MA / Remote, NH

Apr 2023 - Jul 2025

Senior Software Engineer II • Senior Software Engineer I • Software Engineer II (four promotions)

Jan 2018 - Apr 2023

- Led **Paragon**, an open-source design system and React component library adopted across **40+ Open edX projects with 5.9M+ npm downloads**, providing the UI foundation for a platform that has reached 100M+ learners globally, and reviewed more than twice as many pull requests as authored across it and the supporting platform repositories.
- Architected Paragon's design-token system and wrote the Style Dictionary transform layer, including the reference-annotation pass, theme-variant filter factory, and custom CSS formats, **so a theme change no longer required rebuilding the ~30 micro-frontends consuming it**. Designed and prototyped the runtime theme-CSS loader, and built the usage-insights pipeline that produced adoption data for the system.

- Directed a contract team maintaining and extending Paragon's tooling: the CLI, the dependency analyzer, and a Gatsby documentation platform with GraphQL-driven content sourcing that reached 500+ monthly active users, reviewing their output for consistency with the architecture.
- Set frontend and design system technical strategy as a leader in the **Open edX Frontend Working Group**, building consensus on architecture, accessibility, and extensibility roadmaps across independent organizations with no shared reporting line. Led Paragon's internationalization initiative as design authority on its architecture and integration model, and built the translation pipeline that shipped its first language pack.
- Served as the **primary point of contact** for Paragon support across 2U's internal teams and the Open edX community, triaging requests, reviewing external contributions, and holding backward compatibility and deprecation paths across 40+ consuming projects, while participating in the **enterprise engineering on-call rotation**. Ran internal user research through usage surveys, support intake, and adoption telemetry.
- Maintained the core JavaScript libraries underpinning the ~30 micro-frontend applications, improving modularity, shared authentication, and extensibility, and **instrumenting them with Datadog RUM** for client-side performance and error observability.
- Early engineer on edX for Business, a 0-to-1 enterprise learning platform supporting 1.2M+ learners and admins (50k+ MAUs). Architected the React SPAs and Django REST APIs underpinning enterprise partnerships worth ~\$15M in annual revenue, and simplified client-side state management by moving server state out of client stores, establishing **React Query as the fetching, caching, and invalidation architecture** other engineers then adopted.

GROUND SIGNAL

Software Engineer

Boston, MA

Jul 2017 - Jan 2018

- Shipped reusable Ractive.js components for a B2B web application, partnering with a designer and product manager to revamp the dashboard with fuzzy search, venue filtering, and CSV export, plus real-time social data ingestion.

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Research Assistant / Ph.D. Student

Pittsburgh, PA

Aug 2015 - Jul 2017

- Prototyped a browser-based conversational turn-detection model for video communication in Python and JavaScript, analyzing 392 Coursera discussion groups (1,027 users, 800K+ turns) to assess dominant behavior in multi-party conversation.

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

Undergraduate Research Assistant

West Hartford, CT

Sep 2012 - May 2015

- Developed a collaborative video-based learning platform enabling threaded discussion anchored inside video lectures, used by ~5,000 learners across three universities. Ran the user interviews and mixed-methods evaluations that drove prioritization, and co-authored the peer-reviewed publications behind a \$448k National Science Foundation grant (IIS-1318345).

EARLIER

2010 - 2015

Internships, co-ops, and part-time web development roles including Carbonite, Diebold, ForeSite Technologies, and Green Bridge Guide, plus a visiting research appointment at Carnegie Mellon.

SKILLS

- **Design Systems & Design Tooling:** Component Libraries, Design Tokens (Style Dictionary, DTCG), Theming, Storybook, Component Playgrounds, Figma, Usage Analytics, Design/Engineering Handoff
- **Frontend:** JavaScript, TypeScript, React, Next.js (App Router, React Server Components), Single-Page Application Architecture, Server-State Architecture, React Query, Micro-frontends, CSS, Sass, Tailwind
- **AI Engineering:** MCP Server Design, Figma MCP, Claude Agent SDK, LLM Evaluation & Benchmarking, Generative UI
- **Backend, APIs & Observability:** Node.js, Python, Django, REST API Design, GraphQL, PostgreSQL, Datadog RUM, Amplitude, OpenTelemetry, Client-Side Instrumentation, On-Call & Incident Response
- **Accessibility:** WCAG 2.1 AA, axe-core, Automated Accessibility Testing, Screen Reader Testing, VPAT
- **Practice:** Open Source, RFCs & Technical Strategy, Internal User Research, Project Scoping, Engineering Leadership

EDUCATION

- **University of Hartford, B.A.,** Web Design & Development, 2011-2015. Graduated with University Honors; minors in Computer Science and Psychology.

HONORS, PUBLICATIONS & INTERESTS

- Magic Maker of the Month, MagicSchool AI (2026); Strive for Excellence (Honorable Mention), 2U (2023); Honorable Mention, NSF Graduate Research Fellowship (2016)
- Five peer-reviewed HCI publications (ACM Learning @ Scale, CSCW ×2, CSCL, ASIS&T); full citations at adamstankiewicz.dev
- Private pilot and aircraft owner (Cessna 172K); former member of the U.S. Boomerang Team