The Dissertation in Practice at Western University

8-29-2019

# HOW PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS BUILD PRINCIPAL CAPACITY FOR INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

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How Principal Supervisors Build Principal Capacity for Instructional Leadership


by

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AN ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION


LONDON, ONTARIO

AUGUST 29, 2019

**Abstract**

The purpose of this Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) is to assist districts, specifically senior educators, in utilizing practices designed to improve the capacity of principals for instructional leadership related to deep learning. This OIP is built on a theory of action that recognizes that principals play a critical role in creating the conditions for teachers and students to learn in meaningful ways. Under certain conditions, central office staff have a positive mediating role in enhancing principal instructional leadership and ultimately student learning. It is the premise of this OIP that when principal supervisors establish learning focused partnerships with principals, they increase the likelihood that principals will effectively impact teacher practice and create the conditions for students to learn at high levels. Building learning focused partnerships primarily involves creating communities of practice (CoPs) between principals and supervisors as well as among principals and teachers. This process is undergirded by the co-creation of leadership standards that serve as benchmarks for effective instructional leadership practice. Adaptive and distributed leadership approaches are utilized in response to this problem of practice and drive the implementation plan which focuses on reshaping the roles and practice of principal supervisors to make it possible for them to deepen adult and student learning.

*Keywords*: instructional leadership, principal supervisor, communities of practice, adaptive leadership, distributed leadership, complexity theory, emergence, social learning theory, organizational learning theory.

**Executive Summary**

Education systems around the world are being called upon to modernize their approaches to keep pace with the rapidly changing world. Globalization and dramatic technological advances have accelerated the need for school districts to provide students with the skills to thrive in a world where knowledge is no longer controlled by educators. The core of this response has been the development of 21$^{st}$ century skills, often referred to as *deep learning* (Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, 2018; Mehta & Fine, 2019). This is a significant pedagogical shift which the province of British Columbia has undertaken by redesigning its curriculum in response to their aspirations to develop the *educated citizen* (BC Ministry of Education, 2018).

The purpose of this Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) is to investigate how principal supervisors in one British Columbia school district might work to resolve the challenges associated with fulfilling the goals of this ambitious change effort. The primary goal of the curricular change is to ensure that students demonstrate the knowledge, competencies and dispositions embedded in the re-designed curriculum. In order to realize these goals, teachers must have the knowledge and skills to successfully implement the curriculum. Principals play a key role in teacher learning as they are critical shapers of school culture and the conditions under which teachers learn (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Depending on how they are positioned, principal supervisors can play a key role in shaping how principals learn. The problem of practice therefore relates to the orientation that senior level principal supervisors take as they work with principals to implement approaches intended to improve teacher capacity and deep learning at scale.

Chapter 1 provides an outline of the organizational context of Central Valley School District (CVSD) and the multiple factors that shape the problem of practice in this setting. This

chapter also outlines how complexity, organizational learning and social learning theories influence the manner in which principal supervisors influence the conditions under which principals learn. The problem of practice is presented in greater detail, along with an analysis of critical components of organizational readiness.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to planning the organizational change. Specifically, this chapter outlines how transformational, adaptive and distributed leadership practices drive the practice of principal supervisors as they endeavour to enhance principal practice. Change models rooted in emergent and social learning theories are utilized to explain how principal supervisors can lead the change effort within the district. A community of practice (CoP) approach is presented as a promising solution to resolve the problem of practice. This chapter also provides an analysis of the critical organizational structures and processes which need to change in order to secure the intended outcomes. Key features of the proposed solutions are identified, as well as the ethical considerations associated with implementing them.

The solutions contemplated in Chapter 2 are consolidated into a detailed implementation plan in Chapter 3. This plan captures the specific actions that supervisors will take to develop principal capacity for deep learning in their schools. More specifically, the implementation plan outlines how CoPs will be initiated and deployed, and how their progress will be monitored and evaluated in such a way as to deepen leadership practice in support of student learning. This chapter also includes a multi-faceted communication strategy designed to engage multiple stakeholders within the district by capitalizing upon the critical approaches of adaptive and distributed leadership. Chapter 3 concludes with an overview of key next steps in the transformation effort, and also outlines important areas for further study.

**Acknowledgements**

It has been a running joke for the last three years that the entire six-member senior team in my district has also been completing their doctoral studies. The truth is that this work has been very real not just for me, but for our entire district. It has been so because I have been privileged to work with a very talented and committed group of educators who were willing to accompany me on this journey, and to apply the many principles we have encountered along the way. I am therefore indebted to them for their willingness to live the vision of symmetry we have just begun to understand.

My mother, who passed away during the course of my studies, has been the most significant influence in my life, teaching me about the value of hard work and perseverance. She will forever be my inspiration. I also wish to dedicate this to our two children, Keenan and Aniya, for whom we have endeavoured to model the importance of lifelong learning from the day they came into our lives.

Finally, I am forever thankful to my wife of thirty-two years, Leah, who agreed to put our lives on hold for these past three years. She continues to teach me more each day about love and sacrifice.

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**Acronyms**

CoP (Community of Practice)

CVSD (Central Valley School District)

BCPVPA (British Columbia Principals and Vice-principals Association)

BCSSA (British Columbia Superintendents Association)

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM**

**Organizational Context**

This section of the Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) provides a brief history of Central Valley School District, paying attention to its overarching mission and vision, situated within the context of recent changes to provincial educational policy. This contextual picture provides a useful backdrop for the problem of practice related to the challenge of principal supervisors effectively engaging the principals they support to implement the board's strategic plan and the redesigned provincial curriculum. This chapter also outlines key perspectives which help to further frame the specific challenges outlined in this OIP. A leadership-focused vision for change is presented and lays the groundwork for an organizational change readiness framework which assesses how change leaders might commence the work of resolving the specified problem of practice.

Central Valley School District (CVSD) is a moderately sized and growing suburban district in British Columbia enrolling approximately twenty thousand students in over forty schools.  The district encompasses the city of Ramsay which is a suburb of a major metropolitan centre. With a population over 120,000, the city is one of the most ethnically diverse in the country, a community where over sixty different languages are spoken. CVSD is a high achieving district, boasts one of the highest graduation rates in the province, and has developed a reputation for innovative programming. The board is committed to continuous improvement and has recently invested in a bold strategic plan designed to transform its schools in support of its vision for *deep learning*. Fullan, Quinn, and McEachen (2018) describe deep learning as "… the process of acquiring the six global competencies of: character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking" (p. 16). While there are nuanced definitions for

deep learning used by other proponents (Mehta & Fine, 2019; Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012) the term is used here to refer to the competencies and essential understandings embedded in the redesigned provincial curriculum of British Columbia (Appendix A also provides a more detailed description of the critical facets of deep learning).

Despite its growing and diverse population, Ramsay has historically been a politically and socially conservative community. While it is projected to continue to develop as a bedroom community of the nearby major metropolitan centre, there also remains strong connection to its agricultural base. The city's religious roots are evidenced by a large faith-based community. Ramsay's conservative roots have been reflected in the make-up of past school boards, whose trustees have historically been affiliated with the major churches in the community. The boards that were elected in the nineteen nineties were conservative in nature, and adopted policies designed to maintain control of educational programming and preserve traditional values (Gutek, 1997).

In 2001 the newly elected board began adopting neo-liberal (Hursh, 2016) policies reflected in the implementation of site-based management, parental choice, and open competition among schools, all of which were consistent with legislation from the politically conservative Liberal provincial government. This philosophy shaped the organizational culture of the district, as the board hired superintendents, senior staff and principals whom they felt would fulfill these mandates. Within a few years of the Liberal government coming to power in 2001, CVSD had created a highly decentralized school system based on parental choice, interschool competition, and external accountability measures. Parents were encouraged to send their children to any school in the district, and the superintendent was required to create space in sites that were popular but overcrowded. Over time, some schools became over-enrolled, while others were

grossly under-enrolled and on the verge of being considered for closure. Many principals

disclosed that they did not agree with the board's philosophy but had no recourse but to follow it.

While principals were cordial with each other, there were limited opportunities for structured

collaboration amongst them, as they were often in open competition for students, the key factor

in the board's compensation structure for principals.

Two acrimonious resignations of superintendents in a four-year period between 2006 and

2010 caused the board to re-examine their philosophy and governance position. As the third

superintendent in this series, it was up to me to establish a strong working relationship with the

trustees, and to engage them in establishing a policy position that was more conducive to their

aspiration to improve student achievement. The timing of my hiring coincided with the

commencement of the government's plan to modernize the education system (BC Ministry of

Education, 2015a) and redesign the provincial curriculum.

The announcement of this provincial transformation agenda provided the CVSD Board of

Education with an opportunity to start anew with reshaping their vision for education in the

district. Over the course of the first three years the board restructured its governance model in

favour of a hybrid policy governance approach (Carver & Carver, 2009), reduced its

commitment to school choice, engaged the community in a forward looking strategic plan

(Central Valley School District, 2016a) and encouraged the building of a collaborative culture by

committing to the district values of "respect, trust, teamwork, integrity and communication"

(Central Valley School District, 2017). Accompanying these values were newly developed

mission and vision statements committed to innovation, deep learning and equity.

As superintendent I had inherited a system that was successful under the previous

governance structure and mandate, but one that was not well-equipped to deal with the changing

nature of education. My responsibility was to implement the strategic plan and align it with the district's mission, vision and core values. Over the ensuing months, the executive team responsible for implementing the plan worked collaboratively with teams of principals to establish objectives and success criteria for the goals of the strategic plan. As a new superintendent, I soon recognized that this change was a daunting task not just for our teachers, but also for our team of school-based principals and their district level supervisors.

Consultations with administrators and the executive team identified several key challenges. As with many other districts in the province, CVSD was challenged with significant succession issues within the ranks of its principals and vice-principals. A disproportionate number of retirements in a short timespan saw a turnover of almost half of the district's principals within the preceding seven years. Limited interest in vacant administrative positions resulted in the hiring of many inexperienced principals. This required significant support for these new leaders, many of whom were promoted to principalships within two or three years of being hired as vice-principals. While the influx of new principals provided an opportunity to re-culture the district's leadership, the complexity of the task confounded the senior leadership team of the district. Notwithstanding these changes, a new collaborative culture began to emerge and was well received by the principals and senior staff.

A cornerstone of the transformation effort in CVSD was implementing the recently redesigned provincial curriculum, which put significant emphasis on deep learning (BC Ministry of Education, 2015b; Fullan et al., 2018; Mehta & Fine, 2019). After months of consultation, the provincial government released the long-awaited curricular framework. While it was generally well received, the teachers' union, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF), expressed concern that teachers required significant support to successfully implement the changes in their

classrooms. This concern was echoed in CVSD, where the recently developed strategic plan also committed to implementing the revised curriculum. This placed added pressure on the cadre of inexperienced principals and vice-principals, as well as the senior educators who supervised them.

Another critical factor impacting leadership in CVSD related to the longstanding labour unrest between the BCTF and the provincial government (Fleming, 2011). Leadership and personnel challenges were compounded by the fact that the district was emerging from one of the most tumultuous labour disputes in the province's history, a situation which had eroded trust between administrators and teachers, particularly in CVSD where the board had supported much of the Liberal government's policies and bargaining approaches. Further, a 2016 Canadian Supreme Court decision in favour of the BCTF required the government to restore collective agreement provisions that had been stripped by the Liberal government in 2002, necessitating the hiring of over 3500 teachers across the province. The ensuing provincial teacher shortage saw that CVSD had to replace over 400 of its 1400 full and part-time teaching staff.

The educational transformation was to be led by the CVSD executive team, which was comprised of myself as superintendent, three assistant superintendents, two directors of instruction, the director of human resources, and the secretary-treasurer. With a few exceptions, the three assistant superintendents distributed their responsibilities by level rather than by zone. That is, each had primary supervisory responsibility for groups of principals from CVSD's elementary, middle or secondary schools. They worked in consort with centralized field services to support the direction that was established for each level of school. While the educational goals of the strategic plan related to implementing the curriculum, each level was required to implement sub-goals that were commensurate with the pedagogical challenges of the teachers,

and the developmental needs of their students. For example, elementary schools were challenged with early literacy approaches, middle schools with inquiry-based learning, and secondary schools with designing meaningful graduation pathways. Each of the three principal supervisors, while having served as successful principals, were relatively new to their district level portfolios. Hence, they also needed a level of support to fulfill their mandate of building the capacity of their principals to improve the quality of instruction relative to the constructs of the redesigned curriculum and strategic plan.

In sum, CVSD was faced with its most significant educational reform in decades, resulting in unprecedented change for teachers, many of whom were new to the district and/or the profession. At the school level, the initiatives were to be led by principals, many of whom were recently hired to their positions, and did not have prior experience in leading such a monumental change. At the district level, the change would be led by a team of district leaders who were newly assigned to their district responsibilities and were equally inexperienced in facilitating the kind of system change envisioned by the provincial government and CVSD board. Amidst these series of challenges, it became my responsibility as superintendent to create a guiding coalition that would enable us to realize this ambitious vision. The basis of this change involved building trust and teamwork among the various constituents within the district so as to accomplish a thorough restructuring of the entire education system.

### Leadership Position and Lens Statement

As a leader it is important to recognize the influence of my role and perspectives in this problem of practice. The team of principal supervisors report directly to me, hence my personal role in this OIP is significant. Notwithstanding that my agency and authority are pronounced in this arena, it is important to also declare that I am taking a stance which hinges less on my

positional authority and more on our common purpose. The complexity of the system change effort underscores the need for different approaches at specific points in the change process. Accordingly, my perspectives reflect both my personal values as a leader as well as the stances that support the district's vision, values and overall direction.

My leadership leans is guided by three overlapping perspectives that help to frame this problem of practice. Firstly, the systemic changes being contemplated in CVSD warrant a high degree of mission clarity and inspirational direction setting, often associated with transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Fullan et al., 2018; Holten & Brenner, 2015; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Northouse, 2016). This is particularly true at the outset of the change effort when inspiring organizational members about the *why* of system change is vitally important. As superintendent, I must paint a compelling picture for the entire organization, and especially the formal leaders, about the moral imperative to transform teaching and learning in the district. It is important that I establish and share a compelling rationale that connects my personal vision with that of the district, one that taps into their emotions, values and beliefs of all organizational members (Fullan et al., 2018; Leithwood et al., 2004). With respect to the educational transformation for deep learning, Fullan et al. (2018) contend that this involves activating a moral imperative for all learners, "…building shared meaning and collective purpose, developing a specific strategy to achieve the purpose, and the change leadership that best mobilizes people" (p. 31). At the district level this is in part captured in the CVSD strategic plan, and its accompanying mission, vision, values statements which serve as guideposts for the entire organization. However, it is also my responsibility as CEO to punctuate the need to make the district's vision a reality for each child.

Secondly, an adaptive perspective acknowledges that leaders in the organization will be taking on challenges that do not have specific or easily identifiable solutions, and which cannot be immediately solved by the leader's authority. Adaptive leadership, "…the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive" (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 14), is the primary perspective through which this OIP will be viewed. Adaptive challenges require the leader to engage others in processes designed to understand and diagnose problems, develop hypotheses, and experiment with tentative solutions (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Adaptive leaders have the capacity to "…help people navigate through a period of disturbance as they sift through what is essential and what is expendable…" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 28). They manage themselves in challenging environments and know how to help others tolerate the disequilibrium that often comes with serious problems. This will require me to engage others in continuous cycles of observation, interpretation, and intervention based on these hypotheses. Resolution involves experimenting and taking smart risks in service of common goals. As the organization experiences these changes, it is my responsibility to model a strong connection to our organizational commitment to innovation and equity.

The complex task of building principals' instructional capacity for the purposes of instituting deep learning in schools is adaptive, requiring the ability to diagnose pedagogical problems and mobilize responses based on that analysis. Leaders must diagnose what is transpiring in the organization as well as within themselves and must take action on both levels. The process of diagnosing the system involves taking differing perspectives, moving repeatedly *from the balcony to the playing field* to analyze the organization's structure, norms and protocols so as to distinguish between the technical and adaptive elements associated with the change (Heifetz et al., 2009). This involves alternatively getting close to the problem and stepping away

from it to gain deeper perspectives about what is transpiring in the organization. Heifetz et al.

(2009) suggest that mobilizing the system involves five critical actions:

- Making interpretations, which involves engaging organizational members with

   thoughtful and accurate interpretations of complex organizational issues;

- Designing effective interventions, which establishes processes for framing, analysing

   and actively tackling the challenge;

-  Acting politically, which involves the use of influence to forge alliances with those

   who will support the effort;

- Orchestrating conflict, which requires the leader to surface relevant and difficult

   issues for mutual problem solving; and

- Building adaptive culture, which involves taking steps to build the resilience of

   organizational members.

The adaptive lens is thus guided by a perspective that recognizes that many of the solutions we

establish during the change process will be unanticipated, and in some cases incompatible with

our organizational culture. However, this perspective acknowledges iteration and emergence as

integral features of the change process (Holman, 2010). An important task for me as leader is to

embrace approaches that give space for experimentation and the ambiguity that comes with

emergence.

A tertiary lens for this problem is the distributed perspective. Distributed leadership

practice involves capitalizing on the interdependence of team members to achieve common goals

(Gronn, 2010; Harris, 2010; Spillane, 2006). Leaders committed to teamwork must attend to

their team's leadership needs to optimize their function (Northouse, 2016). Collaborative leaders

monitor the team dynamics and function in addition to the internal and external environments to

determine if they should take action, and if so, the specific types of actions. Spillane (2006) argues that distributed leadership is about capitalizing upon the collective interactions of followers and the contextual conditions of the organization. This perspective goes beyond assigning tasks to the right people and coordinating their efforts. Rather, it involves consciously managing a synergistic relationship between multiple players in the organization, whereby the sum of the leaders' work adds up to more than its discrete parts (Gronn, 2010; Spillane, 2006). Such interactions are critical to capitalizing on the distributed leadership effect, as leaders must attend to both the interactions between followers and the situational context in which they work. Spillane (2006) refers to this deep level of interaction as *heedfulness,* which occurs when groups "… act carefully, purposefully, and attentively" (p. 59). This co-performance facilitates interdependence across multiple members of the group as they utilize various tools and routines. In keeping with these principles, I must reframe the traditional hierarchical perspective associated with my role as superintendent and deepen interdependence and learning among team members. This involves creating a level of symmetry between multiple layers of the district by developing cross-functional teams comprised of principals and teachers from various schools. In this perspective organizational learning plays a key role in shaping how we will collectively resolve many of the challenges associated with implementation.

The idea that principals and their supervisors work in partnership to tackle the complex adaptive challenges associated with implementing deep learning is guided primarily by social learning theory (Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) and social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Wheatley, 1993). This lens supports the view that the world is an emergent social process created by the individuals who act on it and is thus rooted in the interpretive perspective (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). That is, the organization and its

challenges are viewed through the experiences of the individuals living it, and within the unique

cultural context of the specific organization in which they serve.

Principals and their supervisors within CVSD represent specific communities whose

identities are shaped by their ongoing interactions related to the problem of practice. While

principals and their supervisors represent distinct communities with different but overlapping

roles, the possibility exists that by virtue of their ongoing attempts to expand their competencies

associated with instructional leadership, they will expand the knowledge boundaries of their

respective communities. Their experiences are further shaped as new problems emerge and

tentative solutions are considered and shared within the communities (Wenger-Trayner &

Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Sophisticated solutions to complex challenges such as those outlined in

this OIP require sustained social learning among the individuals. Ongoing and deliberate

interaction allows them to co-construct knowledge which deepens their own practice and

simultaneously serves the needs of the organization. With respect to this OIP, the social learning

lens suggests that principals and supervisors will deepen their knowledge and expand their

individual and collective identities as a result of their formal and informal interactions related to

instructional leadership practice.

<div align="center">**Leadership Problem of Practice**</div>

The problem of practice that I will address is the challenge of principal supervisors

effectively supporting school principals' capacity for instructional leadership for deep learning.

Due to local and provincial mandates, principals are expected to be instructional leaders in their

schools. However, many school principals are unprepared for such a role. Through informal

meetings, principals have told us that they are bombarded on a daily basis with a wide range of

issues and sometimes competing mandates both from the Ministry of Education and the CVSD

district office, expectations that routinely keep them away from the district's expectation that

they are to guide the instructional practice of their teachers. Some principals seem to have a

strong conceptual understanding of the provincial curriculum, while others struggle to

understand its design features. Further, evidence also suggests that many principals have limited

competencies for orchestrating coherent change efforts in their schools (Baker & Bloom, 2017).

Principals articulate that they have a desire to learn these approaches with their

colleagues but have limited opportunities for structured dialogue, reflection and practice

(Pollock, Wang, & Hauseman, 2017). Ideally, principals would: have a deep understanding of

the provincial change effort; understand the dimensions of their role as instructional leaders;

have thoughtfully articulated change strategies to fulfill this mandate (Armenakis & Harris,

2009; Leithwood, 2013); and would be provided with the necessary resources, support and time

to meet these goals (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2007; Honig, 2009)

In a similar manner, senior educators who supervise principals appear to not have the

capacity, resources, nor time to train, coach and mentor principals in using the approaches

associated with fulfilling these responsibilities. This is in keeping with the research on district

level practice which has suggested that structural and political factors inhibit principal

supervisors from consistent and meaningful interaction with principals (Corcoran, Casserly,

Price-Baugh, Walston, Hall, & Simon, 2013; Honig, 2012; Honig & Rainey, 2014; Honig,

Venkateswaran, & McNeil, 2017). Principal supervisors have further identified the need for

focused time to work collaboratively with principals to develop these practices, as well as the

differentiated supports needed to sustain them. It is my observation that principal supervisors do

not yet have the capacity to orchestrate the systemic change effort through the principals they

supervise. In my discussion with them, it appears they do not have the conceptual grounding in

leading the change process, nor the tools to successfully lead the change effort within their portfolios. While principal supervisors are aware of the fundamental importance of supporting principals, it is evident, based on their feedback, that they are unable to consistently engage in the behaviours associated with this notion.

It is vital for principal supervisors to have a deep understanding of their role as change agents. They need to have a manageable scope of responsibilities in recognition of this mandate, the necessary human and financial resources to complete this work, and the researched based practices designed to work collaboratively with their principals to respond to the emergent challenges associated with the educational transformation. Consequently, in CVSD there remains a gap between the system-wide aspirations about instructional leadership and the day to day experiences of principals and their supervisors. How do principal supervisors effectively support the instructional leadership capacity of school principals?

## Framing the Problem of Practice

### Historical Overview

In order to better appreciate the problem, it is important to understand its historical roots. For years prior to 2010, the CVSD principal supervisors were locked into traditional bureaucratic central office practice (Honig, 2012; Honig & Rainey, 2014). This was in part a function of the philosophical orientation of the school board trustees who governed the system. Historical policy documents indicate that the CVSD board had a very centralized and control-oriented governance structure. There was no overarching strategic plan, and the conservative provincial government of the day held no requirement for boards to adopt specific governance practices (BC School Act, 1996). Trustees held tight control of policies associated with district operations, personnel and human resources. The board had a dual CEO structure which bestowed authority for

educational functions to the superintendent and provided authority over business operations to the secretary-treasurer. This allowed trustees to centralize supervision of the organizational enterprise and create structures that would perpetuate their orientation to control (Fallon & Poole, 2013). Principal supervisors also worked closely with trustees to provide them with a steady stream of reports related to various operational matters and emergent political issues. School principals were largely left to their own devices, and schools were monitored with an accountability framework guided by provincial assessments, formal accreditation and school rankings. Policies that permitted students to attend any school they wished helped to create a competitive environment among schools, where principals freely developed programs designed to improve their schools, often at the expense of neighbouring schools. While principals were collegial, there were few opportunities, expectations or guidance for them to deeply collaborate on educational problems of practice.

Even when the board transitioned to a single CEO model in 2002, they did not amend their policies in keeping with an emerging policy governance approach (Carver & Carver, 2009). The superintendent and principal supervisors continued to invest a significant proportion of their time responding to board issues which often had little connection to student learning. The combination of two consecutive unsuccessful superintendent appointments within a four-year period, and elections which brought several new trustees to the board created an opportunity to review the district's direction and governance. I was hired in 2011, at which time I commenced working with the board to modernize their governance structure and develop a framework for strategic planning committed to student learning. Only when these structures were put in place did the superintendent have the opportunity to more closely align the work of principal supervisors with the core functions of leadership development in service of student learning. This

task was a complex one, as the cultural practices within CVSD had been fully imprinted on the organization over the previous decades and would therefore require careful stewardship.

**Key Organizational Theories**

The goals related to this problem of practice are viewed primarily through a liberal lens. While this problem relates to igniting the practice of school-based and district-based leaders, it emanates from a particular view of teaching and learning. The liberal perspective emerges from a position that the goal of our education system is to nurture independent and critical thinkers who deeply understand and can respond to the challenges faced by society. As such, their teachers need to be provided with a level of agency to develop their practice in service of these aims. This liberal perspective embraces the development of the critical mind committed to the greater good (Gary, 2006), a notion which is consistent with the provincial curriculum, and which is enshrined in ministerial policy designed to nurture the *educated citizen* (BC Ministry of Education, 2015a). As is the case with teachers, principals need to be endowed with the leadership skills necessary to catalyze classroom practice. The same holds true for principal supervisors who must support multiple schools with often very different needs. The principal supervisor must ultimately work collaboratively with principals to ensure they have the supports required to fulfill this broad mission. This is consistent with the liberal notion that decision-making authority should be distributed to many groups, in this case to principals and their supervisors. Watkins et al., (2018) argue that "…parallelism exists between the work of adults in the system and the work we hope that teachers will do with their students" (p. 8). This principle of symmetry is also consistent with Fullan's (2014; 2015) approach to *leading from the middle*, which suggests that principals and system leaders will maximize their impact when they act as co-learners with those they supervise.

Three overlapping theoretical lenses that influence this OIP are complexity theory, organizational learning theory and social learning theory. Complexity theory proposes that organizations are complex adaptive systems that are constantly changing based on countless interactions (Mason, 2008; Morrison, 2002; Weick, 2000; Wheatley, 1993). Organizations are viewed as complex ecosystems with numerous subsystems acting upon each other, the outcome of which is unpredictable (Burnes, 2005). It suggests that organizations are complex adaptive systems that cannot be directly controlled by singular human action. Rather, as Lichtenstein, Uhl-Bien, Marion, Seers, Orton, and Schreiber (2006) maintain, complexity theory implies that "…leadership emerges through dynamic interactions" (p. 2). Sometimes referred to as *emergence* (Holman, 2010), complexity theory suggests an approach where leadership does not reside within the formal leaders but emerges as a consequence of the interaction between various organizational players.

According to Edson and McGee (2016), complex adaptive systems are guided by several key principles:

- Guide and nurture growth rather than control it;

- Capitalize on natural organizational interaction patterns rather than force them;

- Encourage participatory decision-making rather than impose order;

- Empower team members rather than restrain them;

- Set high-level system goals rather than detailed targets; and

- Allow for experimentation and failure rather than avoid them.

Lichtenstein et al. (2006) argue that these principles are closely aligned with adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009) and participatory leadership approaches (Gronn, 2010; Harris, 2010; Spillane, 2006), both of which are used to drive this OIP.

This OIP is also guided by organizational learning theory. Like complexity theory, organizational learning theory suggests that positive outcomes are a consequence of the ecosystem of interactions among organizational agents. However, organizational learning theory posits the idea that organizations can learn in a manner similar to the way that individuals learn (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Belle, 2016; Lipshitz, Popper, & Friedman, 2002; Senge, 1990). Argyris and Schon (1996) present three types of organizational learning: *single-loop* learning, where straight forward technical problems are identified and corrected; *double loop* learning where more complex problems involving organizational values and beliefs are impacted; and *deutero-learning*, where the organization learns how to learn. Deutero-learning is dependent on individual learning; hence leadership plays a critical role in creating the conditions and processes for catalyzing organizational inquiry. With respect to this OIP, organizational learning theory suggests that principal supervisor learning will play a critical role in resolving the problems associated with student learning across the various and diverse schools in CVSD. Principal supervisors are key moderators of the organizational factors that either accelerate or inhibit the learning of followers such as principals (Belle, 2016). Their capacity to "…shape lines of communication, information systems, the physical environment, procedures for engaging in inquiry, and incentives" (Evans, Thornton, & Usinger, 2012, p. 161), is vital to the development of organizational learning.

Lipshitz et al. (2002) argue that practitioners should view organizational learning through multiple lenses. They make the case that practitioners should discern between these facets to appropriately determine their approach to advancing organizational learning. The *structural* facet implies that organization players must have more than metaphorical heuristics to guide their process, and instead should have clear roles and procedures that enable them to systematically

"…collect, analyze, store, disseminate and use information relevant to their own and other members' organizational performance" (p. 82). The *cultural* facet identifies norms that are likely to produce positive outcomes as a consequence of shared values within the organization. The foundation of the *psychological* facet is that organizational learning can only be advanced when members perceive and experience safety to take the risks required for learning. The *policy* facet is expressed through an organization's policies, rules and procedures intended to communicate a commitment to learning. Finally, the *contextual* facet focuses on factors external to the organization, but which can have an impact on the extent to which learning is realized in meaningful ways inside the organization. These facets are important to the model proposed in this OIP because organizational learning involves complex interpersonal processes which cannot be strictly prescribed. As such, "…different organizations operating under different circumstances, can manage to learn productively while enacting very different configurations of the facets…" (Lipshitz et al., 2002, p. 93). In other words, there is no single path or prescribed set of arrangements for leaders to enable organizational learning. Rather, organizational learning will occur in an emergent fashion based on the complex interactions among organizational members (Lichtenstein et al., 2006).

Organizational learning theory is also closely connected to social learning theory, which serves as another important frame for this problem of practice. Social learning theory suggests that individuals learn through iterative interactions in structured social contexts. Wenger (1998; 2000) identifies three modes of belonging in social learning systems: *engagement*, which defines the ways group members interact with each other; *imagination*, which involves the manner in which we construct an image of ourselves and the world around us; and *alignment*, which is the extent to which activities are procedurally effective. Social structures such as communities of

practice (CoPs) – groups of people who share a common concern and who seek to deepen their

knowledge by continuous interaction – are a critical element of the social learning framework

because they shape the participation of organizational members in social learning systems. Such

CoPs have three critical features: a *domain* of knowledge, which is a common set of practices

identified by the group; a *community*, who are the people who have some commitment to this

domain; and the shared *practice*, which are the set of tools, ideas and frameworks that the

members use to impact the organization. In CVSD, principal supervisors play a critical role in

nurturing CoPs among principals by shaping their leadership identity, expanding the boundaries

of their competence, and supporting the development of new knowledge frontiers. They support

relationships, tools and tactics developed by various teams of leaders to resolve emerging

problems of practice and moderate dynamic networks of social interactions in response to such

problems (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

**PESTE Analysis**

This problem of practice might also be examined using components of a PESTE analysis

(Cawsey, Deszca, & Ingols, 2016) which provides insight into the political, economic, social,

technological and environmental factors which impact any change effort. Of particular

importance for this OIP are the political, economic and social factors which play a stronger

mediating role in the outcomes associated with this problem.

**Political.** As noted above, reshaping the role of principal supervisor is critical to this

process. This has historically hinged on the governance maturity of the school board trustees.

The CVSD board made a commitment to policy governance (Carver & Carver, 2009) and

created the conditions for the superintendent and principal supervisors to extricate themselves

from mundane board issues and invest more consistently in the district's strategic plan. While

there is no guarantee that future boards will support this approach, an important mitigation strategy was building policies and processes to limit opportunities for future boards to derail the work of the senior administration. Critical to this work was creating more aligned board policies and developing a strategic governance plan that would engage trustees in supporting this work rather than compromising it.

**Economic.** From an economic standpoint, the most dominant issues relate to allocating appropriate resources to effectively support the change effort. Honig (2012) identifies that one of the critical factors limiting principal supervisors from establishing learning focused partnerships with principals is their span of control. Principal supervisors who supervise too many schools have limited ability to meaningfully interact with their principals. In CVSD there would need to be a commitment to providing additional resources to support the work of principal supervisors by reducing their span of control and resourcing the strategies that emerge as a result of their ongoing problem solving. CVSD has accrued an accumulated surplus of over $12M, and it would be necessary for the board to dedicate a portion of these funds to the leadership development goals associated with this plan. Another consideration relates to the financial compensation of principals and supervisors. From 2009 to 2015 all exempt staff in the province were subject to a compensation freeze. This impacted the recruitment, retention and morale of existing principals and principal supervisors. It will be important to resolve these matters so that compensation does not become an impediment to leadership development.

**Socio-cultural.** Another important consideration in this change effort is the leadership culture within the organization. This pertains to the culture among principals, as well as the relationships between principals and their supervisors. While principals have been consulted in the development of the district's mission and vision, they have historically worked independently

of each other in realizing their school goals. Particularly at the secondary level, there has been a long history of competition for students and resources. Principal supervisors have also had a more traditional hierarchical relationship with their teams of principals. The significant turnover of principals in the last five years has afforded the senior leaders an opportunity to reshape the leadership culture in CVSD to resemble more interdependent and collaborative relationships.

While these PESTE forces have combined to shape the problem of practice as it stands in CVSD, they are not intractable. Rather, it is important to navigate them, as they have shaped the trajectory of the problem of practice and must therefore be well understood in order to implement potential solutions.

### Guiding Questions Emerging from the Problem of Practice

Several questions emerge from the problem of practice, each of which drives distinct lines of inquiry. The primary question relates to how principal supervisors came to be disconnected from working closely with principals. While there are historical, political and financial reasons for the current circumstances, it is important to note that school districts typically recruit principal supervisors from the ranks of school principals in part because they have a deep understanding of the work of principals. It is ironic that the very skills that caused principals to be promoted to positions of assistant superintendents (i.e., they are successful school leaders) are not the skills they are called on to utilize on an ongoing basis. Principal supervisors have told me that nurturing principal capacity is among the most fulfilling work they do, and that principals, particularly newly appointed ones, value the support (Honig, 2012; Honig & Rainey, 2014; Honig et al., 2017). Further, providing learning focused feedback to principals is positively correlated to student achievement (Heck & Hallinger, 2014). Consequently, it

remains a key question about the specific forces that have caused this shift to materialize and replicate itself.

One interesting phenomenon related to this question is that our schools will continue to evolve in unpredictable ways even without the purposeful action of our principal supervisors. Principals will continue to learn, will continue to work in idiosyncratic ways with their teachers, and will interpret the principles of the redesigned provincial curriculum in a manner that works for their context. In other words, emergence will materialize whether principal supervisors intervene or not (Holman, 2010; Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Weick, 2000; Wheatley, 1993). The larger question, then, is how will the purposeful intervention of principal supervisors shape the outcomes related to adult and student learning? Can they intervene intentionally to guide and nurture the change in such a way that it more closely approximates the vision for equity that the organization holds for its students?

A second question relates to how principals perceive their role as instructional leaders. When asked to define their roles principals typically reference one or more of the four dimensions articulated in the standards of practice BC Principals and Vice-principals Association (BCPVPA, 2013). That is, they reference some combination of moral stewardship, instructional supervision, relational capacity, or organizational capacity. Their perceptions are shaped by their experiences, values, beliefs and assumptions (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Houchens, Stewart, & Jennings, 2016) but I wonder how many of them would espouse the practices that the senior educators perceive are most critical for creating deep learning experiences for students and teachers. What is more, how many will have a viable theory of action that is grounded in activating specific pedagogies? And how many would have the requisite tools to advance their practice along these lines of inquiry?

These questions to are important because they ultimately point to the kind of challenges that might surface as we attempt to resolve this problem of practice. Principals and their supervisors must equally commit to examining their practice relative to district's widely held expectations, and in so doing audition approaches designed to address this discrepancy. For example, principals more accustomed to control and positional authority must be supported in interrogating these practices to potentially develop and implement more participatory approaches in working with teachers. Similarly, principal supervisors who can critically examine and reshape relationships with their principals based on the district's instructional expectations will be in a better position to realize the goals associated with the district's overall strategy.

### Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

The vision for organizational change is that principal supervisors will play an active leadership role in the educational transformation of the district by engaging in learning focused partnerships with principals. A vision for deep learning in classrooms in CVSD is anchored to a vision for leadership which is inseparable from the kind of instruction we aspire to see in classrooms (Watkins et al., 2018). The executive team acknowledges that if we wish to develop students and teachers as critical thinkers about learning, then their principals must be equally engaged in inquiry about their leadership practices. By extension, principal supervisors must also assume a similar inquiry stance in relation to system leadership. In the face of significant opportunity for diverse and independent action across their schools, our principal supervisors must be committed to leadership approaches that, as Leithwood and Hanford (2018) describe, communicate the shared values and vision that underpin collective organizational efforts. District level leaders must be concerned with the values, standards, and long-term goals that bind the

organization in a common enterprise and must have the capacity to communicate these ideas to others throughout the system.

This vision supports three key priorities for change which Leithwood et al. (2008) identify as the key functions of instructional leadership within school systems: vision building and direction setting, understanding and developing people, and facilitating change. Vision building and direction setting relates to the development of a collaborative and instructionally focused leadership culture between district level leaders and school leaders, one that supports the district's overall vision for student success. It also references the development of a clear set of system outcomes that act as guideposts to which staff can orient their work on an ongoing basis. Principal supervisors must therefore anchor their work in a shared and collective vision which is an extension of the CVSD vision for student learning (Central Valley School District, 2016a). Principal supervisors will meaningfully engage school principals in discourse about their own personal vision and will co-create more nuanced plans and benchmarks for the schools they oversee.

Understanding and developing people is fundamentally about motivating teams to accomplish organizational goals. According to Leithwood et al. (2008), the primary task involves "…providing individualized support and consideration, fostering intellectual stimulation, and modelling appropriate values and behaviours" (p. 30). For the principal supervisor, this involves a strong investment in distributed leadership approaches (Gronn, 2010; Harris, 2013; Spillane, 2006) to nurture trust with their team of principals. While the BCPVPA (2013) has a set of established provincial standards, it is important, in the spirit of collaboration, for principal supervisors to co-develop local standards that would be congruent with the leadership culture in CVSD. These tools would be used to provide a framework for ongoing principal development

and support, allowing supervisors to more meaningfully support, mentor, and recognize principals on their developmental path.

Finally, the leadership vision involves change facilitation, or creating the conditions for principals to make the most of their agency. This primarily involves the leader making the case for change and outlining critical guiding principles in advance of commencing specific change efforts (Higgs & Rowland, 2005). In service of this aim, the work of principal supervisors will look markedly different than it currently does. Their work will more closely approximate what Honig (2012) refers to as *learning focused partnerships* with their principals. More specifically, principal supervisors will develop and share a theory of action related to the immediate learning problems among their cluster schools and will collaboratively invite each of their principals to do the same for their schools. The superintendent will make it possible for the supervisors to take on these revised roles by removing obstacles, redesigning responsibilities, and providing additional resources (Baker & Bloom, 2017). Based on the unique needs and context of their schools, supervisors will design CoPs among their principals to address longstanding and emerging problems of practice. Principal supervisors will have the adaptive skills necessary to not only develop these teams, but also provide differentiated support to meet unforeseen challenges as they arise.

Ultimately this approach will support the principle of symmetry articulated by Watkins et al. (2018). That is, as principal supervisors embrace their role as transformational leaders to articulate a compelling vision for learning, they will advance the goals of this vision through distributed leadership approaches and will realize the nuanced and as yet undetermined strategies of their plans though adaptive approaches. The same principle would hold true for principals as they seek to develop learning focused partnerships with their teachers (Honig, 2012). Principals

will develop a compelling and shared vision for their school in partnership with their teachers,

will collaboratively build CoPs among teachers to resolve emergent student learning challenges,

not dissimilar from the type of deep learning that the system envisions for students. This in turn

will create a direct line to the vision that the board holds for all students.

      Several change drivers will support the vision for the future state. Change initiators and

implementers of a transformation of this nature, typically the senior staff, are in this case among

the change recipients. Consequently, important considerations must be made about how these

roles are fulfilled in this vision (Cawsey et al., 2016). As superintendent, I see my actions as a

critical catalyst to the change drivers. The first is the district's strategic plan. It is important that

this document is a clear reflection of the instructional and leadership intentions and practices of

the staff within the district. The strategic plan must become a living document that actively

engages principal supervisors and principals. One of the key pillars in the CVSD strategic plan is

*leadership excellence,* so it is important that principals and supervisors are not only engaged in

the consultation processes related to these goals but also that they see themselves as primary

architects of this work. For instance, the development of the district's leadership standards must

be the primary work of principals and their supervisors.

      A second driver will be the restructuring of the principal supervisor roles to create the

time to develop learning focused partnerships in schools (Honig, 2012; Honig & Rainey, 2014).

This will involve a budget reallocation process over which I have primary influence as

superintendent. It may include more staffing at the district level and/or a redistribution of

principal supervisor roles to make it possible for them to work more frequently and intimately

with principals (Robertson, 2008). Finally, a third driver is the development of a framework or

toolkit of key practices that will be indicative of redefined relationships. Principal supervisors

themselves must work collaboratively with each other and the superintendent to develop CoPs to design promising practices that will deepen their own efficacy, and simultaneously provide a model for the principals with whom they work.

### Organizational Change Readiness

Cawsey et al. (2016) argue that dissatisfaction with the status quo by senior managers in an organization is a helpful but insufficient condition to catalyze change. What if the envisioned change involves the practice of the senior managers themselves? Because the problem of practice emanates from a need for a reciprocal relationship between two sets of parties – principals and their supervisors – it is helpful to conduct an analysis of current practice and the level of organizational inertia relative to our desired organizational outcomes (Godkin, 2010). The foundations of the redesigned curriculum speak to a redefined relationship between teachers and students, one where teachers work more as facilitators, rather than controllers, of student-centred learning (BC Ministry of Education, 2015b). This calls for a fundamental pedagogical shift. Underscoring the principle of symmetry (Watkins et al., 2018), this OIP also calls for an equally significant shift in leadership practice by principals and their supervisors. In the same way that teachers must work in partnership with students (as must principals work in partnership with teachers), so too must principal supervisors redesign their leadership practice in partnership with principals. Hence a readiness audit must consider both the content as well as the process associated with the change.

It would therefore be important to gather the perceptions of principals and their supervisors about their perceived roles in relation to student learning. While this specific change effort is very connected to a larger provincial effort to improve deep learning, it would still be necessary to clarify the *why* of the change agenda for both principal supervisors and their teams

of principals. This would allow both parties to connect their personal visions with that of the organizations within which they serve. It would also serve as a basis of conversation about common commitments compared to what will inevitably be divergent strategies used across the system.

I propose to utilize the *Rate Your Readiness to Change* questionnaire (Cawsey et al., 2016) to identify the extent to which principal and supervisors are ready to engage in the change effort. The tool specifies six dimensions associated with readiness:

- The manner in which the organization has handled previous change experiences;

- The extent to which the executive team actively supports the change;

- The extent to which the change effort is guided by credible leaders or champions;

- The degree to which the organization is open to change;

- The nature of the existing rewards for organizational members; and

- The depth of the structures in place to measure the proposed changes.

Data gathered from this tool will further clarify the nature of work required for principals and supervisors to attend more consistently to their re-imagined roles. This will also be followed up with individual interviews to better understand the concerns associated with implementing these changes. While this tool is a useful starting point, it does not dictate the process that would be used to launch the change effort. Rather, data from this tool will point the way to deeper inquiries about underlying organizational values and practices. The tool provides a linear set of questions about a process which is inherently emergent and iterative, hence it would be used to generate questions about the values of principal supervisors and their principals.

Another tool closely connected with leadership readiness is the BC School Superintendents Association's *Dimensions of Practice* (BCSSA, 2014) which outlines the

competencies needed by superintendents and principal supervisors to lead system change.  The framework includes six dimensions:

- *Leadership and District Culture* outlines the responsibility to develop school districts cultures that reflects commitment to student learning;

- *Policy and Governance* outlines the obligation to fulfill the legislative and policy requirements associated with the school system;

- *Communications and Community Relations* speaks to the importance of engaging with multiple stakeholders;

- *Organizational Leadership* addresses the capacity to establish systems for the orderly operation of the district;

- *Leading Learning* outlines the capacities associated with ensuring student learning;

- *Human Resources Development and Management* articulates the duties for building the capacity of the adults within the district; and

- *Accountability* establishes parameters for providing assurance for student outcomes;

While each of these has some relevance for the work of the principal supervisor, the standards associated with *Leadership and District Culture* and *Leading Learning* are most closely related to the work of collaboratively building principal instructional capacity. Using this as a readiness tool would not only provide a sense of their readiness to do the work but would also provide guidance in developing approaches to improve leadership practice.

A third tool to assess principal readiness is the local leadership standards for principals (BCPVPA, 2013). The tool covers four dimensions of principal leadership (*Moral Stewardship, Instructional Leadership, Relational Capacity, and Organizational Capacity*). While each of these standards is connected to this work, the most critical standards associated with assessing

readiness are from the Instructional Leadership and Relational Capacity dimensions. However, as noted above, the unique and adaptive work required by principals speak to the importance of creating localized standards that pay closer attention to the skills and competencies needed by principals to re-orient practice. Such a tool serves the dual purpose of assessing principal readiness, and at the same time benchmarking their capacity for the purposes of providing ongoing development and support in their schools.

In summary, while I anticipate a high degree of willingness to change among the senior leadership team, it is important to assess their level of concern about the district's ability to consistently resource the expected changes. As Cawsey et al. (2016) suggest, the senior leaders must "…earn the trust of others and credibly show others how to meet their collective goals" (p. 107). As the most senior leader in the organization I would need to model an approach to readiness that connects the rest of the senior leadership team to the adaptive challenges we will face, as well as a collective commitment to addressing them. This commitment is deepened by trust, co-construction, participatory decision making, and positive risk taking (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). The process of assessing change readiness in a collaborative manner will allow the senior leaders to utilize the evidence to support the subsequent planning and development phases presented in the next chapter.

**CHAPTER 2: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Leadership Approaches to Change**

There are three leadership approaches contemplated as part of this OIP, two of which are dominant in the change effort. Transformative leadership serves as an overarching umbrella and is presented here primarily to capture the overall vision for the ambitious system change underway in CVSD and the province. The vision for system transformation is well articulated at the provincial level with the *BC Education Plan* (BC Ministry of Education, 2015a), the *Policy for Student Success* (BC Ministry of Education, 2018), and locally within the CVSD strategic plan (Central Valley School District, 2016a). Each of these documents speaks to a commitment to prepare students with the necessary skills to meet the demands of a dramatically changing world. In this regard, two critical features of transformational leadership as described by Bass and Avolio (1994) are utilized to advance the change effort: inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. The vision for system change must be sufficiently compelling to stimulate organizational members to higher levels of commitment and invite them to challenge their own beliefs enough to take creative risks in service of the new direction.

I take the position that the provincial and district visions are sufficiently clear for principal supervisors to guide their efforts to motivate and nurture their followers. Principal supervisors can utilize transformation leadership to frame the overall change effort for their teams of principals (Leithwood et al., 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Inspirational motivation is activated when they assemble their teams of principals, consider the provincial direction, reflect on the district's strategic plan and then plan specific moves to further articulate this vision for the schools in their portfolio. Principal supervisors are intellectually stimulated when provided with broad direction, along with an opportunity to lead the development of action plans

that support the overall system aspiration. When given the space to develop their own personal vision for their schools, and the autonomy to establish sub-goals and action plans, principal supervisors become motivated to transcend their own self-interests in favour of the greater good of the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

The other leadership approaches that drive practice for this OIP are adaptive and distributed leadership. In order to build instructional capacity for deep learning, principal supervisors will be required to support their teams of principals in improving the adaptive nature of their work (Fullan et al., 2018; Mehta & Fine, 2019). Having principals work closely with teachers to change their pedagogy and embrace deep learning is not a straightforward technical challenge. Principal supervisors will co-construct an understanding with principals that such changes in practice are adaptive, conflictual, and systemic (Heifetz et al., 2009). Principal supervisors must develop the skill of observing when principals are not conceptualizing the challenge and reframe discourse by asking questions that cause deeper reflections. As ideas surface that denote limited interpretations, the principal supervisor auditions alternative ideas and invites principals to explore how these notions square with their understanding. This in turn opens the door to newer interventions to the problems faced by the group. For example, the challenges associated with assessment in a competency-based curriculum have arisen as a significant challenge for secondary school principals as they work with entrenched assessment practices. The principal supervisor working with this group of principals must reframe this issue to support deeper understanding about assessment practices. As solutions are established, they must "create a holding environment" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 159) for these ideas by allowing principals to own and deploy them in ways that are unique to their schools. The supervisor

assesses the effectiveness of these ideas and keeps these changes at the center of principal attention (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Heifetz et al. (2009) also argue that leaders must turn their efforts to the political arena to further orchestrate and protect the work among their followers. Expanding the authority of principal supervisors is a critical adaptive approach in this regard. They must actively seek to understand the perspective of those who oppose the change effort, as well as those who are critical allies. Not all of the principals in CVSD are active supporters of the district's vision for reframing their role, but some also readily support the work and have considerable influence over their colleagues. Principal supervisors must seek out the various subcultures in the group and actively engage them, particularly if they are dissenting voices. Openness to seemingly subversive ideas about reframed instructional leadership approaches is a necessary adaptive skill that principal supervisors will utilize to unearth perspectives that may otherwise subvert implementation efforts. Working with dissenting voices is part of the skill of orchestrating conflict; as Heifetz et al. (2009) state, "orchestrating conflict is a discipline" (p. 149). Principal supervisors orchestrate conflict among their teams of principals by even-handedly surfacing the competing ideas associated with principal roles, acknowledging contentious and alternative positions, and living in a space of disequilibrium. They encourage principals to reflect upon potential losses, and at the same time encourage them to experiment with new ideas. The important skill that ultimately advances the work is to continually remind principals about the core organizational purpose of improving adult and student learning.

Personal and group mobilization are also important components of building adaptive capacity (Garmston & Wellman, 2016). Principal supervisors must commit to building and sustaining the adaptive capacity of the principals they supervise for a change effort that will take

years to materialize. This involves building a culture where continuous learning and reflection are the norm (Garmston & Wellman, 2016; Heifetz et al., 2009). Supervisors must become conversant in the practices of asking reflective questions and honouring and rewarding risk taking and experimentation (Robertson, 2008). If adaptive leadership is to drive the change effort in CVSD, it must not only be guided by the work of its senior leaders but must also be embedded in the culture of the district. Principal supervisors must therefore attend to being models for these practices by utilizing them and nurturing their use with principals and teachers in all schools throughout the district.

If adaptive leadership approaches are to be institutionalized across the district, then distributed leadership strategies will serve as an effective companion. Distributed leadership is about practices that eschew the heroic actions of the solitary leader, and instead capitalize on the wisdom of the group (Gronn, 2010; Harris, 2010; Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership functions by division of labour, through co-performance, or via parallel performance, and is defined by "… joint interactions of school leaders, followers, and aspects of their situation such as tools and routines" (Spillane, 2006, p. 3). Here principal supervisors advance practice with their teams of principals by carefully mining their interactions with them. They strengthen interdependence by surfacing district goals and utilizing routines and tools that facilitate a collective and coordinated distribution of practices essential to the change effort. One example is the implementation of interdisciplinary project-based units of study. Principal supervisors may surface goals in this area by supporting implementation across schools and having principals interdependently connect their staffs to collaboratively plan units of study. The interactions of the principal supervisor with the teams of principals, the situations within which they work, and

the tools and routines they deploy to solve this problem speak to the kind of distributed

leadership practice that would advance the task of building principal capacity.

## Framework for Leading the Change Process

This problem of practice will be viewed through two connected change models, the

*Knowledge Building System* (Wenger et al., 2002) and the *Core Disciplines for Building*

*Learning Organizations* (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, & Smith, 1994). Each of these change

models holds a critical feature of the change effort associated with a reciprocal learning

partnership between principals and their supervisors, is underpinned by a specific theoretical

approach, and is further supported by methods and tools that support their implementation. The

Knowledge Building System (Wenger et al., 2002) will be utilized to frame the social learning

dimensions of instructional leadership. While the problem is focused around the interactions

between principals and supervisors, social learning theory, which is constructivist in nature, will

be used to understand how knowledge is constructed between supervisors and their principals, as

well as among principals and among supervisors (Lees & Meyer, 2011; Wenger, 1998; Wenger-

Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). The problem of practice will also rely on organizational

learning theory to examine more closely how the considered approaches used by the principal

supervisors will impact the whole organization, and if as a consequence, the organization learns

how to learn (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Senge, 1990). Organizational learning theory, as posited

by Argyris and Schon (1996) and Senge (1990), has its roots in interpretivism, and hence the

phases pay attention to the iterative interactions between players in the organization.

### The Knowledge Building System

A social constructivist approach suggests that a community-based knowledge initiative

such as that proposed in this OIP requires the adoption of an evolutionary design (Hearn &

White, 2009; Holman, 2010; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015; Wheatley, 1993). That is, knowledge building initiatives are organic in nature, and must be approached using a design where organizational initiatives "…evolve naturally, encourage new leaders, seek ambitious value objectives, choreograph formal and informal elements, elicit widespread participation, build on the culture, and create momentum" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 191). The authors identify several critical features of *aliveness* that should guide new knowledge initiatives:

- *Evolutionary design* speaks to nurturing rather than controlling new knowledge;

- *Distributed leadership* involves the development of multiple leaders;

- *Participation across multiple structures* contemplates the inclusion of a wide range of perspectives and participants to represent the organization;

- *Engagement of formal and informal* includes an optimal blend of public and private spaces that encourage diverse forms of participation;

- *Value* is the idea that stewarding knowledge must create value for both the organization as well as its members.

- *Building on the existing culture* involves utilizing core organizational values as a common starting point; and

- *Pacing* speaks to establishing reasonable timeframes for the change effort depending on the depth and complexity of the effort.

These critical factors combine to describe change more as a social movement rather than a series of structured events. The endeavour builds over time with the emerging interests of the various players, each of whom will have differing levels of readiness (Napier, Amborski, & Pesek, 2017), but who will nonetheless contribute to the effort. While there may be multiple extant

communities in an organization, the goal of the community-based knowledge system is to intentionally launch and guide learning communities "…in order to establish them more systematically in the organization" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 196).

The Knowledge Building System involves six phases which are explained here and also form the basis of the implementation plan developed in Chapter 3 (See Appendix B). The first phase (*Prepare*), requires the principal supervisor to identify strategic capability gaps among the principals, where learning activities are unstructured and in need of intentional support. This involves creating strong connections between these activities and the overall strategy of the organization. Principal supervisors will interview or survey groups of principals to better understand the knowledge implications of these existing processes and collaboratively map them with the principals to identify domains where they overlap with the district's larger learning goals. One key area, for instance, is the depth of principal understanding about deep learning approaches (Fullan et al., 2018; Mehta & Fine, 2019; Watkins et al., 2018), and how they may be fostered among teachers who are novice at these approaches. It is important to map the knowledge terrain in this area to align with the district strategic plan, as well as close gaps in understanding and practice.

Through the *Launch* phase, the principal supervisor tactically selects places where there is a high degree of pre-existing momentum among principals. They must, for instance, carefully consider the extent to which they will take a top-down versus a bottom-up approach. This will depend on the level or urgency for change, and the extent to which this type of approach fits within the cultural norms of the district. As this approach involves both adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009; Holman, 2010; Wheatley, 1993) and collaborative practice (Gronn, 2010; Harris, 2011; Spillane, 2006), I propose that principal supervisors take a blended approach that

would leverage and empower the energy of grassroots principal leaders, and at the same time

connect principals to the organizational urgency of the change effort. Optimal numbers of

principal teams would be formed to address the set of emergent problems that exist within their

schools. Properly structured communities will begin to *Expand* when the communities start to

create value for the organization. Once teams begin to discover breakthroughs in key areas and

initiate the process of sharing with their colleagues, it is expected that this will spawn the

creation of deeper aspirations and more nuanced practice. Principal supervisors play a key role in

this phase by deliberately integrating principal practice across the boundaries of the schools in

which they operate (Honig, 2012). For example, as one school develops promising units of study

in support of deep learning, they will be networked with interested school teams that are more

nascent in these approaches.

Communities of practice reach the *Consolidate* phase when they gain legitimacy

throughout the organization. Legitimacy involves organizational members seeing this knowledge

building approach as a viable way of dealing with multiple organizational functions, from

solving pedagogical problems to inducting new members of the organization. Principal

supervisors are in an ideal position to validate and support the expansion of this approach across

the organization. This OIP is built on the principle of symmetry (Watkins et al., 2018), which

means that deep learning for principals will support deep learning for teachers, which will in turn

enhance deep learning for students. Consequently, one of the key places where consolidation will

materialize is when CoPs reach beyond the ranks of principal teams and include teachers and

even students. Other places that will support this growth include the lateral support structures

within the district, such as the CVSD Curriculum Department. Once an emergent area of

knowledge becomes better understood and explicitly codified, it becomes the responsibility of

the community to ensure that new members are educated in that practice. Entities such as the CVSD Curriculum Department will play an important role by amplifying the visibility and energy of the various communities.

The final phase of the process, *Transform,* involves CoPs becoming the focal structure of the organization. That is, they transcend being an integral structure and become deeply embedded in the organizational fabric and culture. As Wenger et al. (2002) note, "…communities do not merely transform how the business operates, they transform it continuously*"* (p. 205). While this is an evolutionary process, principal supervisors might support this phase by developing internal support mechanisms to advance principal leadership. For instance, this might include the development of a district level support team that provides education to newly established CoPs in the district. This might also be accelerated by providing more resources to various schools in the district to encourage deeper participation in CoPs.

**Core Disciplines for Building a Learning Organization**

While there is a strong body of theoretical knowledge about organizational learning (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Belle, 2016; Senge, 1990), some researchers have argued that this literature has yet to add up to a coherent or useful body of knowledge for practitioners (Austin & Harkins, 2008; Lipshitz et al., 2002). For instance, Lipshitz et al. (2002) argue that the organizational learning posited by these theorists, "…is probably more of a visionary rhetorical device than a realizable empirical entity" (p. 94). However, others have identified a correlation between supportive and inclusive leadership and organizational learning (Austin & Harkins, 2008; Johnston & Caldwell, 2001). Notwithstanding these concerns, I will utilize a practitioner's guide (Senge et al., 1994) from *The Fifth Discipline* (Senge, 1990) to surface some of the tools that system leaders may utilize in establishing a learning organization. As Senge (1990) argues,

"organizations learn only through individuals who learn, but individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning" (p.139). Hence there are some key actions that leaders can take that will help to catalyze both individual and organizational learning. Senge outlines five disciplines (*Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision*, *Team Learning* and *System Thinking*) and argues that when they are viewed as disciplines, "…as a series of practices and principles that must be applied to be useful…" (Senge, 1990, p.147), then leaders will lay the ground work for organizational learning. Senge et al. (1994) offer several processes for leaders to deepen their practice associated with organizational learning. I apply one of these tools, *Designing a Learning Organization*, to the practice of organizational learning among the CVSD principal supervisors and principals.

Senge et al. (1994) propose that a natural starting point for building a learning organization is to design processes that identify and respond to the organization's learning priorities. The initial phase, *Establishing Groups*, requires the formation of teams consisting of those committed to organizational improvement and those who have sufficient authority to support this work. The authors argue that a vertical slice of the organization is most beneficial for this part of the process, hence this might involve teams of teachers, principals, central office staff and principal supervisors coming together to frame a picture of what organizational learning could look like relative to key areas of need. The *Divergent Thinking* phase involves establishing a vision and actively exploring actions steps and policies that support the creation of a learning culture. It also involves the multilayer teams identifying potential barriers, designing mitigation strategies, and establishing approaches to capitalize on places where learning is already evident. The various schools that are represented in this process in CVSD would bring a wealth of

perspectives to this process, and principal supervisors play a key role in facilitating the

formulation of action steps among such teams.

The next two phases, *Clarity and Convergent Thinking,* involve consolidating and

refining a focus on key performance goals. Here the teams finalize the actions they intend to take

and eliminate actions which are extraneous to their priorities. Potential actions are those that are

purposeful for advancing organizational priorities, as well as steps intended to remove barriers to

learning. Principal supervisors act as facilitators to both sets of actions, as they often have the

ability to resource positive action, and the authority to remove obstacles as they materialize.

*Presentation and Priorities* is a process of detailing personal and group priorities. Given

that this phase will surface multiple priorities at first, it is augmented by a secondary process of

alignment with the most critical organizational goals. The important point here is for the process

to be structured for all members of the team to be heard so that their perspectives are understood

prior to commencing formal action. *Implementation* involves identifying champions and creating

task forces for each of the chosen priorities. Teams take responsibility for implementation,

monitoring the desired results and reporting back to the larger group to benefit from the

experience. It is important to note that this process is closely related to the knowledge building

process as it is driven by adaptive and collaborative leadership approaches and recognizes the

iterative and organic nature of team learning (Senge, 1990).

### Critical Organizational Analysis

Several tools will be used to analyze the organizational change effort. A combination of

evidence from the change readiness assessment, as well as tools embedded in the proposed

change models will be useful. It is helpful to analyze the efficacy of the change agents in this

OIP, the processes they utilize to advance their work, as well as the status of the environment in

which they propose to do this work. More specifically, I will utilize evidence from a force field analysis and the change readiness inventory to assess and describe the changes needed; I will use the *Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards* (CCSSO, 2015) to analyze the leadership efficacy of principal supervisors. Finally, I will use *Stages of Community Development* (Wenger et al., 2002) to analyze the social conditions being created to advance the work.

**Force Field Analysis**

Given the historical challenge associated with principals and their supervisors consistently engaging in instructional leadership, it is necessary to examine the forces that conspire to keep principals and supervisors away from this work. A force field analysis, as described in Cawsey et al. (2016), will allow CVSD to assess forces in support of change, and those that are in opposition to it. The authors argue that in order to create change, leaders must change the equilibrium between the "driving forces" and "restraining forces" (p. 196) associated with the change effort. The force field analysis completed by both principals and supervisors elicits structural, political and cultural barriers that keep them away from discourse and practice related to teaching and learning. This force field analysis is utilized to asses the strength of the forces that inhibit meaningful interactions between principals and their supervisors, the strategies that can be utilized to diminish these forces, and further actions that can be taken to strengthen more desirable engagement. Table 2.1 outlines the key forces at play in this configuration.

Table 2.1

*Force Field Analysis*

| Driving Forces | Restraining Forces |
|---|---|
| Redesigned provincial curriculum | Provincial labour strife/low trust with union |
| Aligned strategic vision and plan | Principal supervisor workload |

| | |
|---|---|
| School and district leadership standards | Nascent implementation plans in some sites |
| Positive leadership culture | Inexperienced principals |
| Supportive policy governance structure | Cyclical political instability amongst trustees |
| Organizational openness to innovation | Long-term financial limitations |

The forces outlined in Table 2.1 are not exhaustive but represent the significant pressures that

will impact the change effort both positively and negatively. Cawsey et al. (2016) state that the

force field analysis must be conducted in such a way as to assess the immediacy and strength to

"…understand how the forces might be altered to produce a more hospitable climate for

change…" (p. 197). While some of the restraining forces cannot be immediately mitigated,

resources can be allocated to strengthen the driving forces and thus lessen the risks associated

with negative forces. For example, while many of the CVSD principals are inexperienced, the

positive and trusting leadership culture between principals and senior leaders enables principal

supervisors to more successfully support the desired changes.

**Change Readiness Analysis**

Change readiness processes display strengths and also provide insights for change

management. While the proposed changes to the education system in CVSD are ultimately

discontinuous and potentially disruptive, the processes for change utilized by the organizational

members are largely incremental (Cawsey et al., 2016). That is, while we seek to fundamentally

shift education to become more equitable and personalized, there is no crisis that suggests that it

ought to be immediately overhauled. The evidence from the change readiness tools suggests high

levels of executive support and openness to change, credible numbers of change champions, and

consistent measures of accountability (Cawsey et al., 2016). Principals and supervisors alike

have a deep understanding of the purpose of the change effort, though their access to the

necessary resources and support is moderate. Overall, this suggests that there are strong

indicators of readiness to proceed.

**Leadership Standards**

The Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards (CCSSO, 2015) and the *British*

*Columbia Principals and Vice-principals Association Leadership Standards* (BCPVPA, 2013),

typically used for supervision and evaluation, are also helpful tools for assessing and advancing

leadership skills among principals and their supervisors. There are two overlapping standards

within these two documents that will help to drive this change effort. These standards are

connected to instructional leadership, as well as to the adaptive and distributed leadership

approaches which drive this OIP. The CCSSO (2015) standards outline four critical dimension

that are germane to this problem of practice:

- Standard 1: Principal supervisors dedicate their time to helping principals grow as
  instructional leaders;

- Standard 2: Principal supervisors coach and support individual principals and engage in
  effective professional learning strategies to help principals grow as instructional leaders;

- Standard 3: Principal supervisors use evidence of principals' effectiveness to determine
  necessary improvements in principals' practice to foster a positive educational
  environment that supports the diverse cultural and learning needs of students; and

- Standard 4: Principal supervisors engage principals in the formal district principal
  evaluation process in ways that help them grow as instructional leaders. (p. 8)

These standards are aligned with the BCPVPA Standards (2013) for principals, which outline the

responsibilities of principals to "…engage in effective supervision that focuses on instructional

and assessment practices that maximize student development, engagement, and learning" (p. 13).

These tools can work in tandem to provide information about the extent to which supervisors and

principals are engaged in the behaviours designed to improve teacher and student learning.

**Stages of Community Development**

Complexity theory (Lichtenstein et al., 2006), social learning theory (Wenger, 1998;

Wenger et al., 2002; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) and organizational learning

theory (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Senge, 1990), underpin this critical analysis, thus it is important

to examine the nature of the learning community designed to support both adult and student

learning. Wenger et al. (2002) describe five stages of community development (*Potential,*

*Coalescing, Maturing, Stewardship and Transformation*), which can be used as an analytical tool

to assess the level of cohesion that exists within the organizational ecosystem. For the purposes

of this analysis, I will only explore the first two stages of this continuum. It is understood that the

development of CoPs will not be a smooth process, as it often involves difficult transitions and

overcoming multiple obstacles. However, in order to advance the change agenda organizational

energies must be invested in consciously launching the process. Hence, a focal point of analysis

should be the conditions that are established at the outset of the change initiative (Weiner, 2009)

intended to coalesce extant social networks into purposeful CoPs. A different set of processes are

considered as the change efforts matures and seeks to sustain itself, but critical thought should be

given to the deliberate actions taken to initiate the change.

I provide this analysis using the three critical features of a community of practice: the

*domain*, the *community*, and the *practice*. At the outset, two key issues that CVSD principal

supervisors will be faced with are defining the scope of the domain and establishing the value of

sharing. The work of principals is broad and all encompassing (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007;

Leithwood et al., 2008; Pollock et al., 2017) hence it is critical that the domain of instructional

leadership be clarified sufficiently for principals to discern the areas in which they will share

practice. Wenger et al. (2002) suggest that at the outset of the community development process,

the domain must be connected to the organization's core business, must be a source of passion

for its leaders, and must be broad enough to welcome many new members. It is evident in CVSD

that this has not yet been sufficiently accomplished. While instructional leadership is broadly

understood as important and correlated to student achievement (Hallinger, 2011; Hattie, 2009;

Leithwood et al. 2008), its varying definitions and manifestations have created disparate practice

among principals (Leithwood, 2013). Some perceive that this is done through the evaluation

process, others by regular classroom visits, and still others by engaging in collaborative practice

with teachers. These differences also exist among CVSD principal supervisors who themselves

have different conceptualizations of system level instructional leadership and the practices that

accompany it. Some rely on practices related to coaching (Aguilar, 2013; Robertson, 2008), and

others engage in more directive supervision of their principals. Beyond building on what is a

well-established case for change in CVSD, principal supervisors will work closely with

principals to commence the process of clarifying the domain of instructional leadership as related

to deep learning, as well as the importance of sharing practices. This involves interviewing

members, identifying and connecting thought leaders, and creating preliminary designs for their

CoPs (Wenger et al., 2002).

The central community issue at the outset of the change initiative is finding people who

are already working together on key areas and building trust among them to benefit from deeper

networking practice (Wenger et al., 2002). In CVSD, principals have loose networks related to

various domains. However, most of these networks are based operational issues in running their

schools. While there is a congenial leadership culture in the district, there are limited processes for sharing practices associated with deepening instructional practice among principals and their supervisors. The evidence from the readiness survey indicates moderate to high levels of trust among principals and supervisors, however intentional work is required to establish the kind of trust related to being vulnerable about one's instructional practice (Ferrin & Dirks, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Many principals do not have thoughtfully facilitated conversations with their colleagues about leadership pedagogy, especially as it pertains to the new provincial curriculum. As Wenger et al. (2002) maintain, the main challenge for learning communities at this stage is to "…balance the need to let its members develop relationships and trust against the early need to demonstrate the value of the community" (p. 83). Principal supervisors must work on the delicate balance of incubating ideas about instructional practice, and at the same time build relationships that are trusting enough for members to take the professional risk of sharing. Principal supervisors must build a case for membership among their principals, initiate safe collaborations, and surface ideas that are worth sharing.

Finally, the main challenge related to developing practice at the outset of the change process rests with identifying the common knowledge needs of the groups, establishing what specific knowledge should be shared, and how it should be disseminated. Wenger et al. (2002) note that "communities effectively steward knowledge in part by creating technical jargon, specialized methods, and customized environments" (p. 151). In CVSD there are a range of topics for principals to explore, as informal teams have already begun to discuss problems of practice in areas such as literacy instruction, inclusive education, and competency-based assessment. However, there are no structured designs for how these teams operate, and hence there are limited mechanisms for the stewardship of this knowledge. Wenger et al. (2002)

suggest that the most important factor in the success of a community's practice is the strength of

its leadership and argue that the role of *community coordinator* is critical to overall success.

Community coordinators build the community's practice by sharing lessons learned, organizing

learning events, and disseminating tools to learning teams. Since communities are at an early

stage of development in CVSD, they are also nascent in their practice around these various

components. For instance, there are no formally appointed coordinators among groups of

principals who help to steward the knowledge that is developed. In order to advance practice in

this area, principal supervisors will need to allocate resources to the various teams to create these

structures. The support of the CVSD Curriculum and Learning Services Departments is also

helpful to this regard, as they can serve as community coordinators by coaching principals,

building learning networks, co-designing required tools and methods, and facilitating the sharing

of knowledge gathered across the various domains (Houchens et al., 2016; Rincon-Gallardo &

Fullan, 2015).

## Possible Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

In this section I examine three possible solutions to address this OIP. Possible solutions

include maintaining the status quo, taking a more directive approach, or utilizing an emergent

approach involving CoPs. The status quo solution is a viable option, as it entails leaving district

structures as they currently are and allowing the change effort to take its own course. Taking a

more control-oriented approach is also a viable solution, given my positional authority. Finally,

an emergent CoP approach is offered as a promising option. Each of the three approaches will be

explored in terms of desired structural changes to the organization, as well as the required

technical and human resources.

The research on principal supervisor practice (Baker & Bloom, 2017; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Honig, 2012) identifies five clusters of practice that might develop in learning focused relationships between supervisors and principals:

- *Joint work* refers to the idea that instructional leadership is a shared responsibility for principals and supervisors, and is typically reinforced through collaborating on problems of practice related to teaching and learning;

- *Differentiation* is the practice of providing differential supports for principals based upon their personal needs and the unique needs of the school;

- *Modeling* entails the principal supervisor demonstrating thinking and/or action for the purposes of providing exemplars of effective practice;

- *Tools* are artifacts or protocols used to strengthen instructional leadership practice; and

- *Brokering* involves connecting principals to external experts and buffering them from bureaucratic responsibilities that would otherwise keep them away from preferred work.

Honig (2012) refers to this idealized partnership as learner focused relationships, an idea which supports the building of CoPs (Wenger et al., 2002; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). As these practices deepen, the principal supervisors' actions are intended to define and clarify the domain of instructional leadership with principals, expand and strengthen the community of leaders across multiple schools in the district, and deepen and sustain leadership practice related to deep learning. Each of the three solutions presented below will explore how the five clusters of principal supervisor practice and the three dimensions of CoPs will shape the instructional leadership practice of the various principals in the district.

**Status Quo**

CVSD is a high achieving district, and with little intervention from the senior educators, could conceivably achieve some of the goals associated with the provincial policy for student success (BC Ministry of Education, 2018). Many teachers would implement the redesigned curriculum as needed and would do so under the variable supervision and support of principals in the district. Principal supervisors would continue to support principals to the best of their ability and would support the change within the limitations of their existing responsibilities. The tools and approaches that would support principal development may be developed in some pockets of the district and would see some schools emerge with viable solutions to curricular problems, while others would not. The district would realize some positive incremental changes in practice, and innovations would be diffused slowly across the organization (Bentley, 2009).

In the status quo approach, CVSD would utilize the existing leadership standards to outline the expectations for principals as leaders. The instructional leadership standards clearly outline the responsibilities of principals to provide support to teachers by "…engaging in effective supervision that focuses on instructional and assessment practices that maximize student development, engagement, and learning (BCPVPA, 2013, p. 8). This framework currently serves as a guidepost for principals to support the implementation of the provincial curriculum and can be used in support of that effort. Principal supervisors use this tool to inform the district's expectations for leadership, and to guide the principal evaluation process. Similarly, the current *Dimensions of Practice* (BCSSA, 2014) serves as a useful framework for principal supervisor practice. Continued focus on the various components of system leadership including the operational, political and bureaucratic dimensions will peripherally support the work of principals. Where appropriate, principal supervisors will endeavour to "…create system

conditions that allow for the development of structures and practices that facilitate learning"
(BCSSA, 2014, p. 8), and would do so within the confines of a manageable set of responsibilities
established by the superintendent. These tools can be used to evaluate principal supervisors and
provide general guidance relative to the district's expectations for instructional leadership.

An important aspect of the status quo solution is the nature of the relationships that exist
between principals and their supervisors, and the approaches that are used to share and improve
instructional practice. Principal supervisors and principals already meet many of the conditions
required to respond to the instructional challenges presented by the re-designed provincial
curriculum (BC Ministry of Education, 2015b). For instance, principal supervisors may continue
to nurture individual principals to take risks related to improving the quality of instruction in
schools. They may also continue to communicate the provincial direction and the CVSD
strategic plan as a means of creating system alignment. The district vision supports the
development of change in school environments where the cultural conditions are amenable to the
effort (Connolly, James, & Beales, 2011). In this scenario, principal supervisors may continue to
incrementally advance the work of deep learning at a pace enabled by existing resources.

In this status quo scenario, a limited number of common practices and tools might be
developed by principal supervisors to advance the system change effort. These changes are
moderated by the existing nature of their responsibilities and the practical ramifications of
dealing with the competing demands of their roles (Honig, 2012; Spillane 1998; Stein & Nelson,
2003). Nonetheless, the existing structures do facilitate the development of approaches that may
advance principal practice. Honig (2004; 2009) has identified that in the face significant
bureaucratic and political demands principal supervisors advance the work of individual schools
by adopting non-traditional forms of capacity building. Hence in the absence of system-wide

efforts to fundamentally reshape their work, some of the CVSD principal supervisors will deploy

idiosyncratic approaches to advancing learning in schools where the contextual and cultural

conditions are amenable to such practices (Schein, 2010).

In the status quo scenario, principal supervisors will engage in each of these practices, but

in an inconsistent manner. Table 2.2 outlines how each of these practices will be manifested if

the current organizational structures in CVSD are maintained as is.

Table 2.2

*Status Quo Solution*

| Principal Supervisor Practice | CoP Dimension | Status Quo Description |
|---|---|---|
| Joint Work | Domain clarification | <ul><li>Build principal instructional capacity</li><li>Inconsistent patterns of practice</li></ul> |
| Differentiation | Practice diversification | <ul><li>Limited differentiation</li><li>More focused time with inexperienced principals on technical issues</li></ul> |
| Modeling | Domain clarification | <ul><li>Limited opportunities for modeling</li><li>Limited development of metacognitive strategies related to instructional leadership</li></ul> |
| Tools | Practice sophistication | <ul><li>Tools not consistently anchored to districts instructional expectations</li><li>Limited curation of best practice tools and protocols</li></ul> |
| Brokering | Community expansion and protection | <ul><li>Inconsistent brokering and bridging to other district services and colleagues</li><li>Inconsistent buffering from bureaucratic responsibilities</li></ul> |

Adapted from Honig (2012) and Wenger et al. (2002).

The central point here is that principal supervisors would utilize some of the specified

approaches but would not do so consistently. This would potentially compromise the key

principle of equity by allowing some principals to advance deep learning practices in their

schools, leaving others to struggle or not benefit from learning in other parts of the organization (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Senge, 1990).

Finally, the status quo option might yield more predictable approaches in terms of how the change effort will be monitored and resourced. The current CVSD strategic plan (Central Valley School District, 2016a) utilizes a Balanced Scorecard approach (Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Rohm, Wilsey, Perry, & Montgomery, 2013), which tracks performance outcomes in four key dimensions (*Organizational Growth and Learning, Internal Processes, Financial Outcomes, and Client Success*). Based on this model, CVSD has the capacity to deploy resources to address high priority organizational needs. The majority of data gathered in this area relates to the district's ongoing principal recruitment challenges. As part of the district budget process, the board might allocate additional resources to the superintendent to address urgent district needs related to leadership succession. In the absence of other evidence related to leadership development, CVSD would continue to place more focus on student performance and would respond to possible decreases in student achievement with renewed supports for classroom instruction, possibly at the expense of any structured plan related to the development of instructional leadership across the district.

**Directive Approach**

In keeping with the historically conservative approach to leadership in CVSD, the problem of practice related to this OIP might also be resolved with a more directive approach. This involves the senior leadership team utilizing their positional authority over principals to establish the leadership standards, articulate the key practices expected of principal supervisors and principals, and systematically implement them in a prescribed timeline. Because the government has already established the provincial curriculum, the senior leaders in the CVSD

are able to reasonably leverage the instructional expectations by aligning the district's leadership standards with the provincial curricular framework. The implementation plan thereafter would ensure that organizational milestones are established in a timeline prescribed by the superintendent.

Under this option, the leadership standards for principals and their supervisors would be established and mandated by the district. While it is not necessary that it be created in isolation, the superintendent would limit the process by which the instructional leadership dimensions are articulated. For example, I might have the team of principal supervisors review the current principal leadership standards (BCPVPA, 2013) to ensure that they understand the district expectations held for principals. These might be presented to the principals for clarification before they would be used as a tool to evaluate performance and drive salary increments. Similarly, the superintendent can establish the principal supervisor standards (BCSSA, 2014) with limited consultation. Emphasis would be placed on standards that are more germane to supervising principal instructional leadership, and the superintendent would use these to evaluate principal supervisors as needed.

Results from the organizational analysis can also be utilized to advance the directive option. For example, the force field analysis and readiness survey (Cawsey et al., 2016) point to several structural advantages that might be exploited to accelerate the expected changes. The provincial curriculum is supported by an aligned strategic plan and a governance structure that has given the superintendent authority to implement needed changes. The team of principals are new to their positions and are more likely to accept direction from their supervisors. This is also true of the supervisors themselves who are directed under the superintendent's authority. The change readiness survey points to a high degree of openness to change, strong executive support,

and a system that has been historically amenable to external accountability measures. The

superintendent has authority to establish stronger reward and accountability systems for principal

supervisors to guide them to establishing the required components.

In terms of the key approaches that principal supervisors might use in this option, Table

2.3 outlines practices relative to the five clusters of principal supervisor practice, and the key

components of CoPs. (Honig, 2012; Wenger et al., 2002). The distinction here is that principal

Table 2.3

*Directive Solution*

| Principal Supervisor Practice | CoP Dimension | Directive Description |
|---|---|---|
| Joint Work | Domain clarification | • Delineation of principal responsibilities based on hierarchy<br>• Supervise and direct principal behaviour |
| Differentiation | Practice diversification | • Uniform practice across schools<br>• Structured time with inexperienced principals; less time with experienced principals |
| Modeling | Domain clarification | • Modeling practice to provide consistent direction<br>• Limited development of metacognitive strategies related to instructional leadership |
| Tools | Practice sophistication | • Tools developed by district staff for creating consistency of practice<br>• Curation of tools managed and disseminated by district staff |
| Brokering | Community expansion and protection | • Brokering and bridging to services managed by the district's centralized departments<br>• Bureaucratic policies created to control and direct practice |

Adapted from Honig (2012) and Wenger et al. (2002)

supervisors establish the agenda for principal practice based on the predetermined leadership

standards, their vision for the district, and an orientation to control. With limited differentiation

among principals, the changes in CVSD advance along prescribed lines under the supervision of the principal supervisors who attend to a finite set of indicators across schools.

Under the directive approach the resource and measurement systems are oriented around a traditional set of performance measures. Principal supervisors use the leadership standards (BCPVPA, 2013) to evaluate principal performance in a similar manner that the superintendent uses to evaluate supervisor performance (BCSSA, 2014). Resources might include training and support for externally monitoring prescribed outcomes. Additional resources would be allocated to schools that do not meet the district student achievement benchmarks based on standardized provincial assessments. Primary emphasis for system change is measured through graduation rates and provincial assessments. These tools might allow the CVSD board to provide resources to support struggling schools and would also be used as an accountability measure to ensure that principals are effectively supervising teacher practice.

**Community of Practice Approach**

The CoP approach is more aligned with the adaptive and distributed leadership principles outlined in this OIP, is emergent (Holman, 2010; Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Wheatley, 1993) and participatory (Gronn, 2010; Harris, 2011; Spillane, 2006). This is in keeping with the approach which has been used provincially to develop the curriculum (BC Ministry of Education, 2015b), and supports the values of trust, integrity, teamwork and respect publicly expressed by the CVSD Board of Education (Central Valley School District, 2016a). It capitalizes on the evidence gathered from the organizational analysis and recognizes adaptive leadership as a catalyst for enhancing deep learning in schools (Fullan, et al., 2018; Mehta & Fine, 2019; Watkins et al., 2018).

An important starting point for this approach is the strength of the instructional

framework in the district (Central Valley School District, 2016b). This instructional framework

is the engine that drives the work of teachers, the catalyst for principals to engage teachers, and

for supervisors to collaborate with principals. Put simply, principals need to speak and deeply

understand the language of learning used in their classrooms, in a similar way that principal

supervisors need to understand the language of instructional leadership in their schools. This

supports Leithwood's (2013) position that strong districts expect both school and district leaders

to reflect the associated teaching and leadership standards of the province or district. These

standards also apply to principal supervisors and enhance district coherence when they connect

the behaviours of supervisors to that of principals, and in turn to the instructional practice of

classroom teachers (Honig & Rainey, 2014).

One of the critical elements of the CoP approach is that principals and supervisors make

the instructional leadership standards one of their primary domains. While these documents

already exist (BCPVPA, 2013), it is important that all parties deeply understand them to ensure

that they support the values of the organization (Central Valley School District, 2016a) and the

overall provincial direction. Principals and supervisors can therefore work collaboratively to

understand how these ideas ought to be manifested in schools and co-develop tools that reflect

their local intentions. The same holds true for the supervisor standards which will be co-

developed with principal supervisors to ensure that they are aligned with principal practice, the

core values of the district, and the principles of deep learning (Fullan et al., 2017; Mehta & Fine,

2019; Watkins et al., 2018). In turn, these standards support key structural changes to the roles of

both principals and their supervisors to enhance their ability to meet agreed upon goals. For

example, one of the critical resource requirements is for the district to make it possible for

principals and their supervisors to serve as instructional leaders. Limiting the supervisor's span

of control to more manageable numbers of schools is one tangible way to allocate resources to

support these intentions (Honig, 2012; Honig & Rainey 2014). Principal supervisors who are

more consistently available for their principals are more likely to build the bonds of trust

required to nurture change.

      The CoP approach also articulates several pronounced differences in how the five clusters

of principal supervisor practice are articulated to support principals' leadership (See Table 2.4).

Table 2.4

*Community of Practice Solution*

| Principal Supervisor Practice | CoP Dimension | Community of Practice Description |
|---|---|---|
| Joint Work | Domain clarification | • Work collaboratively with principals to define and articulate parameters of instructional leadership.<br>• Jointly develop problems of practice and explore solutions |
| Differentiation | Practice diversification | • Consistently provide differentiated support and resources to principals based on personal and school needs<br>• Allocate resources equitably to meet emergent needs |
| Modeling | Domain clarification | • Development and promotion of reflexive practice<br>• Consistently model thinking/action<br>• Regular use of metacognitive strategies<br>• Active coaching of principals |
| Tools | Practice sophistication | • Tools developed collaboratively in relation with problems of practice;<br>• Protocols for curation developed collaboratively with principals<br>• Tools and protocols are shared and used to deepen learning conversations |
| Brokering | Community expansion and protection | • Bridge principals to diverse instructional supports |

| | | • Connect principals to external learning communities<br>• Consistently buffer principals from bureaucratic demands |
|---|---|---|

Adapted from Honig (2012) and Wenger et al. (2002)

Each of these practices speak to building CoPs where the supervisor acts in a facilitative co-learner role to build the instructional capacity of principals, and in some cases their own colleagues (Baker & Bloom, 2017). In this option, the CoPs are nurtured by the principal supervisor who plays an increasingly prominent role in relation to the instructional vision, and continuously transforms it based on the emergent needs of the community (Wenger et al., 2002).

In this approach, multiple processes are utilized to evaluate and iteratively resource the learning needs of the various learning communities (Wenger et al., 2002). The district's Balanced Scorecard strategic plan (Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Rohm et al., 2013) entertains both outcome and process measures that provide evidence about the extent to which organizational goals are being met and value is being created for the organization. It also invites central office leaders to explore and support the antecedents of change that may point to long-term organizational success (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). A focus on improving deep learning in the district is therefore assessed not just by student outcomes, but also by improvements in processes (for example) that bring people together to learn. This supports Wenger et al.'s (2002) contention that such "…measures of communities' value creation legitimize their function in the organization, reinforce member participation, and provide a basis for prioritizing activities" (p. 167). These processes are also innate to the adaptive leadership process advanced by Heifetz et al. (2009) who argue that moving repeatedly from the balcony to the practice field requires iterative risk taking in search of imaginative solutions to adaptive problems.

**Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change**

Ethical issues for this OIP are considered in terms of the adaptive and distributed leadership approaches being utilized. Both leadership approaches have noteworthy ethical dimensions which are presented here with particular attention to the fact that I am the superintendent and chief executive officer of CVSD. My considered solutions to the problem of practice speak to a recognition that I do have positional authority to mandate some of the solutions I have chosen to implement through collaborative means. However, it does not diminish the fact that a power imbalance exists between me and the members of the senior executive team, as well as the principals they support. Formal authority must therefore be used judiciously in support of common goals.

The practices of adaptive leadership requiring the leader to mobilize the system surfaces several ethical considerations. Adaptive challenges are fundamentally about "…dancing on the edge of authority into leadership territory" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 25). The authors note that adaptive leadership is dangerous work because the leaders must constantly take risks, from taking on an unwanted challenge to telling people things they may not wish to hear. The act of creating disequilibrium to tackle tough challenges also puts the leader at risk, and therefore necessitates a foundation of trusting relationships to undergird such approaches (Ferrin & Dirks, 2002). Adaptive leaders "…speak the unspeakable" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 82) but must do so in a way that preserves dignity and supports the stated values of the organization. Adaptive leaders also value independent judgment among team members and must create the conditions for team members to safely take risks in service of organizational goals. Heifetz and his colleagues argue that the creation of holding environments, where solutions to pressing problems are incubated in conflictual CoPs carefully designed by the leader, is a critical skill for building adaptive

organizations. The construction of these environments poses ethical challenges, as invariably, the adoption of new ideas often leads to loss for some people in the organization. Nonetheless, leaders are challenged to assist organizational members in heightening their engagement through a process that is inherently conflictual (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015).

Similarly, despite its participatory underpinnings, researchers have suggested that there are ethical challenges associated with distributed leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2009; Harris, 2013; Starratt, 1991). Chief among the concerns is the weight of responsibility for team performance when it falls on the shoulders of a single individual, typically the formal leader. Harris (2013) also warns of the pitfall of allowing distributed leadership to undermine formal authority and negate the influence of the formal leader in situations where it is warranted. The fundamental challenge rests with building trusting relationships so that distributed leadership is authentic "…and is not simply delegation by another name" (Harris, 2013, p. 552). As with other forms of leadership, distributed leadership can also be undermined if power and authority are misused.

Burnes (2009) argues that leading proponents of emergent change, such as that contemplated in this OIP, are less concerned with the issue of ethics. He suggests that the practice of capitalizing on the issues of power and politics that dominate organizational life often expose emergent leaders to dismiss participatory and democratic leadership approaches that would bring about valued ends. These are legitimate concerns, particularly in the corporate world, but I would argue that the liberal principles of equity (Gary, 2006; Raven, 2005) enshrined in the aspirations of deeper learning are intended to engender ethical leadership (Fullan et al., 2017; Watkins et al., 2018). Indeed, because of the sheer complexity of the pedagogical change associated with this OIP, a preferred solution is one associated with guiding

and nurturing change among principals and supervisors, rather than exercising control over their practice (Wagter & Russell, 2016).

Heifetz et al. (2009) suggest that because they operate on the edge of their authority, adaptive leaders must consider three ethical roles. Firstly, they argue that in selecting interventions, adaptive leaders must calculate the potential damage to others and weigh this impact, even if the ends are noble. They also suggest that leaders must assess the damage to one's own personal and deeply held values. They state that successfully leading change "…may demand that you take actions that do not feel right to you, even if you have the capacity for the behavior" (p. 234). Thirdly, they argue that adaptive leaders must continually keep these questions at the forefront of their practice. In other words, leaders must have an ethical framework to both recognize and resolve the predictable dilemmas they will face as a result of consistently leading on the edge.

Ehrich, Klenowski and Spina (2015) argue that such frameworks are useful for principals in understanding and navigating ethical dilemmas. I propose to use Kidder's (1996) ethical decision-making framework as a heuristic for understanding and resolving the dilemmas related to the leadership practices in this OIP. Kidder argues that ethical dilemmas are *right versus right* scenarios that pit one deeply held core value against another, and that these dilemmas fall into four connected categories. The *Truth versus Loyalty* paradigm pits conformity with facts and truthfulness against allegiance to persons, the corporate body or deeply held ideas. The *Individual versus Community* construct pits the interests of the many against the needs of the single individual. When leaders are faced with considering the current needs of the organization over its long-term future health, they are contending with the *Short-term versus Long-term* paradigm. The fourth paradigm, *Justice versus Mercy,* invites us to navigate adherence to rules

and expectations at one end of the spectrum, with care and exception for unique circumstances at the other. In their study, Ehrich et al. (2015) identified that principals acknowledge the existence of such ethical dilemmas in their leadership practice and need to have the skills to navigate them successfully. Kidder (1996) goes further and argues that because truly complex dilemmas often involve multiple competing priorities, leaders must purposefully develop their skills to understand and resolve them confidently.

Kidder (2003) proposes three resolution principles to guide leaders through these complex ethical dilemmas. The *Ends-based Principle* asks leaders to take the action that produces the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Applied to this OIP, it invites the principal supervisor who is faced with a decision about allocating limited resources for school improvement to focus on decisions that positively impact the greatest number of students. The *Rules-based Principle* guides leaders to set a principle or rule against which all future circumstances will be applied. Based on this principle, district leaders faced with the challenge of responding to the differential needs of their principals would establish a consistent model and apply it evenly across all schools regardless of contextual circumstances. The *Care-based Principle* invites leaders to follow the rule of putting the love and care of humankind at the forefront of decision-making. This is consistent with Starratt's (1991) *ethic of caring* which suggests that leaders should be "…grounded in the belief that the integrity of human relationships should be held sacred…" (p. 195). Faced with a school community struggling to meet the needs of its students, the principal supervisor might create a differential resourcing model that meets the needs of the most vulnerable learners. Both Kidder (1996; 2003) and Ehrich et al. (2015) argue that using resolution principles are not binary choices for leaders, since compromise solutions can arise out of thoughtful analysis and reflection. Hence the principal

supervisor may creatively and courageously discover solutions that support the interests of the

individual as well as the full organization. Kidder (2003) argues that decisions such as these

require moral courage, "the quality of mind and spirit that enables one to face up to ethical

dilemmas and moral wrongdoings firmly and confidently, without flinching or retreating" (p.

16). This is a critical disposition for principal supervisors as they look to humanely but resolutely

resolve the challenges posed by implementation.

  This chapter outlined the foundations for the planning processes related to the problem of

practice. Adaptive and distributed leadership were applied to the critical components of the

change model. The CoP option was articulated relative to these leadership approaches,

demonstrating the critical features of how principal supervisors might approach the task of

deepening principal instructional leadership practice along five critical paths. Three potential

resolutions were offered, each with distinct ramifications for structural organization change and

resource allocation. Further, the ethical dimensions of these approaches were considered to

ensure that the proposed actions support the values and beliefs of the organization. This sets the

stage for the implementation and measurement stage which is presented in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3: IMPLEMENTATION, EVAULATION AND COMMUNICATION

### Change Implementation Plan

While the central challenge of this OIP relates to building the instructional leadership capacity of principals, it is guided by an organizational imperative for improved student learning. The actions that principal supervisors take in relation to their teams of principals is one component of a comprehensive strategic plan (Central Valley School District, 2016a) designed to improve student success. The instructional leadership goals serve the purpose of building teacher capacity to improve the quality of student learning experiences. This section will therefore outline the goals and priorities of this implementation plan in relation to the overall strategic direction in CVSD. This plan will be contextualized among the range of strategies broadly designed to improve teaching and learning across the district.

The goals specifically related to the implementation plan involve principal supervisors playing an active role in building the leadership capacity of principals to support deep learning (Fullan et al., 2018; Mehta & Fine, 2019) in their schools. CVSD has established a Balanced Scorecard strategic plan (Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Rohm et al., 2013) comprised of four distinct perspectives: *Learning and Growth*, which refers to the actions the organization will take to improve its human capital; *Internal Processes* are the mechanisms that allow the organization to operate efficiently; the *Financial* pillar refers to the resources that are allocated in service of the organizational vision; and the *Customer* pillar speaks to a commitment to the organization's clients. In this regard, the CVSD strategic plan (Central Valley School District, 2016a) establishes the following aspirations in each of these respective areas:

- Progressive Workforce: We provide a workplace that fosters creativity, inspires excellence, and challenges everyone to embrace growth (Learning and Growth);

- Engaging Opportunities: We provide engaging opportunities for every member of our learning community to contribute to student success (Internal Processes);

- Optimized Resources: We are creative and responsible in the management of educational resources (Financial); and

- Student Success: Our students are engaged, challenged, and prepared for a lifetime of success (Customer). (p. 1)

Within these four perspectives are corresponding goals, objectives and projects designed to realize these aspirational statements. Each goal is managed by at least one member of the CVSD executive team and is cascaded to various departments and schools within the district. The strategy map in Figure 3.1 outlines the goals associated with each of the four strategic plan perspectives, and the relationships that exist between them.
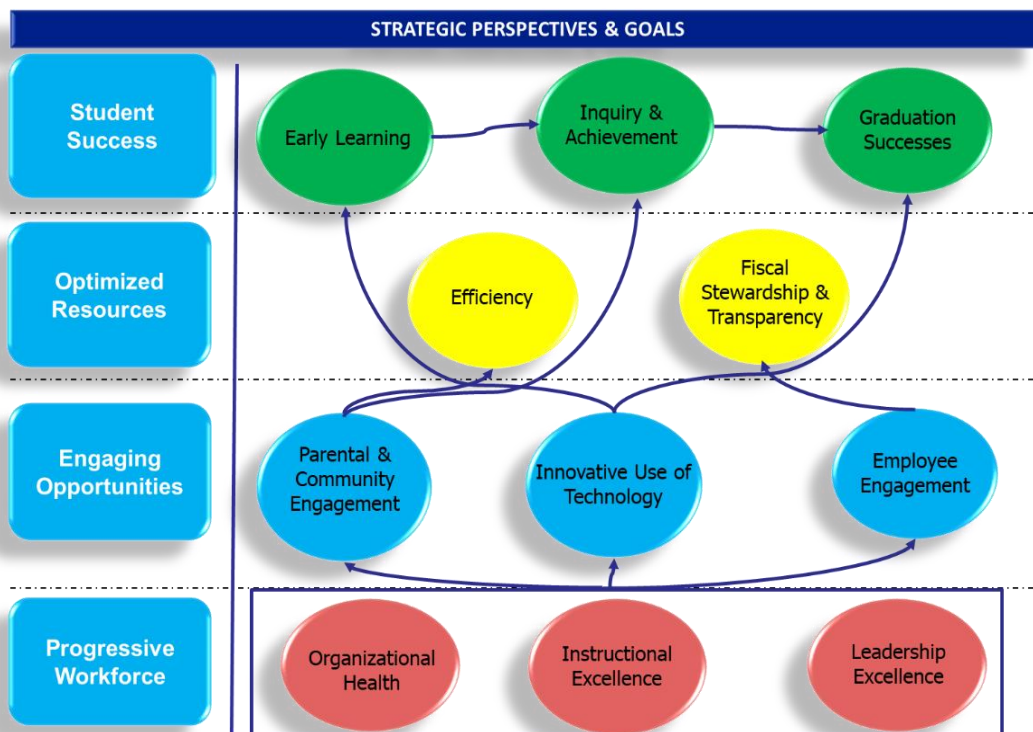


*Figure 3.1* CVSD Strategy Map. Adapted from Central Valley School District (2016a).

The task of building leadership capacity among principals for deep learning is also nuanced to the level of schooling. Elementary schools have different urgencies than middle schools, which are also different from those at secondary schools. Hence the goal of building leadership capacity must be sufficiently differentiated to address the school level contextual factors as well as the diverse skill levels of various principals (Honig, 2012). Differentiation must address the organizational goals and expectations, the unique needs of the schools, the competencies of the individual principals, the goals of their instructional staff, and the learning needs of the students. Notwithstanding these factors, the goals related to the change implementation plan involve four distinct domains:

- co-develop a clear vision for instructional leadership;

- co-develop competencies and descriptors for instructional leadership practice;

- establish a system of support to build principal instructional leadership capacity; and

- remove barriers and amplify successful principal practice.

These goals are embedded with the Progressive Workforce domain and are also connected to several other goals in the CVSD strategic plan.

**Implementation Plan Steps**

The implementation steps associated with this OIP are derived from the Knowledge Building System (Wenger et al., 2002), and also rely on critical components of principal supervisor practice identified by Honig (2012). While the steps are presented here in a linear fashion, it is important to note that they are evolutionary and iterative in nature and will likely be manifested at different rates across the district. The contextual and cultural differences among various schools will naturally result in uneven goal attainment.

Wenger et al. (2002) outline five phases for building knowledge initiatives: Prepare, Launch, Expand, Consolidate, and Transform (See Appendix B). During the first phase, the district clarifies and articulates its vision and standards for instructional leadership, particularly as it applies to deep learning (Fullan et al., 2018; Mehta & Fine, 2019). This is done jointly between principals and their supervisors and will allow them to identify and assess gaps between the current and desired state. Because a primary implementation approach involves utilizing CoPs, principal supervisors will commence the Launch phase by first identifying places where principal CoPs exist so that their practice may be amplified as models for resolving other problems of practice in schools. During this phase, the principal supervisor provides resources to allow loosely structured teams to begin to formalize their work. He/she must also support the emergence of new CoPs in the most needed areas. For example, several CVSD schools struggle with low early literacy results, hence the elementary principal supervisor will need to allocate resources to design CoPs in the area of literacy leadership to address principal and teacher capacity gaps.

As CoPs start to take root, the important task of integrating them into the life of the organization will commence. This Expansion phase involves creating cross-functional and cross-school teams of principals, teachers and field services staff to address new problems of practice. For example, secondary school assessments for each of the disciplines is a task that principals can address by leading CoPs in a specific subject area along with teachers and centralized field services staff. The principal supervisor supports this work by providing resources to allow the principal to facilitate these conversations within and across their schools. It is also at this stage when tools are developed to measure the effectiveness of teams and assess the value they create relative to the learning problems being considered. As more CoPs are developed around

emergent problems of practice, principal supervisors can begin to consolidate the work. Gradually, CoPs will be seen as a legitimate way of solving organizational learning challenges. CVSD will establish more formalized policies and procedures for dealing with instructional and leadership problems of practice. The district may allocate resources for positions such as community managers (Wenger et al., 2002) to formally curate knowledge gathered in CoPs, so that successful approaches devised in one school may be successfully deployed in multiple schools. The final stage, Transform, represents the long-term vision for the organization where CoPs become the focal structure for resolving instructional problems of practice. This process is evolutionary; hence it may take years for the district reach this stage.

**Stakeholder Reactions**

An important component of any change effort is understanding and managing the concerns of participants. As this change is part of a province-wide effort, it is helpful to acknowledge the forces of anxiety and resistance that typically accompany such initiatives. Gaubatz and Ensminger (2017) cite a lack of understanding about the need for change, a sense of personal self-efficacy, lack of incentives and support as critical contributors to the level of resistance that may be manifested against a change initiative. Dudar, Scott, and Scott (2017) maintain that stakeholder feedback is essential to gathering a fulsome understanding of organizational members' concerns for the purposes of change management. They argue that it is important to gather multidimensional perspectives to ensure that the voices of all stakeholders, particularly marginalized populations, are heard in order to ensure balanced policy positions. It is therefore essential for principal supervisors to be critically reflective and consider processes that will engage principals, teachers, parents and students throughout this implementation process.

Because the principal-supervisor relationship is the focal point for this OIP, it is important that principal supervisors take a collaborative stance by inviting principals into the various points of inquiry associated with this plan. It is also important for these administrators to reach outside of their roles and engage the broader educational community. Focus groups made up of teachers and students will also provide feedback on leadership competencies. The development and proliferation of CoPs, particularly if they are cross-functional and cross-school, will also allow stakeholders from multiple locations in the school district to have meaningful impact on the outcome of the various change goals.

**Envisioned Future State**

Another important aspect of this implementation plan is identifying and empowering change ambassadors who can support the cultural changes associated with this process. This implementation plan represents one of several key goals of a comprehensive district strategic plan. The overall plan is guided by the CVSD executive team tasked with managing various operational plans. The instructional leadership plan is largely championed by the three assistant superintendents (principal supervisors) who work with over forty principals. They are each supported by small teams of principals who play a leadership role by serving on one of the three implementation teams. The plans designed by these teams are further supported by the various CoPs established to address the specific problems of practice in their schools (See Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

*Change Team Structures*

| Tier 1 | Tier 2 | Tier 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Elementary Assistant Superintendent | Elementary Implementation Team (Comprised of assistant superintendent, two directors of instruction, and five principals) | Leaders of cross-functional CoPs (Comprised of principals, vice-principals and field services teachers, and school-based lead teachers) |

| Middle Assistant Superintendent | Middle Implementation Team (Comprised of assistant superintendent, two directors of instruction, and eight principals) | Leaders of cross-functional CoPs (Comprised of principals, vice-principals and middle school team leaders) |
|---|---|---|
| Secondary Assistant Superintendent | Secondary Implementation Team (Comprised of assistant superintendent, two directors of instruction, and five principals) | Leaders of cross-functional CoPs (Comprised of principals, vice-principals and department leaders, field services teachers) |

## Supports and Resources

In order for this plan to be successful, the members of the various change teams and CoPs must have timely access to resources to realize their goals. In the early stages of the implementation plan, principal supervisors and principals will need support from the Human Resources Department to facilitate the development of the instructional leadership competencies. Support in the form of release time, consultants, as well as time at key meetings communicate a level of support that allows the next layer of implementation teams to propel their work. Financial resources are also needed to restructure the role of principal supervisors. Additional staff must be hired to assume some of the central office responsibilities vacated by principal supervisors as they focus more on schools. Honig and Rainey (2014) argue that a reasonable span of control for principal supervisors should be between eight and ten schools. Since the financial resources in CVSD are not available to meet this ratio, resources must be allocated to principal supervisors to augment their re-designed roles. This comes in the form of leadership coaches who assist them with the goal of providing increased support for principals (Houchens et al., 2016; Robertson, 2008). Financial resources must also be allocated to providing principals

with more administrative time in their schools so that they may more consistently attend to instructional matters.

In addition to these resources, provisions must be made to support the work of the cross-functional CoPs created to improve leadership practice. The primary resource will be release time from their school-based responsibilities so that they may meet to devise and implement needed interventions. The task of curating and leveraging solutions identified by the various teams must also be supported by technologies that will allow knowledge resources to be effectively shared (Wenger, White, & Smith, 2009). The deployment of these technologies must be supported by trained personnel deployed to facilitate ease of implementation. Resources will also be needed for professional development, as teams may be required to leave the district to learn more effective strategies, or to benefit from external experts.

Finally, an integral feature of the implementation plan is the ongoing learning of the senior executive team itself. Ideally, the team will benefit from some form of ongoing consultancy or partnership with a local university to support their systemic leadership efforts (Watkins et al., 2018). As this change effort is province-wide, opportunities may be brokered for the CVSD senior leaders to build CoPs with the senior teams from other districts. External consultants from local universities might advance this work by providing technical expertise, supporting action research and/or connecting district staff with districts doing similar work outside of the province. This work deepens the implementation effort and simultaneously models ongoing learning for all district staff.

**Implementation Issues**

As with any change effort, potential implementation issues are a legitimate concern which should be proactively addressed to mitigate anticipated challenges. Caution should be

extended to ensure that the plan is well resourced, as it will impact the perceptions and efficacy of the organizational members (Gaubatz & Ensminger, 2017). One of the primary implementation challenges is the span of control of the principal supervisors (Honig & Rainey, 2014). This plan relies in part on the use of retired principals to serve as instructional coaches to provide increased contact time with principals. While their experience is valued, they are less aware of the intricacies of the district's overall strategic plan and must therefore be sufficiently briefed to ensure their efforts are aligned with the district's current direction.

As mentioned earlier, there are significant leadership succession challenges in CVSD which have caused unprecedented and frequent movement of principals into schools they are sometimes inadequately prepared to lead. Principal movement will impact the goal to develop CoPs across schools, as principals need the benefit of time in their schools to better understand the context and learning challenges experienced by staff and students. Stable relationships are one of the key factors in the development of trust between leaders and followers (Ferrin & Dirks, 2002; Kutsyuruba, Walker, & Noonan, 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015), hence it is important that principal supervisors build trusting relationships with their principals. Principal supervisors must sufficiently engage with new principals to ensure that they have clarity about the vision for change so that they may meaningfully participate in the necessary components of the plan.

Finally, as senior leaders in the district, it is important that principal supervisors look beyond the confines of their own role in the implementation plan and understand the broader imperatives associated with the change. Because the three principal supervisors are responsible for developing instructional leadership practice at specific levels, they run the risk of missing the opportunity to benefit from and influence other domains in the organization. It is therefore

necessary that principal supervisors expand their own boundaries to ensure that they capitalize

upon and inform changes in other parts of the organization (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner,

2015). For example, communication processes must be established to allow successes that

materialize in elementary schools to be modified and utilized in secondary schools. A deep

understanding of the overall system change effort advances the notion of coherence and will

increase opportunities for engagement of both supervisors and principals (Fullan et al., 2018).

**Short, Medium and Long-term Goals**

Intermediary goals will keep stakeholders engaged over the course of the change plan.

Short-term goals which are established within the first twelve months of the plan include

communicating the need for change, making preliminary preparations, recruiting change leaders,

conducting gap analyses, forming CoPs, and communicating the plan as a part of the overall

organizational vision. These steps materialize in the form of the formal Launch (Wenger et al.,

2002), which is communicated both verbally and with the district's various communication tools

– websites, intranet and social media channels. At this early stage, the important targets are

represented by finite projects which when completed present opportunities to generate positive

momentum. For example, posting the CVSD leadership development plan on the district's

website is a finite task, and communicates the district's commitment to the plan when brought to

the attention of stakeholders.

Medium-term goals which typically range between one to two years, are actioned during

the Expansion phase (Wenger et al., 2002) of the change plan. This is when the work of the

principal supervisors and lead principals becomes more pronounced as they take on initiatives

designed to meet formally stated goals. One such goal might be the district-wide diffusion of

standards-based assessment practices related to the redesigned curriculum. Principals are

engaged by active participation in projects connected to the needs of their school, but also associated with the overall district goal. As CoPs begin to find early solutions to problems of practice, they can be communicated back to the change leaders and across the organization. Mechanisms are established to celebrate early wins, as these results are embedded within the formal reporting structures established by the CVSD strategic plan.

Long-term goals manifested beyond the three-year horizon typically involve systemic changes in teacher practice and improvements in student learning. Outcomes such as these are gauged by lagging measures and are a critical feature of the Consolidation phase (Wenger et al., 2002). For example, increased graduation rates across all student demographics might represent a long-term goal. This stage requires judicious use of key performance indicators, which would be routinely reported as part of an ongoing accountability cycle. Targets which are not met would result in a review of the associated measures and would cause new intervention plans to be developed. Principal supervisors whose schools do not meet desired targets would thus make adjustments to their operational plan, starting with the leadership question emanating from the student learning challenge. This in turn would spawn new or deeper areas of inquiry designed to improve instructional leadership, teaching and learning.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations with this OIP whose challenges warrant the development of mitigation strategies. While the OIP relates to leadership practice, such behaviours are intricately tied to instructional practice, which necessitates trusting partnerships with teachers. Firstly, the persistent labour strife which has been endemic in the province for the last two decades (Fleming, 2011) will impact the ability of principals to work collaboratively with teachers. This will in turn shape the kind of leadership envisioned within this OIP. In an environment beset

with such political tensions, senior leaders must support principals with the skills necessary for building trusting relationships.

A second limitation to positive outcomes is our current system of public education governance. Invariably, practices involving senior educators will be impacted by political forces related to elected trustees, who sometimes engage in self-destructive behaviours. Despite a well-established policy governance structure and general support for system transformation, these threats also exist among CVSD trustees who have periodically engaged in behaviours that interfere with the work of the superintendent and the executive team. As superintendent, it is my responsibility to respond to the competing commitments resulting from poor board governance by working diligently with the elected board.

A final limitation is my own position. As an experienced superintendent, one who has served as both district principal and assistant superintendent, I bring certain biases to the change process which can be compounded by my formal authority. It is often manifested in subordinates telling me what they think I want to hear, as opposed to what I need to hear, at the risk of perceived disapproval. Part of my response to this is to secure a coach who will provide me with feedback about how I interact with my executive team. It is also important that I continue to build trusting relationships with my team so that they feel comfortable enough to challenge my assumptions or disagree with my approaches.

## Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

This section will utilize a combination of the adaptive leadership cycle and the Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Rohm et al., 2013) measurement process to monitor and evaluate the key change processes associated with this OIP. The adaptive leadership process of *observe-interpret-intervene* (Heifetz et al. 2009), and the *Balanced Scorecard Logic Model*

(Rohm et al., 2013; Kaplan &Norton, 1996) will work in complementary fashion to collect

feedback about the success of various interventions to keep the implementation process on track.

Tools such as these are important because they assist change leaders in connecting their actions

to the overall organizational direction and serve as helpful accountability mechanisms to keep

teams on track (Cawsey et al., 2016). Evaluation tools are also helpful for communicating

organizational progress and creating positive momentum to recruit new participants into the

change effort (Rohm et al., 2013).

**Observe-Interpret-Intervene**

A key practice of adaptive leadership is assisting team members to live through

disequilibrium as they experiment with solutions to complex challenges. Heifetz et al. (2009)

propose an iterative cycle of observe-interpret-intervene to assess and respond to these adaptive

challenges. Change leaders in this OIP are required to observe various patterns of interaction

around them, develop hypotheses about the significance of these events, and design interventions

to keep their teams on track with their intended goals.

Applied to this implementation plan, the observation stage involves the principal

supervisor gathering multiple forms of evidence from various principals both by working closely

with them, and also observing their work from afar (Heifetz et al., 2009). This might, for

example, involve participating and actively observing principals interact with a group of teachers

seeking to resolve the challenge of aboriginal student learning at the middle school level. He/she

might step away and gather evidence about the schools these students have attended in the past,

district resource allocation patterns, family and community dynamics, attendance, as well as their

achievement on district assessments. The challenging task of interpretation involves assessing

multiple hypotheses related to the observations, and "…considering the widest possible array of

sensory information" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 34). Based on the evidence gathered, the principal

supervisor facilitates interventions connected to the initial hypotheses. Key interventions in this

case might involve adjusting district resource allocation or providing feedback to the principal

about his/her interactions with the team attempting to resolve the learning challenge.

       While these actions are experimental, they are purposeful and are in service of the agreed

upon problem which brought the CoP together in the first place. In this case, the principal

supervisor might challenge the team to develop interventions designed to address a hypothesis of

structural inequities related to aboriginal students. He/she modulates pressure, support and

resources for the CoP to address the problems, recognizing that the proposed solution may only

be partly correct, and would need to be iteratively amended as the team learns more about the

effectiveness of its interventions. This is an adaptive task because the principal supervisor must

attend to the problem, the feelings and skills of the members of the CoP as well as his/her own

actions to ensure that the team works an at optimal level. Aguilar (2013) and Houchens et al.

(2016) argue that effective leaders take multiple coaching stances when they work with their

followers to have them see the problem of practice from multiple perspectives and thus increase

the likelihood that they will generate a broader array of potential solutions. Figure 3.2 outlines

the observe-interpret-intervene cycle relative to the adaptive leader's task to modulate variables

of heat or pressure (for example, by asking provocative questions about current school practice),

air or support (for example, by acknowledging and celebrating current successful efforts

underway in the school) and fuel or resources (for example, by providing access to technical

expertise not in present in the school) needed to resolve the challenge. Successive interventions

build on previous ones, as the change leader attempts to repeatedly refine their observations,

interpretations and interventions. This process builds "…expertise that knows prudently how to

experiment with never-been-tried-before relationships, means of communication and ways of interreacting that will help develop solutions that build upon and surpass present wisdom" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 2).
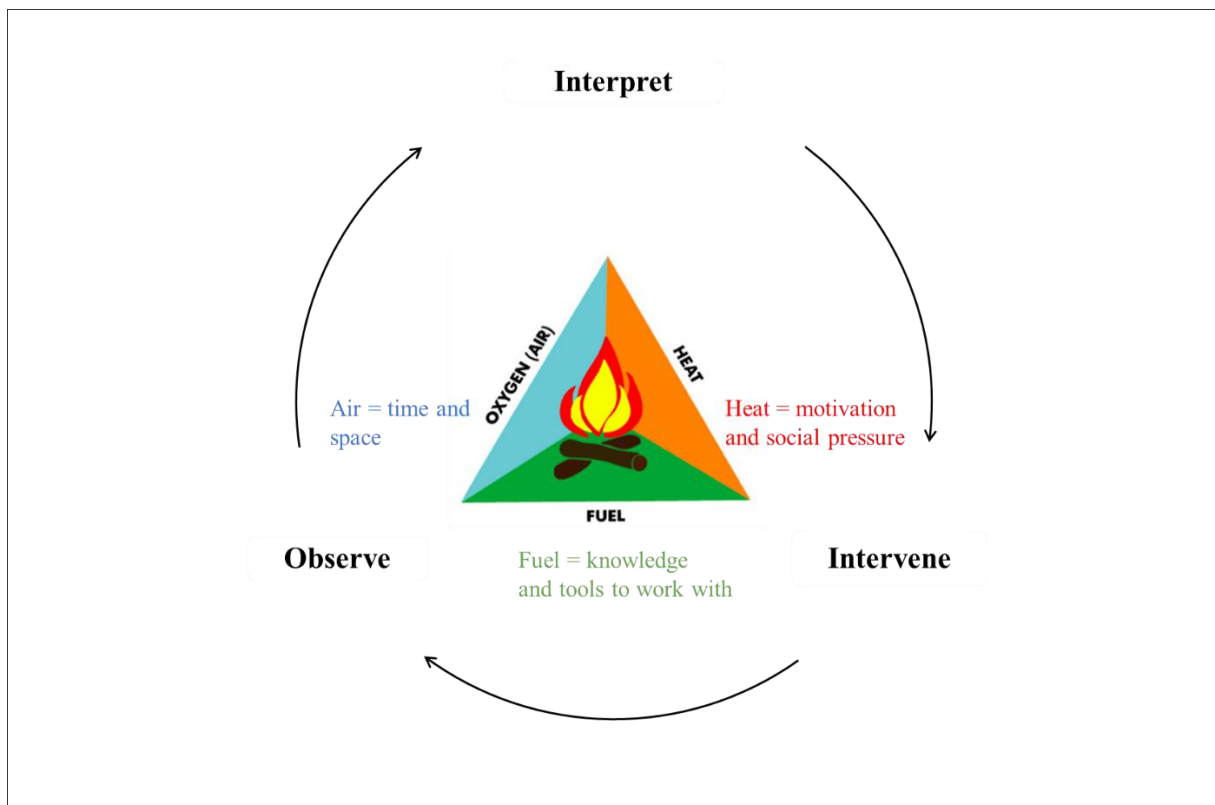


*Figure 3.2* Observe-Interpret-Intervene Cycle. Adapted from Heifetz et al. (2009).

**Evaluating and Monitoring Communities of Practice**

Since CoPs are a primary component of the implementation plan**,** it is important to identify how their work will be evaluated relative to the expected outcomes of this OIP. Wenger et al., (2002) maintain that "measures of value are instrumental for communities to gain visibility and influence, and to evaluate and guide their own development" (p. 167). They along with other authors (Lichtenstein et al., 2006; McKellar, Pitzul, Yi, & Cole, 2014; van Winkelen, 2016) argue that while it is untenable to measure knowledge, change leaders should aim to measure the systems through which knowledge flows to create value for the organization. McKellar et al. (2014) propose that evaluation which focuses on learning processes and the active engagement

of the participants are effective measurement approaches for assessing CoPs. I will therefore use the Knowledge Value System (Wenger et al., 2002) as a tool to address both the process of community development among principals as well as the outcomes of value creation related to building instructional leadership capacity.

The model proposes two complementary measurement features: anecdotal evidence through stories and *systematicity* through rigorous documentation (McKellar et al., 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). Stories are an effective medium to describe often complex organizational interactions and can capture the unique contextual factors tied to a specific challenge. Stories provide details that no single measure can capture. The story model associated with the Knowledge Value System identifies three questions that must be answered for each community:

- What did the community do?

- What knowledge resources did they produce?

- How was this resource applied to get results?

Table 3.2 provides an example of how the components of storytelling are applied to the problem of building principal instructional leadership capacity for noted challenges at each of the three levels of schools in CVSD.

Table 3.2

*Knowledge Value System for Instructional Leadership Capacity*

| What did the community do? | What knowledge resources did they produce? | How were these resources applied to get results? |
|---|---|---|
| Elementary school principals hold meetings to share ideas about providing targeted feedback to teachers during guided reading lessons. | They gain insight and improve their ability to ask open ended questions of teachers after specific lessons. | They add to the district's principal toolkit related to coaching and performance management and increase principal utilization of the various tools. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Elementary school principals work collaboratively with their classroom and learning support staff to improve academic language for English language learners. | The teams build a list of key academic vocabulary related to the grade 5 curriculum and design lessons for teaching these key words across various units of study. | They improve instruction for English language learners, and the principals share the resources with other schools. |
| Middle school principals and aboriginal support workers collaborate on the problem of reading achievement gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal students. | They create greater understanding of ways to indigenize classroom instruction. | Teams provide professional development to other school teams about meaningful ways to indigenize the curriculum, and increase teacher understanding and application. |
| Middle school principals work with their team leaders to improve the use of competency-based formative assessment related to the new math curriculum. | They develop an assessment toolkit related to the curricular competencies in Math 6-8. | Assessment toolkits are shared across all middle schools to support the goal to improve numeracy. |
| Secondary principals collaborate with department leaders around discipline specific success criteria related to the redesigned provincial curriculum. | The various teams create a standard template for assessing curricular competencies, and apply them to the core disciplines of Science, Mathematics, English Language Arts and Social Studies. | Assessment templates are used by school teams throughout the district and communicated to students in advance of the district's assessment week. |
| Secondary principals develop a plan to improve cross-curricular and blended instruction at the grade 9 level. | Select groups of teachers decide to collaborate on a year-long integrated cross-curricular project in the humanities. | Students in the cohort program achieve well above the district average on the provincial literacy assessment. Students and parents report high levels of satisfaction. |

Adapted from Heifetz et al. (2009).

The second component of the Knowledge Value System, systematicity, requires the

principal supervisor to systematically curate these diverse stories into a compelling organization-

wide picture of value. Stories must be triangulated with qualitative and quantitative indicators to

paint a fuller picture of success which can be corroborated with traditional and more established

organizational measures such as district literacy and numeracy assessments. Given that

measurement can be a costly endeavour, caution must be extended to ensure that measurement related to systematicity is aligned with the organization's overall needs and business strategy (Wenger et al., 2002). Below I outline how the Balanced Scorecard Logic Model (Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Rohm et al., 2013) might provide this alignment.

**The Balanced Scorecard Logic Model**

Central Valley School District utilises a Balanced Scorecard strategic plan (Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Rohm et al., 2013), one of whose components is the leadership goal contemplated in this OIP. Rohm et al. (2013) highlight the importance of short-term measures as important tools for gauging the success of strategic goals, and further argue that change leaders must deploy measures at multiple stages of the plan in order to gauge success and motivate organizational members. They propose the use of leading measures – which gauge short and medium-term objectives, along with lagging measures – which track longer term organizational outcomes, as effective tools to accomplish this task. While the ultimate lagging measure associated with this implementation plan is student achievement, evaluation mechanisms must also focus on improvements in teacher practice as well as principal instructional leadership as predictors of improvements in student learning. Hence a continuum of measures is contemplated to validate that progress is being made and value is being created throughout the implementation process. The Balanced Scorecard Logic Model can track progress along this continuum and will allow principal supervisors to make adaptive changes associated with building principal instructional leadership capacity at multiple points in the process. Systematicity is manifested when stories of value are aggregated along multiple points of the implementation process.

Rohm et al. (2013) state that the Balanced Scorecard Logic Model is an effective way of "…focussing organizational attention on what matters most" (p. 162) and suggest that change

leaders must look broadly at operational measures such as inputs, efficiencies, and quality experiences, in addition to measures focused on long-term outcomes. Most importantly, these shorter-term operational measures are predictors of longer-term success. When applied to this implementation plan, it reveals a continuum of intermediary measures which can be used to gauge success. For example, the principal's ability to work collaboratively with teachers on improving formative feedback to students is a predictor of the teacher using these approaches more effectively, and also of the students learning at higher levels. Hence, while student achievement is not immediately observed, value is created by the principal learning to effectively interact with teachers, and also with the deeper application of classroom pedagogy.

At one end of the continuum are operational measures associated with the resources required to support the change effort. These include changes to the principal supervisor span of control, increases to the amount of available instructional leadership time for principals, the deployment of coaches, plus other resources associated with building and sustaining CoPs across the district. The often-overlooked measures associated with this part of the plan include budget dollars and full-time equivalents which drive the implementation plan. These resources are not unlimited; hence they can be adjusted and redeployed if they are not fulfilling an intended objective. The second type of operational measure are process measures, which typically refer to measures of efficiency or quality related to completing a given project. One such measure is the time it takes for the district to activate its mentorship services for new principals in need of support. Next, output measures indicate what is produced. The establishment of a district portal where various CoPs can post and share ideas about effective early literacy practices represents a tangible output which can serve as a key milestone of the implementation plan.

The operational measures consisting of inputs, processes and outputs can then be clustered to describe progress towards the intended outcome of improved principal performance. As noted in Chapter 2, principal capacity is assessed using the leadership standards collaboratively developed within the district. Evidence of leadership efficacy of both principals and supervisors will be gathered through a combination of direct observation, survey and growth plan reflections (OPSOA, 2015). Existing principal and supervisor evaluation and growth plan processes will be augmented to ensure alignment between the critical organizational outcomes and the agreed upon leadership competencies associated with building instructionally focused CoPs. By providing resources for increased contact between principals and supervisors, designing efficient processes for support, and attending to tangible outputs from this investment, the district will be able to triangulate multiple sources of evidence to assess impact. An important point here is that each of these variables in the Logic Model can be manipulated as a part of the overall implementation plan to secure desired results. Figure 3.3 outlines the Logic Model applied to the implementation plan.
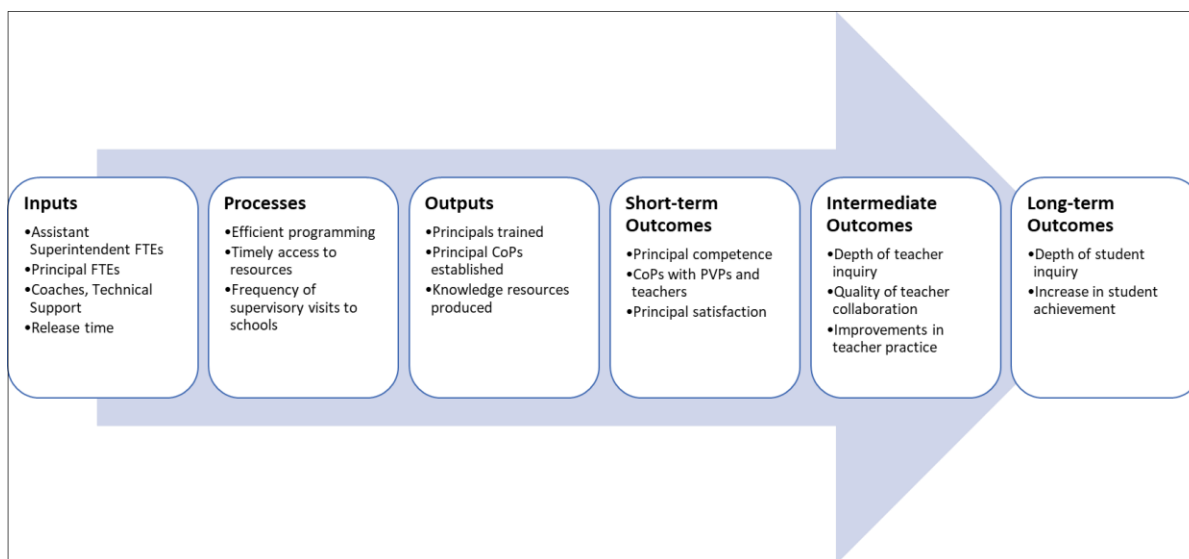


*Figure 3.3* Balanced Scorecard Logic Model for Principal Efficacy. Adapted from Rohm et al. (2013).

The Logic Model serves as a complementary measurement tool to the Knowledge Value System (Wenger et al., 2002). This mechanism is particularly useful because it connects multiple success factors and facilitates the use of stories to codify complex interactions where principals play a significant role. Systematicity, the task of aggregating multiple CoP activities into a comprehensive picture of value creation, recognizes that no one measure from the Logic Model fully captures the intentions of the implementation plan. In its entirety the Logic Model is particularly helpful because it seeks to capture multiple antecedents of organizational success, and in so doing it supports the systematicity function.

It is therefore possible to blend the two models to create a fulsome evaluation mechanism: community activities in the Knowledge Value System can be measured by Logic Model inputs and processes; knowledge assets can be measured by Logic Model outputs; and overall value creation can be measured by performance outcomes. At the microlevel it allows principal supervisors to monitor individual stories and cultivate ongoing short-term school level interventions. At the macrolevel it also allows them to curate these stories to assess their overall organizational impact, to make adjustments to the implementation plan as needed, and to connect the implementation plan to the district's larger strategic plan. For example, at the secondary school level the principal supervisor can support the development of multiple CoPs designed to implement the new curriculum in an integrated manner across several high schools. Each of these projects might be slightly different given the context of the school and the skills of the principal and the staff. Some of these CoPs might be immediately successful and their efforts might be scaled, while others might require further support. However, when viewed as a whole, the very existence of these CoPs paints a picture of encouraging adult learning and progress

towards the intermediate goal of building principal instructional capacity, and the ultimate goal of student achievement.

## Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and Change Process

This section provides an overview of the plan for building awareness and communicating progress toward the intended outcomes. The communication plan must accomplish the important goals of sharing the need for change, deepening understanding about the impact of the change on organizational members, and keeping people informed about progress towards important milestones (Cawsey et al., 2016). In support of these objectives, Klein (1996) references six features that should drive a communications strategy during a change process:

- Frequent messaging;

- Face to face communication;

- Capitalizing on the voice of supervisors and senior leaders;

- Securing the support of informal leaders;

- Making messages personally relevant; and

- Connecting messages with organizational values.

Klein also argues that "a communications strategy should coincide with the general stages of a planned change and the relevant associated information requirements" (p. 36). This position is consistent with Goodman and Truss (2004) who maintain that change leaders must take careful account of the various phases of their change program prior to designing their communication strategy. In keeping with this notion, the communication plan for this OIP should be carefully aligned with the key features of the change plan articulated in Chapter 2. It is therefore important that the communication strategy resonates with the adaptive and distributed leadership approaches associated with this problem of practice.

**Communication Plan**

  The task of building the instructional leadership capacity of principals is one of several organizational goals embedded in the CVSD strategic plan, which is itself part of a larger provincial effort to modernize instruction in support of deep learning. The communication plan related to this goal must therefore fit contextually with the organizational values and leadership culture established within the board, as well as with the overall provincial plan. Leadership development is intended to serve the cause of student learning relative to the redesigned curriculum; hence communication about progress towards the leadership goals must be strongly connected to communication about the broader set of strategic plan goals. For example, communication strategies developed for teaching and learning are naturally anchored to strategies related to instructional leadership. The communication plan presented in Table 3.3, while focused primarily on leadership, is part of a larger organizational communication plan connected to a district and provincial plan for educational modernization.

  This OIP is primarily organized around the Knowledge Building System (Wenger et al., 2002) outlined in Chapter 2. The model conceptualizes communication in nuanced ways relative to its iterative approaches to change. Communication is innate to the processes of organizational learning and is enhanced as a consequence of the learning loops created by various CoPs within the organization. Similarly, the Knowledge Building System conceptualizes communication in an integrated and natural manner. Because the very purpose of CoPs is to capitalize on the knowledge in the community, communication is built into their overall design processes. Using the approach presented by Klein (1996), the communication plan for this OIP is built around each of the key phases of the Knowledge Building System: Prepare, Launch, Expand, Consolidate and Transform (Wenger et al., 2002).

Table 3.3

*Communication activities related to the Knowledge Building System*

| Components | Prepare | Launch & Expand | Consolidate & Transform |
|---|---|---|---|
| Redundancy and multimedia tools | Multi-media launch campaign outlining rationale and critical features of the district plan. | Frequent communication about progress and milestones using community meetings and internal digital tools. | Use of formal media to celebrate successes and communicate value. Institutionalize communication processes within schools and departments. |
| Face to face | Principals and supervisors communicate rationale and their personal *why* statements. | Principal supervisors regularly visit schools and school teams and provide coaching and feedback on progress. | Principal supervisors provide personal recognition for successes on an ongoing basis. |
| Supervisors/senior leaders | Principal supervisor outlines vision and various roles in the implementation process and clarifies key approaches that will be used. | Utilize principal meetings and CoPs to communicate progress between community facilitators and principal supervisors. | Confirm new communication pathways to highlight successes for principal supervisors. |
| Opinion leaders | Lead principals and influential department leaders co-plan implementation. | Lead principals and department leaders are kept apprised of ongoing successes and adaptations to existing plans. | The role of lead principals and department leaders is acknowledged for creating organizational value. |
| Personal relevance | Principal supervisors communicate the impact of changed practices on principal roles and provide reassurance about ongoing support. | Provide principals with resources and information to support personal and professional development. | Provide personal feedback through performance appraisal process to principals about the personal impact they have had on organizational outcomes. |
| Connecting with organizational values | Ensure messaging about deep learning and instructional leadership is consistent with district values. | Key messaging provides more details about the work of specific CoPs and milestones being reached. | Key messaging related to accomplishments and celebrations are overtly connected with district core values. |

Adapted from Klein (1996) and Wenger et al. (2002).

**Prepare Phase.** During the Prepare phase, where learning activities are unstructured and in need of intentional support, communication must fulfill the objective of explaining the rationale for change and must also reassure organizational members. One important activity is for principal supervisors to have mechanisms to communicate primarily with principals, but also with teachers in their schools about the reasons for the change and what this means in terms of instructional practice. While the new provincial curriculum is the primary driver for the change, principal supervisors must communicate why the curriculum was modernized, and outline what this means for students, teachers and principals. Implementing deep learning represents a significant change for many teachers, and so principal supervisors must also communicate features of the plan and reassure their principals and teachers that they will be supported through the duration of the effort (Armenakis & Harris, 2009).

Communication must be closely connected to two components of the implementation plan. Firstly, principal supervisors, principals and other leaders involved in the change must communicate what is meant by deep learning (Fullan et al., 2018; Mehta & Fine, 2019). Several overlapping terms, such as personalized learning, inquiry-based learning, and competency-based learning have been utilized around the province and leaders must provide clear operational definitions for these terms and must further ensure that their communication clarifies any critical differences that may exist between them. Secondly, principal supervisors and principals must deeply explore the rationale for the change on multiple levels. While the motivation for the changes at the provincial and district level might be gathered from various documents such the CVSD strategic plan, principal supervisors must communicate an inspired and compelling *why* to their principals to assist them with psychologically embracing the change effort (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). For the same reasons, they must also encourage principals to do the same with

their teaching staff. This is an important task for transformational leaders and must be communicated intentionally. This type of activity is best done in the confines of grade group, department and staff meetings, as well as at school-based professional development sessions. The important task of assessing teacher understanding and application of this change is part of the supervisory and inquiry cycle that the principal develops with teachers on staff.

Important communication principles at this phase include message redundancy, face to face communication and personal relevance (Klein,1996). Multiple messages utilizing various media tools are helpful to reach the many organizational and community members impacted by the change. The CVSD strategic plan works in tandem with the provincial curricular changes, hence the rationale and critical components of the change will be amplified when communicated to CVSD staff and the public. With respect to the finer details of the plan, however, it is essential that principal supervisors communicate their personal vision in face to face interactions with principals at their regularly scheduled meetings. The results of the needs assessment, the process for developing leadership standards, and the design of various CoPs are important components that must be negotiated with principals as part of the ongoing communication. Principals must also reciprocate this type of communication with teachers in their schools. Communities of practice are undergirded by distributed leadership approaches, but principal supervisors must provide rationale about why this approached is worthwhile and invite principals into the planning process related to how they structure CoPs in their schools. These approaches will enhance the personal relevance of the change for principals as they begin to take risks with new approaches.

**Launch and Expand Phases.** The Launch and Expand phases respectively involve capitalizing on the work of existing CoPs and forming new teams in areas of greatest need. Key CoP domains might include curriculum implementation, early literacy, and aboriginal student

learning. An important feature of the communication plan during these phases is building the capacity of organizational members to perform the concrete tasks related to the change plan (Armenakis & Harris, 2002). In addition, organizational members will want information to confirm that progress is being made toward the intended outcomes, for instance, with breakthroughs in aboriginal student learning. The communication plan entails providing information about training opportunities for principals and teachers on indigenous principles of learning, informing principals about the progress of various CoPs realizing success with aboriginal education, and sharing knowledge with those who continue to struggle. Wenger et al. (2002) point out that "the heart of a community is the web of relationships among community members" (p. 58). Hence the principal supervisor plays a pivotal role in opening communication pathways that allow challenges and successes to be shared both formally and informally (Honig, 2006). For example, he/she would connect principals facing similar challenges by facilitating structured external visits or expanding a local CoP to include members from multiple schools.

Important communication principles applied in this phase include the effective use of senior management and opinion leaders to deepen the level of trust and understanding of the work (Klein, 1996). Principal supervisors, lead principals and department leaders play a key role in the expansion of CoPs. The superintendent and principal supervisors will regularly highlight the work underway using tools such as websites and social media feeds managed by the CVSD Communications Department. Communities of practice will be regularly featured in each of the biweekly superintendent's newsletter. Employees making positive contributions to the district's goals will also be featured. Principals and department leaders at each level of school will be invited to share their work in the electronic newsletter and will be highlighted at district learning demonstrations and public board meetings. As CoPs resolve problems associated with their

challenges, they will utilize more specific technology tools such as the district's platforms in Google Suite, Office 365 and the Curriculum Department's online repository to share and refine their ideas. Successes will also be shared with colleagues and the parent community at local showcases routinely hosted in schools.

**Consolidate and Transform Phases.** The Consolidate and Transform phases occur when CoPs gain legitimacy throughout the organization and are accepted as the preferred way of building knowledge within the organization. At this stage, multiple CoPs exist in the organization and organically emerge as newer and more complex problems of practice surface. The communication plan is now more focused on highlighting and celebrating the successes of existing communities and orienting the organization to potential new opportunities on the horizon. Celebrations are an important aspect of this stage because they provide recognition, inspire reflection, and support deeper commitment for subsequent changes (Cawsey et al., 2016).

During these phases, principal supervisors will focus communication on the successes being realized by the many active CoPs in the district. Principals will be invited routinely to share their progress at regularly scheduled superintendent meetings, at small group meetings and at formal meetings of the Board of Education where progress is reported semi-annually. Successes will also be shared at the CVSD annual showcase and professional development days where teams of educators can highlight practices which have been successfully implemented in their schools. For example, school teams that have developed successful early literacy interventions will be invited to share both their processes as well as results. In a similar fashion, principal supervisors will communicate successful practices with each other, as well as at the regional and provincial levels. At this stage, the communication strategy involves sustaining communications about effective approaches.

The formal roles of the senior staff are again important in enshrining the work of CoPs into existing reporting and communication structures. The message and media redundancy functions will be fulfilled largely with formal integration into district accountability and reporting structures related to the CVSD strategic plan. Reports to the Board of Education are routinely communicated to internal audiences as well as to external media outlets, and community accomplishments can be celebrated as part of this process. CVSD houses its leadership development program on its Human Resources Department website and can therefore highlight outcomes related to instructional leadership for both internal and external audiences. Since senior staff have considerable influence, they play a key role in legitimizing the work of CoPs. Cawsey et al. (2016) note that "if the CEO says it, the message packs a punch and gets attention" (p. 323). Hence an important component of this stage of the communication plan are the key messages communicated by the superintendent at various points in the annual reporting cycle required by the Board of Education and the Ministry of Education.

In summary, the communication plan emanates from the change model and leadership perspectives that underpin this OIP. They are further connected to the broader strategic effort driven by the district and province. Collaborative and adaptive leadership are cornerstones of the implementation plan; hence they also undergird the communication plan. The phases of the Knowledge Building System (Wenger et al., 2002) serve as a useful frame to ensure that communication activities are closely aligned with the steps of the change implementation plan which helps in turn to strengthen the overall alignment of the OIP.

**Next Steps and Future Considerations**

**Next Steps**

All CoPs go through phases, and as Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) argue, it is rarely without its challenges. This is no different for the leadership goal within CVSD. There have been and will continue to be fluctuations based on a variety of contextual challenges, ranging from the ongoing succession issues in the district to the provincial collective agreement landscape. Because this OIP focuses on leadership as a lever to scale system change, it is recognized that the envisioned outcomes in student learning will take some time to materialize. Notwithstanding this long-term challenge, it is important to identify immediate next steps that will put the organization on a path to realizing progress in the first and second year of the implementation process.

One of the key next steps is ensuring that the monitoring mechanisms provide meaningful evidence of organizational improvement across the district. One of the goals of the plan is to create a sustainable principal support structure that addresses the needs of individual principals as well as the larger district challenge related to leadership succession. It is important to recognize that these challenges may not exist in the longer term and may slowly be resolved over time. As such, the implementation plan must be nimble enough to meet the emergent needs of both the district and its individual principals. The data gathered about the effectiveness of the plan must be regularly reviewed to ensure that the plan can be adjusted in a timely fashion. The evidence gathered from multiple sources must be used to ensure that the support plans are responsive to the organizational needs that will naturally evolve over time.

Another valuable step is working closely with each principal supervisor to support the development of their nuanced approaches to building principal capacity specific to their level.

The challenges in our elementary schools are different from our middle schools, which are also different from our secondary schools. And while their plans are a subset of the overall direction outlined in the CVSD strategic plan, each of them will naturally approach their work in nuanced ways. It is therefore useful as an early step in the developmental phases of this plan to build community among the principal supervisors so that they may build knowledge related to system level approaches. This might be accomplished within the district team as well as with other districts engaged in this type of work. Since this is part of a provincial effort, principal supervisors will benefit from building CoPs with similar leaders from other districts. Building cross-district networks will require skilled facilitation, relationships and technical support to thoughtfully advance the work (Rincon-Gallardo & Fullan, 2015; Watkins et al., 2018).

**Future Considerations**

There are two critical future considerations related to this OIP. The first relates to the relationship between instructional leadership and student learning. While this OIP has dealt squarely with building the instructional leadership capacity of principals through the purposeful guidance of their supervisors, this work is ultimately done in service of student learning. Hence the first area that warrants future consideration is the impact that principals themselves have on building teacher capacity and supporting teacher inquiry. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the principle of symmetry drives this OIP by suggesting that students will learn deeply as a consequence of their teachers learning deeply about their pedagogy, which is in turn enhanced as a consequence of principals learning deeply about instructional leadership. This OIP did not deeply explore the relationship that should exist between principals and teachers as a result of their instructional leadership. Nor did it actively explore the ultimate impact of teacher inquiry on student learning. The problem of practice referenced deep student learning as the outcome but

begs the question about how deep learning will be measured. While the proposed solutions suggest that local schools and districts will develop competency-based measures to provide evidence of deep learning, this does not address the level of validation that the provincial government typically needs to provide public assurance that the education system is fulfilling its mandate. As of 2019, the British Columbia Ministry of Education is actively re-designing its accountability framework to ensure that students graduate from the system with the requisite skills and dispositions outlined in the re-designed curriculum and ministerial policy. This remains a fertile area for further research. This OIP took the position that a certain type of leadership accelerates emergence in support of deep learning, but more work must be done along the way to ensure that the envisioned student outcomes are materializing. Caution is also warranted to ensure that the measures being utilized are aligned with the system aspirations for deep learning.

A final area for future study relates to systemic inertia. A predictable phenomenon associated with all social movements is that of systemic resistance, particularly as the change reaches a critical tipping point (Bradford & Burke, 2004; Holman, 2010; Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009; Napier, Amborski, & Pesek, 2017; Terhart, 2003; Wheatley & Frieze, 2006). While on one hand many will argue that this provincial change is long overdue, concerns from various stakeholders will predictably surface about some of the philosophies and approaches underpinning this change. A valuable area of research will be the role that leadership plays in moving this educational modernization effort past the tipping point.

A key premise of this OIP has been that adaptive and collaborative leadership are required to scale system change for deep learning, and that senior district leaders have significant influence on the process by virtue of how they orient themselves to school level leaders. My

argument has been that district leaders must work in close partnership with principals and teachers to take on the complex challenges associated with modernizing classroom pedagogy. More than that, the partnership must transcend traditional approaches to implementing and managing change in the education sector. The collective wisdom required for this change will not materialize through a lock-step plan created in advance. Rather, as Senge, Hamilton and Kania (2015) argue, it will emerge as a result of leaders creating the space where practitioners "…can come together to tell the truth, think more deeply about what is really happening, explore options beyond popular thinking, and search for higher leverage changes through progressive cycles of action and reflection and learning over time (p. 30). It makes sense that this kind of leadership will be essential to sufficiently protect and illuminate the new possibilities of a truly transformed educational system.

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**Appendix A**

Global Competencies for Deep Learning

| Mastery | Collaboration | • Working interdependently and synergistically in teams<br>• Interpersonal and team-related skills<br>• Social, emotional, and intercultural skills<br>• Managing team dynamics and challenges<br>• Learning from and contributing to the learning of others |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | Communication | • Communicating effectively with a variety of styles, modes, and tools including digital<br>• Communication designed for different audiences<br>• Reflection on and use of the process of learning to improve communication |
| | Critical Thinking | • Evaluating information and arguments<br>• Making connections and identifying patterns<br>• Problem solving<br>• Constructing meaningful knowledge<br>• Experimenting, reflecting, and taking action on ideas in the real world |
| Creativity | Creativity | • Having an "entrepreneurial eye" for economic and social opportunities<br>• Asking the right inquiry questions<br>• Considering and pursuing novel ideas and solutions<br>• Leadership to turn ideas into action |
| Identity | Character | • Learning to learn<br>• Grit, tenacity, perseverance and resilience<br>• Self-regulation, responsibility and integrity |
| | Citizenship | • Thinking like global citizens<br>• Considering global issues based on a deep understanding of diverse values and worldviews<br>• Genuine interest and ability to solve ambiguous and complex real-world problems that impact human and environmental sustainability<br>• Compassion, empathy, and concern for others |

Adapted from Fullan et al. (2018) and Mehta & Fine (2019)

**Appendix B**

Change Implementation Plan

| Step Description | Related Practices | Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| Prepare: Assess the current conditions, where there are capability/ knowledge gaps, where learning is uncoordinated. Establish strong connections to the organizational mission and vision. | 1. Clarify system expectations and standards for instructional leadership.<br>2. Articulate instructional leadership strategies within organizational mission, vision and values, as connected to district strategic plan.<br>3. Define deep learning. Clarify relationship and connection between instructional leadership and deep learning.<br>4. Assess gaps in principal and principal supervisor capacity relative to desired leadership competencies. | Year 1 (6-12 months) |
| Launch: Utilize multiple strategies to launch communities. Identify and build on places where there is energy and emerging successful practices; identify areas of urgent need. | 5. Re-structure and resource the re-defined roles of principal supervisors to support CoPs.<br>6. Launch and amplify existing CoPs that are working well in supporting deep learning.<br>7. Provide differential resources to address schools/problems that represent significant achievement gaps. | Year 1-2 (12-24 months) |
| Expand: Integrate the work of the communities across the various organizational functions. | 8. Develop cross-functional CoPs (i.e., principals, vice-principals, lead teachers, field services staff, etc.) invested in responding to emerging problems of practice in their schools.<br>9. Provide resources to develop new CoPs for new problems of practice, and address barriers to improved practice.<br>10. Establish systemic processes for monitoring and measuring value provided by CoPs. | Year 2-4 (24-48 months) |

| Consolidate: Legitimize and institutionalize the status of communities within the organizational structure. | 11. Develop policies and structures for curating and sharing the results of CoPs so that multiple schools may benefit from solutions developed in one site.<br>12. Provide resources to sustain the work of various CoPs.<br>13. Integrate the work of CoPs into existing school district and school planning processes and policies. | Year 2-5 (24-50 months) |
|---|---|---|
| Transform: Establish communities of practice as the focal structure for fulfilling the organization's goals, used to continuously transform the organization. | 14. Cross functional CoPs made up of principal supervisors, principals, teachers become the focal structure for solving learning problems in the district, and ultimately transform the way the district learns. | Year 5 and onward |

Adapted from Wenger et al. (2002).