



# The Deeper Learning Dozen

Transforming School Districts to Support Deeper Learning for All: A Hypothesis

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# Introduction

All over the world, school is changing. Faced with all the possibilities, inequities, anxieties, and complexities of contemporary life, educators and students alike are balking at an inherited approach to schooling that does little to prepare students for those challenges. They are finding ways to orient student work around meaningful questions and practices, replacing coverage with mastery of knowledge, busy-work with disciplined creativity, and one-size-fits-all with a diversity of promising approaches. Some of them have described this as a reorientation towards **deeper learning**.

We have been fortunate to observe many examples of this change in action. We are excited about examples of individual classrooms and schools that are demonstrating how students can learn in more rigorous and meaningful ways. But we find repeatedly that these spaces are not supported by, and are often working directly against, the systems in which they are housed. To succeed, educators often need to buffer themselves from the demands of public school systems, finding their best efforts incompatible with bureaucratic structures that are still based in "measure, predict, and control," as a means of improvement.

We also know, however, that there are many public school systems whose leaders want to enable more meaningful, more engaging, and more rigorous learning for all their students. Specifically, these leaders recognize the need to move away from an old-style command and control approach and organize their work in professional ways that are more respectful of the needs and views of teachers, students, and communities. The past decade has also seen the emergence of a variety of tools and processes—like networked improvement communities, improvement science, and continuous improvement methods—that are intended to work in a way that is more iterative and draws upon practitioner expertise. But while these methods can be helpful, they are not sufficient. To make the shifts we seek will require connecting these methods to a more systemic perspective and analysis, one that incorporates an understanding of power, politics, class, and racism as structural phenomena. Such an approach needs to question and then redesign the very systems that have proven so impervious to change. It can utilize these new methods, but needs to connect to a broader strategy for system redesign.

**The Deeper Learning Dozen** is our attempt to address this need. It is both an action project and an attempt to learn and share what we are learning with the field. It is first and foremost a design for a **community of practice** of twelve school districts. As we launch the network, this paper lays out our initial thinking of the changes that we think districts will need to undertake to move towards a goal of wall-to-wall systemic, equitable, deeper learning for both students and adults. Over the next three years, we will be working with our districts to try to enact these ideas and also to refine and revise them in light of their experiences. For this community to sustain and grow, however, it needs allies beyond the founding twelve. If you would like to be part of this work in any way, we would love to hear from you.

## Acknowledgements

This work would not be possible without the ambition and dedication of the districts who make up the initial "dozen". We are grateful to them and to the Hewlett Foundation for their ongoing support of this work.

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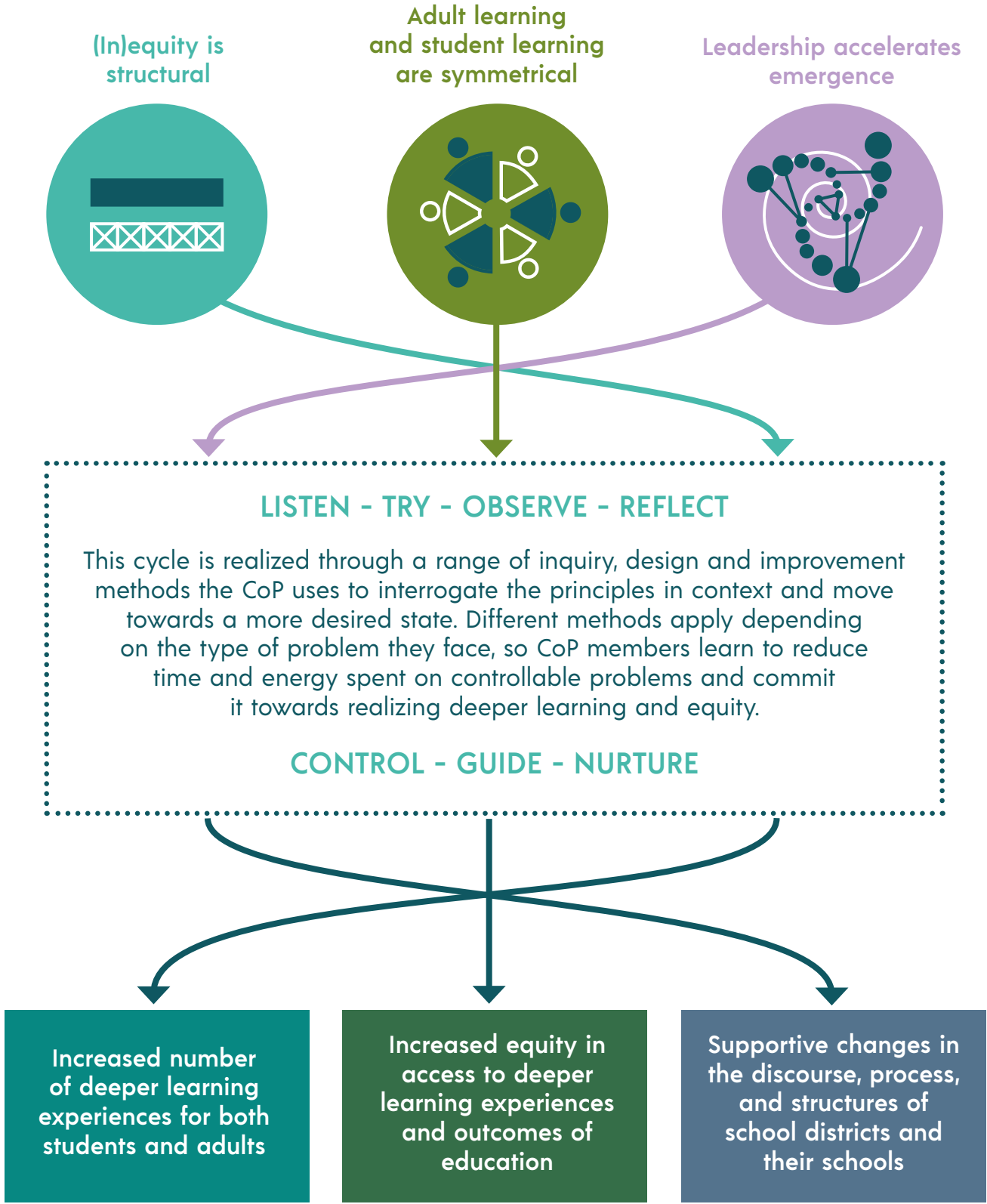
# Our Theory of Change

## DEEPER LEARNING THEORY OF CHANGE

**3 DLD PRINCIPLES:**  
 the work of the CoP is all orientated towards understanding, internalizing and acting on these principles. SDs are introduced to texts and experiences throughout their time together to understand the principles.

The principles feed into the process container created for, with and by the Community of Practice. CoP members learn to separate out what they can control (known procedures and outcomes) and what needs to be guided and nurtured (precise procedures and outcomes unknown; emergent practice). The CoP Supports the emergence of new practice and outcomes with cycles of inquiry, design and improvement methods.

**3 DLD GOALS:**  
 each would require an initial definition in the context of each district, and would become more defined over time.



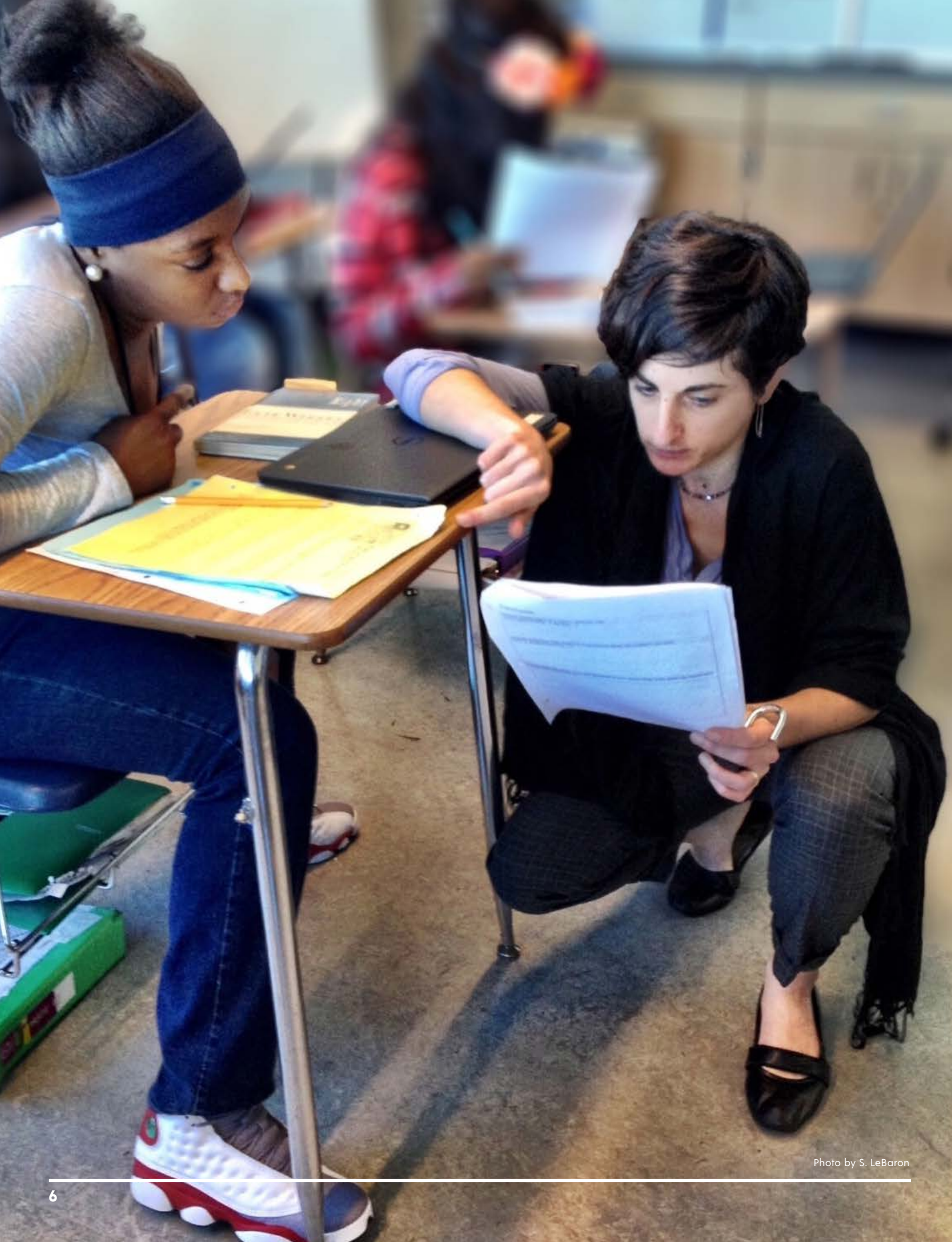


Photo by S. LeBaron

# Part 1: The Hope and Challenge

## Defining deeper learning

A community of practice is anchored by common values and aspirations. In aspiring to give all students access to deeper learning, we are aiming for all students to have **experiences that develop their mastery, identity, and creativity.**<sup>1</sup> We are not precious about these particular descriptors but we do find that they capture what others describe as important in contemporary education. Mastery entails a grasp of core disciplinary knowledge, as well as of the capacities of critical thinking and reasoning, problem solving, communication - including listening - collaboration, and digitally-based learning.<sup>2</sup> Identity entails the development of character as well as self-efficacy, agency, and motivation.<sup>3</sup> It also encompasses the ways in which students see themselves in what they are learning, and feel seen and heard in the classroom - factors that also contribute to academic achievement.<sup>4</sup> We see creativity as a disposition and practice relevant to all the roles young people have to take up in life, as citizens, productive contributors to an economy, community and family members, and stewards of the natural environment. Creativity, as it shows up in pedagogy, provides experiential practice in developing this disposition, entails students actively creating knowledge collectively, not just receiving information passively.<sup>5</sup>

Above all, we want young people to experience learning that is **connected**. Too many students feel disconnected from their school community, from the knowledge they might develop, from each other, and from themselves. Those who are engaged in demanding tasks, working collaboratively on issues they are passionate about, and developing their own drive to extend their knowledge and skills in new ways. This is where we see mastery, identity and creativity developing together. Michael Fullan and colleagues put it this way: "What gives humans meaning in life is a strong sense of identity around a purpose or passion; creativity and mastery in relation to a valued pursuit, and connectedness with the world and others."<sup>6</sup>

It is important to note that deeper learning is not synonymous with project-based learning, student-centered learning, competency-based learning, or blended learning, all of which are modalities which can be deep or shallow in practice. Rather, our view is more of deeper learning as "timeless," as the authors of a new book, "Timeless Learning,"<sup>7</sup> suggest: many of our oldest traditions of learning, particularly learning by doing and apprenticeship, remain the most robust ways to induct a learner into the increasing complexity and depth of a field. The authors suggest another interpretation of "timeless": the messiness and boundlessness of real learning. This is what is currently destroyed by the ways we have constrained learning in order to make it conform to the requirements of a mechanistic model of schooling. But to achieve such timeless learning, by both meanings, consistently would require significant remaking of our existing systems; thus while the goals have a timeless quality to them, we also need substantial innovation and even transformation to realize them.

- 1 Jal Mehta and Sarah Fine, "The Why, What, Where, and How of Deeper Learning in American Secondary Schools," *Students at the Center Series* (Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future, 2015), <http://www.studentsatthecenter.org/sites/scl.dl-dev.com/files/The-Why-What-Where-How-121415.pdf>; Jal Mehta and Sarah Fine, *In Search of Deeper Learning: The Quest to Remake the American High School* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).
- 2 Michael Fullan, Joanne Quinn, and Joanne J. McEachen, *Deep Learning: Engage the World Change the World*, 1 edition (Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin, 2017).
- 3 Jacquelynne S. Eccles and Allan Wigfield, "Motivational Beliefs, Values, and Goals," *Annual Review of Psychology* 53, no. 1 (February 2002): 109-32, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.53.100901.135153>.
- 4 Thomas S. Dee and Emily K. Penner, "The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance: Evidence From an Ethnic Studies Curriculum," *American Educational Research Journal* 54, no. 1 (February 1, 2017): 127-66, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216677002>.
- 5 Yong Zhao, *World Class Learners: Educating Creative and Entrepreneurial Students* (Corwin Press, 2012); Bill Lucas and Ellen Spencer, *Teaching Creative Thinking: Developing Learners Who Generate Ideas and Can Think Critically* (Williston, VT: Crown House Publishing, 2017).
- 6 Fullan, Quinn, and McEachen, *Deep Learning*, 5.
- 7 Ira Socol, Pam Moran, and Chad Ratliff, *Timeless Learning: How Imagination, Observation, and Zero-Based Thinking Change Schools* (San Francisco, CA: Hoboken, NJ: Jossey Bass, 2018).

## Deep Learning in Practice: “When, if ever, is it OK to break the law?”

The atmosphere was hushed, intensely focused, and serious. Students sat in clusters of twelve, two teams debating each other and two teams judging. One at a time spoke, with calm intensity, reading their opening statements from prepared texts, making claims, citing evidence, explaining their reasoning, while others listened intently, took notes, or quietly conferred with each other, formulating their cross examination. This was their final exam, addressing the resolution: “The zero tolerance policy is a fair and effective policy for protecting the safety of students, teachers, and staff in our nation’s schools.” After the debate, students moderated a more open-ended conversation about what had come up, and how their thinking had changed as a result. This debate flowed from the essential question of Jessica Forbes’ Sophomore English class in the Public Health Academy (PHA) at Oakland High School that spring: “When, if ever, is it OK to break the law?” Earlier in the unit, students engaged with the complex text in *Sophocles’ Antigone* by participating in round-robin reading and analysis of short scenes, working in teams to translate scenes into modern English (or Oakland slang!) and performing their translated scenes, creating collages with text and images that analyzed power dynamics between characters, and discussing the significance of short passages that revealed responses to the essential question. Along the way, other essential questions emerged, such as: What is human justice? How did Creon act as a ruler? What would it be like to live in a world led by a dictatorship vs. anarchy, and what is the grey area in-between? After reading *Antigone*, and in preparation for the final debate, the class explored such public health related topics as: how to make schools safe, what is justice in school discipline policies, how much mercy is too much mercy, leniency and discretion in sentencing, systemic racism, the school to prison pipeline, and the relation in charter schools between zero tolerance and equity. Precise argumentation and probing questioning coupled with open-ended reflection led to authentic explorations by students of concepts of justice as applied to their own lived experiences.

This is the impact we want to have on learning experiences. But we know that if we want these experiences for all students, we have to focus explicitly on promoting **more equitable education outcomes**. Without intentional efforts to identify structural sources of current inequities, new pedagogical practices and their supporting systems risk perpetuating or even exacerbating inequities as they work within existing hierarchies or methods of identification, allocation, and recognition. Several recent reports on district systemic change initiatives have found that, in the absence of a systemic approach to equity, new learning opportunities are unequally distributed and actually reinforced inequity.<sup>8</sup> To aim for greater equity, teams and communities need the opportunity to build a collective understanding of what equity, inclusion, and diversity mean for them, a vision for what greater equity would mean in their context, and a set of strategies and practices to enact that vision.<sup>9</sup>

We have set out the impact we desire to have on learning and education outcomes. To do so, we have to create **changes in the discourse, processes, and structures of education systems**. The education system was built more than a century ago with a certain grammar—age-graded subjects, batch processing of students, teaching as transmission, siloed subjects, tracking and sorting students in ways that reproduced inequalities of race and class—and this grammar remains largely in place today. The system was also organized as a hierarchical bureaucracy, in which much of the power is concentrated in the (mostly male) administrative class, who are expected to direct the work of the (mostly female) practitioner class of teachers. This bureaucratic form may be appropriate for simple work but is not well-suited to the complex work of teaching. Recent efforts to introduce ideas of continuous improvement and learning organizations are fundamentally about trying to shift this bureaucratic form into a more professional one, which recognizes that teaching is complex work and thus develops a form of social organization that builds professional expertise in the practitioner class and gives them more ownership over their work. Fundamentally, though, we continue to be trapped by the past, and need

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to develop a school system of a very different form to accomplish the kind of learning that we seek for our students.

To make this more concrete, we have met few teachers, especially those who teach in low income or “at risk” communities, who do not aspire in some way or other to change the lives of their students, and by extension, to change the world. But they struggle with the knowledge that they also are part of a reproductive system, reproducing society’s values and inequities. It is thus really the case that for the most part, teachers, and others working in education, do what they do in spite of, rather than because of, the current bureaucratic system. Teachers who want to make a difference, particularly those who want to create new learning and teaching environments that are less about banking knowledge and more about engaging their students, have to work around this bureaucratic system. For their part, many district officials were former teachers and feel themselves to be impotent cogs in a machine, carrying out their daily duties as expected, but realizing, deep down, that this way of working is not creating the changes that they want. This system has specifically evolved not to be humane or just; if we want significant changes in practice, we need to change the system.

A sense of connectedness is therefore not only what we want for students. Adults are ready to rethink the patterns, processes, and structures, as well as governance and administration, of their education systems so they support a more human and humane enterprise, where the learning and the work hold a sense of connection and meaningfulness for all participants.

<sup>8</sup> National Equity Project; John Watkins et al., “Measure N Year 1 Participatory Action Research Evaluation (PARE) Final Report” (Oakland Unified School District, June 20, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> National Equity Project

<sup>10</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

# Teaching for Deeper Learning: The Evolution of the Antigone Unit

Seven years ago, Jessica Forbes joined the Public Health Academy. Since then, her teaching of Antigone has evolved over time from a traditional literature unit into one focused on larger real world issues that have specific public health implications. This transition has paralleled a transition of Ms Forbes' professional identity as well, from someone who at first self-described as an English teacher focused on literature and literacy, to an English teacher on a team of teachers working together to support the success of students who make up the PHA community (where, of course, literature and literacy are still an essential part of that success). As an English teacher, she spent both formal and informal time with her English department colleagues analyzing and developing units and lessons such as this one, time she valued and learned from. Six years ago, Ms Forbes attended her first project based learning (PBL) workshop, five days with a facilitator from BIE (Buck Institute) and her PHA team. Initially, her actual practice did not change much in response to that experience. Gradually, however, she began to spend more time working with her PHA colleagues across disciplines on public health related project based learning units. This year, she and her team took part in an intensive PBL Institute at the High Tech High Graduate School of Education, in residence for three days in February and again in May, focused on the design and implementation of a PBL unit. In part, her transition is the story of how teachers improve their practice iteratively over time; however, it is also the story of how qualitatively different changes in teachers' practices are enabled when they are provided with different visions, cultures of practice, and supporting structures. It took about twenty hours for Ms Forbes to redesign this six week unit as a PBL unit, refocus it on the essential question about breaking the law, and have the Zero Tolerance debate be the final exam. This work would be very difficult without a new master schedule at the school, which gave her longer sessions with her students and common planning time with colleagues. Equally, in pursuing her individual commitment to equitable teaching, she relied on a pathway design that provided her with a demographically mixed group of students—the students who form the Public Health Academy cohort—increasingly a close-knit community who are willing to take academic risks together.

Such meaningfulness and sense of connection is rare; this is what we hope to change.

## THE THREE GOALS OF THE DEEPER LEARNING DOZEN



1.

An overall increase in the number of deeper learning experiences for both students and adults;



2.

Increased equity of access to deeper learning experiences and outcomes of education;



3.

Supportive changes in the processes, structures, and cultures of the school district and their schools.

**These operate in mutually reinforcing ways:** each will further the other, and each is only possible with the others. We have seen what deeper learning looks like in classrooms and sometimes schools; the core motivating question for the project is how to build policies, systems, roles, and a learning culture to create this kind of learning equitably district-wide.



Photos 1 & 3 taken by Joanna Vazquez, photo 2 taken by Alcian Lindo.

# SPREADING DEEPER LEARNING: THE LIMITS OF "SCALING" AND THE NEED FOR A NEW PERSPECTIVE

How might we achieve this for more students, more of the time? For as long as there has been a notion of education as something that could be improved, reformers have been challenged by the problem of scale. Learning and teaching are "human-scale" practices, but the notion of public education seems to call for some equality of experience across populations of children. Thus no sooner has a new practice or model emerged than someone asks whether it can scale.

This notion of scale as replication implies a top-down perspective (or "seeing like a state"<sup>10</sup>) which is increasingly challenged in the field of education. Top-down reform approaches of test-based accountability, "evidence-based programming," and teacher evaluation are not generating the returns reformers hoped for.<sup>11</sup> In addition, "scaling" has a long history as being treated as a technical problem, deriving from early studies of technology transfer.<sup>12</sup> While many recognize that in fact, in education, scale is a complex adaptive challenge of spreading human learning and collective meaning-making, in actual practice and organizational systems we still seem stuck in old ways of thinking about it.

In recent years, a cluster of more "bottom-up" approaches has emerged to take the place of top-down reform, including improvement science, design thinking, and research-practice partnerships.<sup>13</sup> Rather than focusing on the generation of one-size fits all solutions and the means to incentivize districts and schools to adopt them, these methods start from the perspectives of practitioners and schools and seek to develop or adapt solutions to these contexts. This shift creates considerable new demands for district leaders to support and coordinate these local efforts.

While we are enthusiastic about this transition, in studying cases of these methods in use, we find several pieces are consistently missing. First, despite several years now of "design" being a key watchword in education, the potential for system leaders to actually redesign their structures is vanishingly small: organizational cultures, institutionalized practices, and local politics all work against any such clean-slate thinking. The best that design can do is treat these factors as "constraints" and seek to work within them. Districts therefore require additional processes for situating design

and improvement efforts within a systemic perspective and analysis, one that incorporates an understanding of power, politics, class, and racism as structural phenomena.

Secondly, these methods rely heavily on organizational routines ("the design process," "inquiry cycles," "learning walks") while remaining relatively silent on the knowledge and beliefs that leaders and practitioners need to make these routines effective in bringing about instructional change. A second addition therefore is a means to develop knowledge of equity issues, leadership, adult learning, and pedagogical approaches and their outcomes.

Finally, in order for these methods or routines to hold a prospect of transforming learning designs at scale, they would need to be embedded within and change the organizational structures of schools and district offices. As yet, we see little evidence of this occurring; these methods are primarily limited to programmatic and piecemeal implementation cycles or particular offices or teams. Successive waves of these more traditional kinds of reforms have contributed to "geological" layers of initiatives in school districts that are "serial, incoherent, and persistent," and thus profoundly impede improvement.<sup>14</sup> Advocates of the newer design and improvement approaches would agree that they are still very much figuring out what they mean for the organizational structures of districts and how they interact with schools.

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We believe that these missing pieces can only be filled by a different way of working with districts. In our approach, scale and in particular scaling, recede to the background, to be replaced by a focus on **symmetry** and **emergence**. By symmetry, we mean a parallelism between the work of adults in the system and the work we hope that teachers will do with students.<sup>15</sup> Currently, the system is characterized by symmetry between an over-emphasis on individual achievement and assessment in the classroom and individual teacher development and evaluation in districts. We are seeking much more ambitious experiences for all students, which will require different kinds of schools and learning experiences for teachers and other adults, which will in turn require different actions and roles on the part of districts. Most notably, it will require a shift in focus toward collaborative capacity building amongst educators.<sup>16</sup>

By emergence, we mean an approach to leadership and to organization, where leaders move from engineers to gardeners, helping to nurture and grow the energy and capacity in their system, and support more lateral and organic organizational forms to emerge. While these shifts in systems can and should be led and owned by practitioners, they need leaders to forge shared purpose, create the space and the resources, and offer guidance and facilitation for this new work. New approaches to leadership are needed to provide the context within which these processes and systems can develop. It is with district leaders, then, that we start.



- 11 Frederick M. Hess, *The Same Thing Over and Over: How School Reformers Get Stuck in Yesterday's Ideas* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010); Michael J. Petrilli, "NAEP 2017: America's 'Lost Decade' of Educational Progress," *edexcellence.net*, Flypaper (Thomas B. Fordham Institute) (blog), April 10, 2018, <https://edexcellence.net/articles/naep-2017-americas-lost-decade-of-educational-progress>.
- 12 Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovation* (New York: The Free Press, 1962); Ronald G. Havelock, "The Utilisation of Educational Research and Development," *British Journal of Educational Technology* 2, no. 2 (May 1, 1971): 84-98, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8535.1971.tb00552.x>.
- 13 Cynthia E. Coburn and William R. Penuel, "Research-Practice Partnerships in Education Outcomes, Dynamics, and Open Questions," *Educational Researcher* 45, no. 1 (January 1, 2016): 48-54, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X16631750>; IDEO, "Design Thinking for Educators: Toolkit v.2.0," April 2013, <https://designthinkingforeducators.com/>; Catherine Lewis, "What Is Improvement Science? Do We Need It in Education?," *Educational Researcher* 44, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 54-61, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X15570388>.
- 14 Richard Elmore, "The Strategic Turn in School Improvement" (unpublished manuscript), 5; Anthony S. Bryk and Sharon G. Rowland, "The Chicago Experiment: Enhanced Democratic Participation as a Lever for School Improvement," *Issues in Restructuring Schools* 3, no. Fall (1992): 3-8; Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn, *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems* (Corwin Press, 2015); Charles M. Payne, *So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools*, Third Printing, 2010 edition (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Education Press, 2008).
- 15 Elmore, "The Strategic Turn in School Improvement."
- 16 Michael Fullan, "Choosing the Wrong Drivers for Whole System Reform," Seminar Series Paper (Melbourne: Center for Strategic Education, April 2011).

# Part 2: The Deeper Learning Dozen Community of Practice

Below, we describe how we plan to organize our community of practice to accomplish the above goals. We initially wrote this section for the participants in the COP, but include it here thinking it might be useful to others thinking about similar goals. Appendix A provides more operational details for our COP.

The Deeper Learning Dozen is designed to foster a community of practice. We will work with small teams from twelve districts to develop their understanding of deeper learning, equity, and leadership for system change. As we build trusting relationships and common goals amongst our superintendents, we will draw upon the problems they bring forward, and the knowledge they develop, to create the focus for our nascent community of practice. As we guide them through cycles of work on these challenges, we will observe, surface, and name the knowledge and possibilities emerging and make these a new focus for the community, letting the work diversify. As and where necessary, we will foster working groups to fast-track the development of particular solutions. From there we will nurture and steward the work as much as possible in the direction of more pervasive deeper learning. All of this explicitly parallels what we hope superintendents will do in their districts.

More specifically, leaders will learn to choose where it is appropriate to "control, guide, or nurture." This involves us modeling and supporting practice that sorts things that can be controlled (i.e., technical problems) from those that cannot be controlled (i.e., most non-technical, or complex adaptive, challenges), and thus should be guided or nurtured. Always keeping the "North Star" of our three outcomes in mind, we will help districts figure out what systems of control can be built to do routine things in routine ways, so that more of their energy can focus on their own deeper learning and change.

Bill Traynor, of Lawrence Community Works, has used something similar to the control, guide, nurture approach with a range of organizations, and describes the important rules like this:

At every iteration we are reinventing. There are three considerations to be able to grow with the network:

1. **Build systems along the way to allow us to do routine things in a routine way (orientation, website, databases, [fiscal, purchasing, logistics, reporting, contracts]);**
2. **Transfer as much to [community] leaders and members as we can... Recycle learning so we don't always have to go to staff;**
3. **Ability and willingness to discard anything quickly so we can do something else.**

For those things that cannot be controlled—including, we believe, the emergent structures and practices of deeper learning—we will model how to *guide* a community of practice and nurture emergent learning and practice. We guide by facilitating the process container for the superintendents' community of practice. Initially this takes the form of specific practices that help the CoP move "from I to We," and "from Purpose to Work." These practices (which we detail in the appendix) build trusting relationships and community, and a shared sense of purpose and mission. We move then to examine participants' existing experience, knowledge, and skills needed for this work. Over time and with reflection on their practice, the CoP participants will increasingly take leadership, deciding what else they need to know and how to learn it in order to achieve the goals of the project back in their districts.

A key step in this process is to commit to using some form of an iterative, cyclical process, such as systems analysis, spirals of inquiry, or design thinking. Whichever methods the teams gravitate towards, we will ensure they include the crucial stages of:

- **listening**, becoming aware of what is already happening and the perspectives of others, the "discovery" or "empathy" phase of design thinking,
- **trying** things out, the focus on practice,
- **observing** to get feedback from the system and from each other, and
- **reflecting**, to take the time to understand what is happening and make necessary adjustments along the way.

The CoP acts to amplify the value of these cycles by feeding back ideas and reflections at each stage.

As these cycles increase across several districts, the benefit of community might manifest in one of two ways, depending on what kind of challenge districts are working on: technical or adaptive. Technical problems are those such as: what is a good format for designing extended units? Can we find a better software system for scheduling student cohorts with integrity? What procedures should we use consistently for immediate response to violent situations on campus?<sup>17</sup> For technical problem-solving, as the number of fellow "cyclists" increases, the potential for useful ideas and realizations likewise goes up. In the case of more adaptive problems (for example, how can we meet the varied needs of our learners), the solutions will require a style of leadership that fosters more problem-solving and collective ownership from the participants in each of the districts. With these adaptive problems, the central importance of local contexts makes simple transfer of technologies difficult. But even so, there will likely be many benefits to learning across contexts, as doing so expands the notions of what is possible and multiplies the social power (or network effect) of the overall effort.

As practitioners at different points in a system see others in parallel positions who are willing to explore and pioneer new practices and share what they are learning about more significant forms of change, they too will become more willing to consider new possibilities in resolving their own challenges.

To further both these effects—networked learning and social power—we will nurture the cycles and what emerges, iteratively, through our facilitation work and by creating stories and other representations of what is happening in districts. We will support leadership to transfer and share learning, spreading leadership across their districts. We will help districts iterate quickly and engage in selective abandonment as appropriate.

The central work of the community of practice therefore lies in district leadership developing an understanding of what they can control (very little) and what they cannot (most things), and then providing them with ways of developing new forms of leadership that address complexity and uncertainty. This is a significant shift for bureaucracies whose last great organizational revolution was based in modernist, instrumental notions of "measure, predict, control," as a means of improvement. But equity, deeper learning, and system change are not concepts that can be controlled from the start, measured and incentivized in the traditional ways, or for which people can be held accountable in advance, because their expression is too diverse. We believe that the way to increase these new ideas and practices, therefore, is by increasing the range of people who understand and work with them and the interconnections among those people: a community of practice with a view to creating system symmetry. In this way people can witness and experience these ideas and practices in action, and learn how to express them in a form others can learn from.

<sup>17</sup> But note that these examples of technical problem solving do not address the deliberations necessary to decide to change the bell schedule or master schedule, or what our priorities might be when we do, or how we design and implement an overall approach to violent incidents on campus (even more, work to reduce incidents of them), or how teachers work together to design and teach units and improve their practice of that teaching over time.



# DEEPER LEARNING DOZEN PRINCIPLES: EQUITY, SYMMETRY, AND EMERGENCE

A community of practice relies on developing and "stewarding" a shared body of knowledge, skills, and experiences that participants dynamically and iteratively draw and build on. The knowledge base of public education is wide and varied. Many educators will have had the experience of falling back on low-value or outdated touchstones in their professional conversations, if only because of working within systems that are designed based on many tacit, old assumptions about learning and organization, and just because they cannot be sure of any better common denominator. To promote deeper learning, equity, and system change, our community will need better touchpoints. Drawing together a variety of research on organizational and system change, as well as our own work with educators and leaders, we see three principles that are critical to building the kinds of systems that we want and need for the future:

- (In)equity is structural
- Student learning and adult learning are symmetrical
- Leadership accelerates emergence

While we have sketched two of these briefly above, each requires considerable unpacking, and we start that below. It is only a starting point, however, as the core work of the community of practice will be oriented towards exploring, understanding, internalizing, and acting on these principles. While we are confident that these principles are important, what we do not know is what a system looks like that fully embodies them. That is what we hope to find out, and enact, together.



# (In)equity is structural



A key lesson of prior education reform is that without intentional efforts to identify structural sources of current inequities, new pedagogical practices and their accompanying systems risk perpetuating or even exacerbating inequities. Equally, the deployment of design and improvement methods often reifies the concerns and perspectives of those who run the process; before they utilize any more bottom-up approach, therefore, practitioners need the opportunity to deeply interrogate and understand the structural dimensions of contemporary inequity, and to address their own experience with inequity, implicit bias, and discrimination. An understanding of the structural dimension of inequities and vision for more equitable, inclusive, and diverse learning must be the undercurrent for design and improvement efforts.

In the community of practice, we will address equity at the levels of discourse, structure, and practice. We will model equity discourse in the form of courageous conversations, allowing participants to practice language and ways to initiate conversations that need to happen at every level in the system - pervasively - and persistently over time. But discourse by itself is insufficient. So we will interrogate the structural bases of inequity, and the changes that might need to be made. Structural changes might mean changes to methods for teacher allocation, hiring, course design, advising or use of discretionary funding, or it might involve a systems analysis of school choice options and their consequences. Superintendents and their teams will identify these points through careful work with their schools and communities. Finally, at the level of what Ted Sizer referred to as the "daily graininess" of schooling, in every pedagogical interaction, there are opportunities for micro-practices that aggregate over time to give access to higher levels of engagement and achievement to students who traditionally have been the ones left out of the game.<sup>18</sup>

When an understanding and awareness of these levels remains present and acted on throughout the effort, districts stand a greater chance of reaching past surface problems and focusing on deeper leverage points in systems that produce inequities. Over time, therefore, we will aim for the districts to move from structural inequity towards more structural equity, building in more equitable expectations and interactions at the levels of discourse, structure, and practice. The box below describes more of what this might look like in practice.

18 Abdel-qawi, personal communication, 5/21/2018

## Confronting Inequity: Discourse, Structure, and Practice

Gathering as a team for the first time, the teacher leaders of five college and career pathways (academies within the larger school with a career theme, a dedicated team of teachers across traditional disciplines, and cohorts of students) at Oakland High School were not prepared to grapple with the racial, socioeconomic, and achievement inequities that existed across their pathways. Their pathways had existed in a kind of "Wild West" of subtle, and not-so-subtle, competition for resources and higher performing students for years; there was not a culture, nor any collaborative practice, supporting an effort to create a schoolwide system of pathways that addressed any of these challenges. The Principal spoke to the team, stating unequivocally his vision for an equitable approach to ensuring that "all OHigh Scholars would have access to all the pathways, and be supported to be successful in those pathways." One of the authors of this paper, John Watkins, was working as a Pathway Coach at OHigh at that time. He presented the team with data from district dashboards showing the ethnic, gender, and GPA/ performance distributions across the pathways. A tumultuous conversation ensued. There was not yet an agreed on set of norms for this kind of discourse, nor was there any shared sense that balancing the demographics of the pathways was in the best interest of several of the pathways, who had spent years aggressively recruiting, and even "poaching" from other pathways, higher performing Asian students. There was not much trust in those first few meetings, and lots of conflict. The Principal and the Coach persisted; eventually, most of the leaders agreed to figure out a way to balance the demographics so that slowly over several years they would approach the same profile as the overall school, and still allow for a recruitment, choice, and selection process that acknowledged student interest. They began their journey toward a collaborative process to achieve that goal.

Four years later, the Pathway Leaders' meeting occurs regularly on a bi-weekly basis, and has moved from a contentious experience that the leaders did not relish, to a genial and effective leadership body that oversees all aspects of a wall-to-wall pathway school. One of the more successful processes they were able to lead was the restructuring of the master schedule. That restructuring made it possible to create student cohort integrity and weekly common planning time for teachers in pathway teams, as well as ninety minute blocks for instruction. Building on the growth of their human collective capacity, systems are now in place to "do routine things in routine ways," but always on a foundation of regularly renewed trust and agreements about participation, and with the equity vision still front and center.

Recently, the Principal reflected, "I don't think we have yet achieved the equity vision we intended." John asked why, given that the pathways are now almost exactly balanced to the overall school profile. "Yes," the Principal responded, "But that's just diversity and inclusion; we are still not giving all our Scholars equitable access to what they need to be academically successful." And thus begins the deeper conversation, beyond discourse and structure, into the question of the "micro-pedagogies" that welcome students in and give them access to an academic culture, and the tools, strategies, and knowledge they need for success in that culture. How the school might address this larger question of adult learning culture and shared standards of practice remains to be seen.

For changes in discourse, structure, and practice to really lead to different kinds of student learning experiences, however, there will need to be concomitant change in the way that teachers are supported to design and engage in instruction. This brings us to our second principle:

## Student learning and adult learning are symmetrical



This principle faces two ways: it both describes a core problem of current systems and proposes a potential driver for improvement. The core problem is this: because student learning and adult learning are symmetrical, much of what students currently experience in classrooms is a reflection of what adults have experienced. Given that the system was set up on a model of teaching as transmission, most of what teachers themselves experienced as students was heavily teacher-directed, and many teachers replicate this in their own classrooms,<sup>19</sup> unless efforts are made to uncover the tacit assumptions embedded in these experiences. Further, much of what teachers experience in their professional education and development is similarly miserable: learning opportunities are triggered by a bureaucratic imperative as opposed to a personal or community need; they are shown new things but rarely have an opportunity to practice new things with support over time; and compliance is rewarded over creativity. The proposal for a potential driver for improvement then is that were adults to have different experiences, this, too, could be reflected in the kinds of experiences they create for their students.

Above, we introduced Richard Elmore's notion of "system symmetry:" that the instructional core cannot improve without parallel change at other levels of an education system. We see this as particularly relevant in the case of deeper learning: if superintendents want deeper learning for their students they have to experience it too, and then find ways to support deeper learning experiences for their principals and teachers. Fullan goes one step further and argues that systemic improvement cannot occur unless we focus on the collective capacity building of adults to engage together in complex learning, so that they can then create complex learning environments for their students.<sup>20</sup>

In our community of practice, we will model system symmetry by creating opportunities for superintendents to experience designs for both student and adult deeper learning. The community of practice must be a model for the learning culture and practices that superintendents can create with their educators, and which their educators can in turn create with their students and wider communities. To enable this symmetry, we will make explicit all that we do and why we are doing it as we are doing it, in a form of "triple track" facilitation, coaching, and teaching.<sup>21</sup> Triple track facilitation, described in the "Tiny Writing" box, is a facilitation method that asks the adults to participate in a metacognitive process of reflecting on how the facilitator is supporting their learning, while modeling how they might support other adult learning, all the while using methods that can be translated into good pedagogy in the classroom with students.

<sup>19</sup> Dan C. Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Fullan, "Choosing the Wrong Drivers for Whole System Reform"; Fullan and Quinn, *Coherence*.

<sup>21</sup> Garmston & Wellman, *The Adaptive School: Developing and Facilitating Collaborative Groups*, 2000; Frazier & Mehle, *Activators: Classroom Strategies for Engaging Middle and High School Students*, Nicole Frazier and Donna Mehle, *Engaging Schools*, 2013; Carol Miller Lieber, *Getting Classroom Management Right: Guided Discipline and Personalized Support in Secondary Schools*, *Engaging Schools*, 2009.

## Teacher Collaborative Practice: Tiny Writing for Argument Building

"Tiny writing is connected to tiny reading, so if we look at all the meaning in a very tiny chunk of text, if we look at the key terms and unpack them, it will help us improve our writing as well." Jessica Forbes was presenting her "Tiny Writing" 90-minute demo lesson as part of a four week invitational summer institute that the Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP) sponsors each summer. Eighteen teachers, two BAWP facilitators, and two additional teacher-facilitators participated. The BAWP Teaching Demo is based on the belief that "a primary source of knowledge about the teaching of writing originates in the classrooms of successful teachers." The Summer Institute teaching demonstrations were designed "to tap that knowledge" and give groups of fellow teachers the opportunity to discuss problems or questions that had arisen in their teaching of writing.

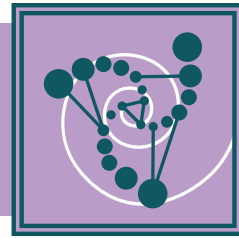
Ms Forbes was following a "triple track agenda": an approach that asks participating teachers to think about how the demo lesson provides: 1) Strategies to support your learning here in this room; 2) Ways of keeping adults engaged and tuned in at other presentations or meetings; and, 3) Applications for working with your students. To structure her presentation, Ms Forbes used slides and activities that she had used with her students, and inserted slides for the "meta-level" activities and discussions among the teacher participants, so they got both the student experience and the teacher collaborative experience of the Institute intermixed.

After introducing the topic, she had the teachers immediately dive into an experience with analyzing the Whitman quote, "I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey work of the stars." She explained "tiny writing," and modeled with them unpacking a key term that they chose from the quote. She next set the context for the lesson: a unit on Cross Cultural Medicine in the Oakland High School Public Health Academy. She led them in the same "entry event" (a PBL term for how to start a unit by "hooking" students) her students had experienced for that unit: "graffiti stems." The activity consisted of quotes of Hmong people's experiences in the Merced County Medical Center on posters taped up around the walls. The teachers set to work for a busy 10 minutes, during which time they chose key terms from the posters and wrote on them an explanation for why they chose that term.

The teachers next did a Think-Pair-Share (as had her students), with an emphasis on thinking first, and then discussing several questions that were content-related, and several that were skill-based, related to the quotes. She then facilitated a whole group discussion about their thoughts.

Several more iterations focused on how she supported her students to grapple collaboratively with the complex text in *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, the anchor text for the Cross Cultural Medicine unit. After each experience, the group backed out to a meta-level analysis of the teachers' experience. Ms Forbes ended her demo lesson by asking the teachers to debrief the whole lesson, again referring to the idea of the "triple track agenda."

# Leadership accelerates emergence



This principle is the most dense but perhaps the most important. Emergence is a broad term that can hide many sins. But we have become convinced that understanding and nurturing it is fundamental to any hope of significant and lasting change in school districts. Creating the contexts for deeper learning across systems requires many types of change that must come from many different people: change in what people know, what they can do, and what they prioritize. The full realization of a different learning experience for students occurs unpredictably when these changes interact, iterate, and reach a tipping point in a particular context. This is how emergence operates through social learning and social networks, one central process in complex adaptive change.

## adrienne maree brown's principles of Emergent Strategy

- Small is good, small is all. (The large is a reflection of the small.)
- Change is constant. (Be like water.)
- There is always enough time for the right work.
- There is a conversation in the room that only these people at this moment can have. Find it.
- Never a failure, always a lesson.
- Trust the people. (If you trust the people, they become trustworthy.)
- Move at the speed of trust. Focus on critical connections more than critical mass - build the resilience by building the relationships.
- Less prep, more presence.
- What you pay attention to grows.

Likewise, the structures necessary to support deeper learning environments and practices are an unknown that must emerge from the change in knowledge, capabilities, and priorities of district teams. We do not know exactly when or how this will occur but we do know it is more likely when district teams have the opportunities to see and experience a wide range of different approaches, to reflect on what they see, and to discuss and make sense of their work together. We will use inquiry cycles and continuous improvement processes to create the kinds of feedback necessary to enable emergence to produce new and unpredictable results.

By opening and holding this space we believe that the real potential of the new design and improvement methods can break through. This is not just a matter of chance, however. This is where leadership comes in. Superintendents must develop the kind of leadership necessary to name and nurture emergent properties. This means the capacity to co-ordinate and make meaning with others out of the complex processes of interdependent change that will be required to realize deeper learning across a district.<sup>22</sup> The field now has the knowledge of the type of leadership required to do this: leadership that is adaptive, and that can hold multiple interpretations of what is happening at any given time<sup>23</sup> – that spends as much time understanding how a system is operating as trying to impact that system – and so leadership that is oriented to listening.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Michael Fullan, *Leading in a Culture of Change* (Wiley, 2001); Andy Hargreaves and Dean Fink, "Sustaining Leadership," *Phi Delta Kappan* 84, no. 9 (May 1, 2003): 693–700, <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170308400910>; Linda Lambert, "How to Build Leadership Capacity," *Educational Leadership* 55, no. 7 (1998): 17–19.

<sup>23</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz, Martin Linsky, and Alexander Grashow, *Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World: A Fieldbook for Practitioners*, 1 edition (Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press, 2009); David Snowden, "Multi-Ontology Sense Making: A New Simplicity in Decision Making," *Journal of Innovation in Health Informatics* 13, no. 1 (2005): 45–53, <https://doi.org/10.14236/jhi.v13i1.578>; David J. Snowden and Mary E. Boone, "A Leader's Framework for Decision Making," *Harvard Business Review* 85, no. 11 (November 2007): 68–76, 149.

<sup>24</sup> Shane Safir, *The Listening Leader: Creating the Conditions for Equitable School Transformation* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2017).

## Leadership in Complex Adaptive Systems: God is in the Relationships

The new principal at Oakland High School, Matin Abdel-qawi, arrived after seven previous principals in an equal number of years had left the staff with a great deal of mistrust of leadership. It didn't help that despite a core of highly skilled teachers with a strong commitment to equity and social justice, OHigh was known in the community as a low performing and dangerous school. Mr. Abdel-qawi acted quickly to engage staff in improving instruction and changing the conditions that affected OHigh's reputation and reality. When Mr. Abdel-qawi arrived, OHigh was poised to grow its existing California Partnership Academies to a wall-to-wall pathway system over the course of the next six years, as part of the district's Linked Learning College and Career Pathways redesign effort. Abdel-qawi knew that the existing six period bell schedule neither supported that wall-to-wall goal, nor effectively provided the opportunities for many students to complete the required "A-G" college preparatory course sequence. He began discussions with staff to change to an eight period alternating A-B ninety minute block schedule. Staff revolted and used the union contract to block his efforts. Regrouping, Abdel-qawi realized he had acted as if the master schedule was a technical change, not a complex adaptive challenge. He began the second year of his tenure meeting with teacher leaders, and found ways to support dialogue and discussion of the current situation at OHigh and how it did and didn't support their scholars' success. He sent teachers to visit schools and districts with successful pathways or academies, and different kinds of schedules. He encouraged those with a range of different views on the schedule to research those views and present to the assembled faculty.

Above all, he became more humble, and adopted a listening stance and strategy. Sitting in staff meetings, he would listen as opposing groups presented their claims and evidence, and he would ask clarifying and probing questions. A culture of animated but respectful dialogue grew. A slow consensus began to emerge. Abdel-qawi decided to have the faculty vote, even though a careful analysis of the union contract revealed that a vote was not required for the change in schedule that was being debated. The vote narrowly achieved the two-thirds majority that would have been required if it had been a union contract issue. Then the preparations began for teachers to work together to figure out how to redesign their teaching, units, and lessons to "teach in the block;" initially many struggled, sometimes trying to "squeeze two lessons from the old fifty minute periods into the new ninety minute block." However, two years later, most teachers, and most students, will say that the shift has made a major change in the depth to which they can go in their teaching and learning, and has created a more calm and focused experience for students. Cohort integrity of students in each pathway, impossible to achieve before the schedule change, makes integrated projects along industry themes possible, as well as creating a close-knit family feeling within pathways that helps students to feel seen and safe, and willing to take more risks academically. Teachers have regular weekly common planning time in their pathway teams. A recent suggestion by the district that this schedule is "too expensive" has met with a uniformly negative response. OHigh is committed to this new "grammar of schooling."

This leadership notices what is emerging, names it, protects those pioneering emergent innovation, interconnects and networks innovators, and champions the work.<sup>25</sup> This kind of leadership is rare but can be learned.<sup>26</sup> Individuals can learn to see systems, and to listen, inquire, act, and observe interchangeably through modeling, observation, practice, discussion, and collective reflection.<sup>27</sup> In line with the principle of symmetry, as superintendents learn in new ways, they can reflect this in the ways they work with their teams, principals, and teachers, developing distributed, adaptive leadership across their system. If "command and control" is one way of doing things, we see leading for emergence as the alternative.

Emergence is a story in motion. While folks like Ron Heifetz and Margaret Wheatley sketch some early versions of related ideas more than 20 years ago now, it has only been more recently that we have started to get more concrete on how one might actually apply these ideas in practice. And the ideas of leading to accelerate emergence have rarely been applied to education, especially at the system level. Thus exploring this would be something really new for our field, and exactly how it works is something we will figure out as we go. We see this as an exciting approach to leadership, to change, and even to organization in the educational sphere.

Emergence happens, then, when adults interact together in, and networked across, communities of practice, engaging in inquiry, learning, and iterations of emergent new practice. Adaptive and visionary leadership spreads across the system to listen, hold the tensions between what we value and what we experience,<sup>28</sup> guide these communities of practice, and nurture what is emerging. As the concentration and community of like-minded practitioners passionately committed to innovating new practice in their context, and connected in networks, increases, the potential for emergence of new practices and structures increases exponentially.<sup>29</sup>

25 Peggy Holman, *Engaging Emergence: Turning Upheaval into Opportunity* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010); Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze, "Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale" (The Berkana Institute, 2006).  
26 Sharon D. Parks, *Leadership Can Be Taught: A Bold Approach for a Complex World*, 1 edition (Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press, 2005).  
27 National Equity Project. <http://nationalequityproject.org/>  
28 Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994).  
29 Williamson R. Murray and Allan R. Millett, eds., *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, New Ed edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Herman Wagter and Jean M. Russell, *Cultivating Flows: How Ideas Become Thriving Organizations* (Axminster, England: Triarchy Press, 2016); Linda Kaser and Judy Halbert, "Teachers Leading Reform through Inquiry Learning Networks: A View from British Columbia," in *Teachers Leading Educational Reform*, ed. Alma Harris, Michelle Jones, and Jane B. Huffman, 1 edition (London ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 32-50; Catherine McGregor, "Inquiry, Networks & Catalytic Impacts," *Radical Hope: A Blog about Learning* (blog), March 23, 2018, <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/radicalhope/2018/03/23/inquiry-networks-catalytic-impacts/>.



# Bringing it all together

We see our three principles and three goals operating together as a triple helix: no single principle can achieve any one of the goals, but when all three principles are enacted, and the work is guided and nurtured with explicit attention to processes that are designed to hold the space for it, all three goals should be furthered, as illustrated in our Theory of Change below. And, part of the role of a facilitator of the kind of community of practice we envision is that we must be humble about what might emerge, while clearly standing for what we believe in and value, for who we are. Our collective practice must have at the core of its being a deeply shared passion and commitment to transformation of the educational system to make it more equitable as it enables deep learning for all. We must create that community with the sense of urgency that our passion requires, yet we must also nurture an atmosphere of "unassuming expectation," as Ted Sizer referred to it. Urgency must be balanced with supporting the community to form and engage in its challenging work "at the speed of trust."<sup>30</sup>

Returning to an earlier motif in this paper, what we seek is "timeless learning," being in the flow of a passionate exploration of what is emerging and being nurtured into being. To do that we must be able to focus on facilitating the exploration and learning of what it means to enact into our collective practice the three principles that we believe will make a difference, though not, as the French aphorism says, "to lean so firmly on them that they collapse under you," and so be open to finding others along the way. We also deeply believe that Margaret Wheatley was right when she said that to heal a system, we must connect the system to more of itself. Part of the implication of that is a steadfast commitment to diversity of participation in our enterprise, to multiple experiences and perspectives, and to multiple ways of knowing, if it is to have the capacity for anything other than replication of the old. Yet diversity by necessity brings tension and conflict as learning happens and new possibilities emerge. Thus, we must be able to hold the space in the disequilibrium that arises as new learning emerges through the friction of conflict, and the feedback of practice. This is emergent strategy.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen M. R. Covey and Rebecca R. Merrill, *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything* (Simon and Schuster, 2006); brown, *Emergent Strategy*.

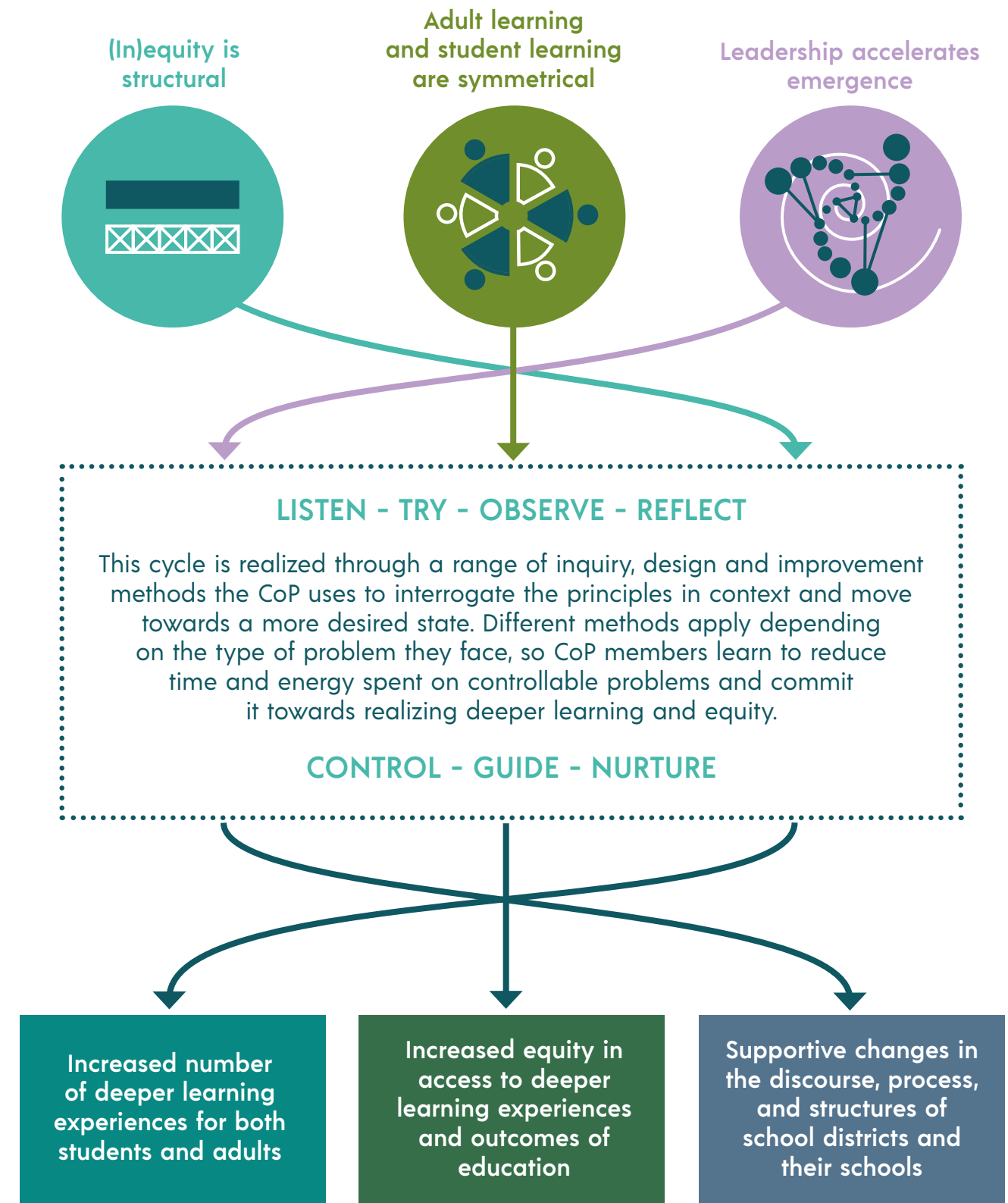
**3 DLD Principles:**  
the work of the CoP is all orientated towards understanding, internalizing and acting on these principles. SDs are introduced to texts and experiences throughout their time together to understand the principles.

The principles feed into the process container created for, with and by the Community of Practice. CoP members learn to separate out what they can control (known precedures and outcomes) and what needs to be guided and nurtured (precise procedures and outcomes unknown; emergent practice). The CoP Supports the emergence of new practice and outcomes with cycles of inquiry, design and improvement methods.

**3 DLD GOALS:**  
each would require an initial definition in the context of each district, and would become more defined over time.

# Our Theory of Change

## DEEPER LEARNING THEORY OF CHANGE



# Appendix: The Details

In accordance with our principles, the precise activity of the CoP is heavily contingent on the contexts and learning needs of the superintendents, their teams and communities. But in order to make our intentions and assumptions explicit, we describe below key knowledge inputs, "anchor practices," and outputs of the CoP, which form a skeleton and catalyst for the activities. We arrange these in terms of the three focal areas for the work: maintaining a sense of direction, developing adult capacity (the motor of change), and institutionalizing change through the creation of new structures and cultures.

## 1. Direction: a shared sense of mission, and vision

*To shape and focus their activity, districts need to have a clear sense of **what** they are trying to change and **why**, and **how** they will know when the right kind of change is happening.*

Importantly, this applies on two levels: across the CoP, among the superintendents and their teams, and within each district, with their principals, teachers, students, and community.

Outputs from a focused Direction might take the form of:

- Vision documents;
- Theory(ies) of change;
- Success indicators;
- New metrics (things that can be monitored or assessed) - replace "curriculum" with collective and emergent learning, "scaling" of innovations with growth of the human networks and embedded knowledge and skill, "outcomes" with impact on adult and student lives; using enhanced qualitative measures, formative in nature, emergent in practice;
- Evaluation plans that include design, implementation, and impact evaluations.

There is a small number of key inputs the community will need to develop a realizable direction committed to deeper learning. We will provide these "seeds for a vision" in the form of:

- Models of what it means to be committed to equity persistently and pervasively across a system;
- Manifestations and theories of deeper learning (for adults as well as students);
- Knowledge of how system change happens in human systems, including theories of emergence, coherence, system symmetry, social learning, social networks, and complex adaptive systems;
- Action research and assessment tools to translate a vision into a method for observing and capturing progress in a complex systems context.

To develop and maintain a sense of shared sense of direction is ongoing work. We will support this activity with several key anchor practices (activities, arrangements, and logistics designed to connect people to the purpose and intentions of the community):

- Working on what is "below the green line" - where most organizational change is directed by a focus on "structure, pattern, and process," our community of practice will also learn how to focus on "identity, information, and relationships." To facilitate this we will use a range of activities to develop the human systems in organizations and to learn collectively how to do this work, including ways to move "From I to We" and "From Purpose to Work";
- Journey Mapping exercises to map districts' experiences with change efforts over time (beginnings of efforts, "critical incident" mapping, processes, engagement of key actors and partners, initiatives over time, etc.);
- Roadmapping to map anticipated theories of action/ theories of change conceptually, causally, sequentially, and over time;
- Accordion design - the use of smaller and larger teams - fostering intimacy and confidentiality to create a space where superintendents and their immediate teams can grapple with difficult truths and ideas, and also promoting the purposeful inclusion and expanded involvement of others from the district and community at key moments for meaning making and developing direction;
- Working with "nested communities" - developing communities of practice, communities of engagement, and communities of interest in each context to enable organic scaling - growth of "nodes" of practice and networks across those - as practitioners are brought into the fold.

## 2. A motor: the means to develop adult collaborative capacity

*Systemic change in education relies on adults being able to think, believe, and do new things. Districts cannot rely only on the capacity of the adults who already understand, believe in, and can support deeper learning; leaders will need to create the conditions to spread this to more adults.*

The development of adult capacity will be observable in terms of these emergent outputs:

- Structures and systems to provide regular collaborative learning opportunities ("above the green line" processes, patterns, and structures), such as peer to peer sharing, coaching, mentoring, "critical friendship," iterative design and inquiry cycles;
- Increased prioritization and utilization of time and resources that support adult learning;
- Quality of collaborative adult learning capacity as assessed on various team development rubrics.

We will provide these inputs to help achieve the development of adult capacity:

- Knowledge building activities to help understand adult learning;
- Knowledge of key ingredients for building a culture of learning;
- Introductions to processes for supporting ongoing learning: inquiry cycles, action research, and lateral learning networks.

The anchor practices of the CoP that will particularly support the development of adult capacity are:

- Going "below the green line" to focus on identity, information, and relationships, building knowledge and trust within the community of practice to tackle the most difficult problems of collaborative capacity building;
- Triple track facilitation – in the way that we facilitate the CoP, we will model how to create a learning community oriented towards developing new leadership and learning practice, so that through their participation in the CoP, Superintendents are developing ideas and practices for how to support their own adult learning system;
- Making practice public – modeling ways to share, and provide "critical friends" feedback on, practice within a community and across lateral learning networks.

## 3. Structure and culture: the means to institutionalize new practices

*To support and sustain systemic change, districts will need to work out what district- and school-level structures (policies, roles, rules, regulations, curricula, tools and guidance) need to be created, changed, or scrapped. As outlined above, structural features typically represent entrenched power imbalances, interests, or inequities within a context, and thus if they are not interrogated, challenged, and changed, new system change efforts or practices tend to regress to the status quo.*

What structural changes support deeper learning and equity is the current "unknown" of this work. While we cannot therefore specify outputs of this focus, we can describe what kind of activities districts would need to instigate to create these structures:

- A process for educators who are engaged in collaborative work with new practices to reflect on and feed back on their needs, challenges, and results that relate to the presence or absence of structures to institutionalize their new practices;
- Time and a process for teams of educators (and potentially community members, students and external designers, legal advisors, or technical assistance providers) to work on new designs, and reflect on new implementations;
- Access to design support or other external expertise that can help with the creation of practices, arrangements, settings, and tools that are functional and sustainable.

To achieve this, as inputs we will provide:

- Guidance on selecting, introducing, and supporting processes such as design thinking and inquiry cycles, through which educators can feedback and synthesize ideas;

- Guidance on selecting, introducing, and supporting processes for creating new educational pedagogies, practices, tools, and structures, such as Co-Design and Design-Based Implementation Research (DBIR), backward mapping cycles of instructional design and revision, unit and lesson study, peer observation and feedback, the examination of student work as a method of reflection and improvement, etc;
- Access and support in selecting external support partners through the CoP.

The anchor practices of the CoP that will particularly support this:

- Explicit feedback loops: we will create spaces and processes for superintendents to express their successes, challenges, and needs to us, and for their staff to express their successes, challenges, and needs to them, creating the context for emergent organization around key issues. We can then focus activities on the structural issues that emerge as key stumbling blocks – for example, if districts are struggling with governance issues, teacher contracts, student information systems or transportation, we will support working groups to develop short-term and long-term solutions – "develop routine systems to do routine things; release energy and resources to support emergent new practices;"
- Rapid prototyping: we will support superintendents to try things out as early as possible and get feedback, discovering the social, emotional, and logistical pitfalls that have to be overcome when making significant changes to educational systems and practice. The earlier we locate the real challenges the more effective our work can be;
- Resource collation: we will curate a website with the key inputs and anchor practices that are used within the community of practice, as well as examples of use as they emerge. This will be a growing resource which feeds back in as an input for our community.

The knowledge collection also represents a key impact of the work: a collection of new visions, theories of change, success indicators and metrics, and ingredients for a new learning culture. We believe this would be a valuable resource for other superintendents who wish to work towards systemic change for deeper learning.



## 4. The nature of the activity – how the Community of Practice will work together

### TIMINGS

- An initial three-year timespan and commitment;
- 3 convenings a year (located at Harvard in the fall, British Columbia in February, and California in the spring or early summer);
- Meetings of 2 1/2 days (plus an additional half a day for travel time);
- Attended by three representatives from each district, including the superintendent;
- Opportunity to extend convenings by 1 1/2 days for working group meetings on specific subjects (conditional on additional, topic-specific funding).

### MEETING ACTIVITIES AND TYPICAL CONVENING STRUCTURE

The meetings will initially focus on creating the core experience of the community of practice, to enable a collective exploration of the Three Principles and the Three Goals of the project, emerging what we know and need to know, and developing our collective "will, skill, knowledge, and capacity" to engage with that focus. We will design specific activities together with the Superintendents to ensure that we are meeting their authentic needs; however, we imagine that we will divide our time in each 2 ½ day convening among:

1. Activities to bring the team together, acknowledging our individual and collective identities, building trusting relationships, continuing to develop the deep meaning making connections "below the green line;"
2. Immersive experiential deeper learning explorations (some kind of proxy for directly experiencing a deeper learning classroom, or unit, or lesson), with reflection using the "triple track" agenda approach;
3. Equity readings and practices to explore equity discourse, equity structures, and equity pedagogy;
4. One deep dive at each convening into one of the areas we will have identified for our long term learning and growth (emergent, but probably around the Three Principles, the Three Goals, and the Processes for doing the work);
5. Sharing emerging practices;
6. Coaching each other or doing protocols on current issues and challenges in our leadership and learning in our districts; and,
7. Planning and reflection time for each district team.

In subsequent meetings, we would increase the focus on:

- Updating roadmapping to take account of ongoing learning and journey mapping to understand development and progress over time, and as communication vehicles to share experience between districts;

- Mutual giving of feedback (e.g., "critical friends" protocols), where possible based on site visits;
- Site visits in response to identified learning needs not available within the community. These will be very carefully organized, prepared for, engaged in, and debriefed to ensure they are focused and efficient, more than just enjoyable provocations, and fulfill specific purposes.

### BETWEEN MEETINGS

Between meetings, we will provide, so that the districts can engage in the concerted activity necessary to support this work:

- A 1/4 time consultant to provide in-person support (1 consultant per cluster of 4 districts). Consultants will act as a coach or critical friend as necessary to support each superintendent and their team on the adaptive leadership work of separating out what to "control, guide, or nurture," developing their, and their team's, capacity to be listening and learning leaders;
- Online consulting sessions: districts will take part in video conferences with the DLD core team and 2+ other district participants who will provide feedback on central challenges or key design issues they are facing. The frequency and size of consulting sessions will be decided by the community, but would be no fewer than two per year, with two respondent DLD member districts present;
- A knowledge collection: a curated website with key knowledge, resources, and emerging examples, and space for member interaction around those resources;
- Working groups: as work develops and foci emerge, we will curate working groups, providing initial facilitation and accountability;
- Option for an online course for members of the district to learn about deeper learning (if interested);
- Reading groups to interrogate particular texts introduced to the CoP (if interested).

Between meetings, we expect districts to engage in comparable activities to the work we do in the community of practice together, namely, activities that set Direction, provide a Motor for change, and institutionalize change through the creation of new Structures and Cultures:

Set and champion a vision, or enhance an existing vision, consistent with the three Goals, and the three Principles, of the Deeper Learning Dozen;

Develop their capacity as listening and learning leaders, who know what they can control, and who are able to provide guidance and nurturing for the more complex, adaptive challenges, and model and encourage that kind of leadership pervasively across their adult professional culture;

"Mirror," or create "symmetrical" systems (or expand existing systems) of adult learning in their districts, modeled after our emergent community of practice and network, expanding from innovators, to early adopters, to engaged others, to the broader community of interested stakeholders;

Support the use of various cycles of inquiry, design, and/or improvement, as "motors" for change, and including in those cycles, phases of listening, trying, observing, and reflecting;

Share emergent practices; raise problems of practice to connect within and across districts to address (possibly a source for topics for cross-district working groups); connect people in networks; assess progress; celebrate successes.



