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## Building Intercultural Capacity in School Teams to Support Refugee Students

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## Abstract

In a period of globalization and forced migration, refugee numbers are increasing exponentially, and unprepared school systems embrace students as families settle in unfamiliar territory. This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) explores the experiences of a school team at Calluna Elementary School (CES, a pseudonym) in Southern Ontario, where staff strive to build their collective intercultural capacity in order to best serve an influx of newcomers who have survived war and significant loss. The Problem of Practice (PoP) involves addressing staff struggles with trauma-informed pedagogy, early literacy instruction, and maintaining an asset-focused perspective, through a refugee critical race theory lens. To inspire radical change in the current organization, and to flex with the rapidly changing demographics of the school community, the principal adopts both a transformative and adaptive leadership approach. While the organization evolves and oppressive programs and practices are identified and addressed, a change plan and communication plan are applied. Implementing formal professional learning sessions for staff through a 4C framework will be instrumental in developing culturally sustaining practices which adequately provide essential supports for refugee students. Training for the school team which focuses on developing intercultural competence will improve the ability of the system to address the unique challenges encountered. This morally imperative work is applicable to school contexts around the world where refugees are accepted and barriers are faced when supporting effective settlement for newcomers.

*Keywords:* refugee, intercultural competence, culturally sustaining pedagogy, transformative leadership, adaptive leadership

## Executive Summary

As refugee students immigrate to new countries, schools must create welcoming, inclusive, and equitable learning environments to support effective settlement for newcomer families. As demographics of school communities evolve and diverse cultures intersect, anti-oppressive programs and practices need to be implemented to best serve students in the evolving school setting. The PoP that will be addressed is the lack of intercultural competence in staff and the challenge to implement culturally sustaining pedagogy to support the unique needs of refugee students (Tuters & Portelli, 2017). When principals implement an adaptive (Nelson & Squires, 2017) and transformative leadership approach (Shields, 2010, 2014), and embed responsive professional learning, there will be an elevation of advocacy for refugee students and deeper connections with newcomers will be made. Limitations in administrator actions exist due to systemic structures which further marginalize newcomers, though building culturally responsive programs is vital (Arar et al., 2019). Principals and school staff require intercultural skill development to support students who have experienced interruptions to schooling and trauma due to war and forced migration. The question that this OIP explores is *"What strategies might address school-based oppressive programs and practices to better support refugee students and strengthen newcomer family-school connections?"*

In the first chapter, the leadership PoP is outlined with the focus centered on the lack of intercultural competence of school teams as refugee students enter the Ontario school system, from the perspective of the principal of Calluna Elementary School. Adaptive (Heifetz et al., 2009) and transformative leadership approaches (Shields, 2010, 2014) are initially introduced as being most relevant in this context. Positionality and agency are explored, as well as the leadership lens. Framing the PoP and a reflection on organizational change readiness is included.

The second chapter centres on a more in-depth discussion of relevant leadership approaches to change. Kotter's eight-stage process (Kotter, 1996) is examined as a framework for leading the change and Sterman's systems dynamics model (Sterman, 2001) is used to critically determine which changes are necessary. Solutions to the PoP are outlined and a preferred solution is defended as being the most effective solution to make meaningful change in developing intercultural competence within the school team. In this section, leadership ethics, equity, and social justice are also included.

The final chapter outlines the change implementation plan and addresses the plan's potential issues and limitations. Change process monitoring and evaluation using the Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015) is reflected upon, as well as the plan to communicate the needed change and change process. Stakeholder perspectives are explored to determine the effectiveness of the change implementation plan. Next steps and future considerations of the organization are also explained, including consideration for opportunities to expand this learning to other principals beyond the organization by creating an administrator working group to support newcomers across the system.

As the number of refugees continues to increase worldwide, school systems must be prepared to welcome newcomer students in equitable ways which promote effective settlement, make space for voices and lived experiences to be truly heard, and anti-oppressive programs and practices must be implemented. In the context of CES, implementing transformative and adaptive leadership approaches when leading the school community through a rapid change in demographics has proven helpful. Integrating professional learning for staff which focuses on the development of intercultural competence and embeds culturally sustaining practices is vital to make urgent shifts. As a result of the learnings from this OIP, various stakeholders have been

positively impacted. The school team has deepened their individual and collective capacity to support newcomer students and their families. Refugee students are experiencing academic success and share they are feeling included in their classroom environment. The administrator team has gained rich transferable knowledge centered around valuing diversity, nurturing an equitable school community, and dismantling oppressive programs and practices. By building intercultural competence of the whole school team, refugee students are better served and experience a deeper sense of belonging in their new community.

## **Acknowledgements and Dedication**

Over the course of this ultimate educational experience, there have been countless supporters who have made this degree attainable and provided the platform for dreams to evolve into reality. Each instructor offered their guidance and wisdom along the path of the program, building upon key learnings from previous courses, and I am indebted to each of them for their commitment to their students' success.

I have been surrounded since childhood with strong female educational leaders, including my mother and step-mother, who shared their passion for teaching, learning, and leading. This opened my eyes to possibilities and lifted my aspirations higher. In the role of principal, I humbly acknowledge the privilege of the title and strive to improve the educational experiences for each of our learners. The staff at Calluna Elementary School are acknowledged here as they encourage me daily with their endless teamwork, care, and dedication. The newcomer students and families have made our school community a better place and we continue to learn together to make continuous improvements to our programs and practices.

I would like to explicitly express my gratitude to you, the reader, for taking time to explore these thoughts in hopes that they provide ideas and strategies to implement in your own context, and improve the learning environments our organizations create to welcome refugees.

To my children, Cally and Jaxon, if I accomplish nothing else in life other than being your mother, that would be enough. Of all the things I have achieved, being your mom has been the greatest of all. Finally, my most heartfelt gratitude goes to my husband and best friend, Jamie. You are my love, and I am so fortunate to share this life with you. I am endlessly appreciative for your patience, perspective, and inspiration along every single step of the way.

*Dedicated to my father, Doug Johns (1945-2022),  
who encouraged me to become a teacher, principal, and to pursue this degree.*

*He was my lifelong advocate, supporter, and cheerleader.*

*Dad, I'm all done now.*

*I know you'll be with me as I cross the finish line.*

*Until we meet again...*



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## Acronyms

CES	(Calluna Elementary School)
ELD	(English Literacy Development)
ELL	(English Language Learner)
ESL	(English as a Second Language)
PDCA	(Plan, Do, Check, Act)
PDSA	(Plan, Do, Study, Act)
PESTE	(Political, Economic, Social, Technological, and Environmental)
OIP	(Organizational Improvement Plan)
OME	(Ontario Ministry of Education)
PoP	(Problem of Practice)
RDSB	(Riljax District School Board)
SPELIT	(Social, Political, Economic, Legal, Intercultural, and Technological)
UNESCO	(United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)



## Definitions

**Adaptive Leadership:** A leadership approach which embraces change and innovation, and enables team members to face struggles and be flexible in their responses due to an environment which is evolving, sometimes rapidly. Continuous growth, demonstrating emotional intelligence, and effective problem-solving skills are embedded (Heifetz et al., 2009).

**Intercultural Competence:** Being effective when working in a diverse context, communicating and thinking in a means that demonstrates understanding, respect, openness, and self-awareness, when interacting with people of different cultural backgrounds (Deardorff, 2009).

**Refugee:** Someone who has been forced to leave their country, with displacement often being due to war and/or fear of persecution.

**Specialist Teacher:** A teacher who is typically not a regular classroom teacher who typically holds additional qualifications in a focused area such as special education, mathematics, or teaching English language learners. These teachers often provide intensive programming to students or provide direct support to classroom teachers.

**Transformative Leadership:** A leadership approach that focuses on social justice, questions inequitable programs and practices, and strives to address the common good to ensure equity for all stakeholders (Shields, 2010; Shields, 2014).

**Trauma-Informed Education:** A stance or lens to hold when implementing programs and practices in a classroom or school context, ensuring there is an appropriate response to the impacts of trauma and that there is consideration for the prevention of future trauma from occurring (Venet, 2021).

## **Chapter 1**

As refugee students immigrate and integrate into existing school systems, leaders strive to improve settlement by developing a sense of community, addressing academic opportunity gaps, and implementing trauma-informed approaches. However, administrators and staff often lack the knowledge of organizational transformation required to achieve desired outcomes for successful settlement. This organizational improvement plan explores the leadership position of the principal of a Canadian elementary school that embraced an influx of newcomers. Inherent challenges and barriers are examined, and pathways are studied that build capacity in staff to better support refugee students. This OIP may serve to impact other schools and districts across the globe who face similar circumstances when welcoming newcomers, as unprepared organizations seek strategies to develop intercultural competencies and form culturally sustaining practices within their teams.

Culturally responsive practices are considered foundational for administrators and teachers to build welcoming and inclusive learning spaces for newcomers (Arar et al., 2019; Khalifa et al., 2016). Building upon the team's intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2009; McCloskey, 2012) may also lead to change in oppressive programs and structures, causing a shift in practices that better serve this marginalized group. This initial chapter gives insight into the organizational context of the elementary school and provides a leadership position and lens. An outline of the PoP is included, as well as framing the problem through a factor analysis. A vision for change is defined and there is consideration for change readiness within the organization.

### **Organizational Context**

Calluna Elementary School (a pseudonym) is a public school in southern Ontario, situated within a large school board in the Greater Toronto Area. CES has approximately seven

hundred students in kindergarten through grade eight and serves a diverse student population with families from China, Russia, and Turkey. The surrounding neighbourhood has recently become a settlement area for newcomers, with refugees arriving from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Syria (Statistics Canada, 2016). Many refugee students in the school have interrupted prior schooling, carrying with them significant trauma from experiences of war, and have an academic profile of an early literacy learner with limited reading and writing experiences.

At the school level, there is a principal (the position of this author), vice principal, approximately forty teachers and twenty other staff members including the office administrative team, educational assistants, and custodians. A school-based leadership team exists comprised of formal leaders (divisional lead teachers, technology lead teacher, and a curriculum and program lead teacher) in addition to informal lead positions (equity and Indigenous education lead teachers, teacher-librarian, and mathematics/literacy lead teacher). The school staff includes many individuals who have been in the community for years, as well as staff who are new to the school and those who are new hires to the system. Staff members are diverse with approximately one third being people of colour, with a teaching staff that is predominantly white females. Leadership roles in the school are a reflection of this ratio.

The school is part of a larger organization, Riljax District School Board (RDSB, a pseudonym), which has a director, associate directors, superintendents and a board of trustees who form policy to be enacted across the school board (Appendix A). At the system level, there is a curriculum department with a superintendent and a system principal who oversee programming for English Language Learners (ELLs). RDSB has a co-ordinator and several consultants who focus on English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Literacy

Development (ELD) programming within the board. These regional teachers work with schools to support the success of ELLs and guide professional learning at the system level.

### **Organizational Aspirations: Mission, Vision, Values, Purpose, and Goals**

To guide the goals of the system, RDSB has a multi-year strategic plan and director's action plan, and schools have local improvement plans based upon those embedded goals. The mission is to improve student success and well-being by building community and promoting inclusion, while acknowledging flexibility is key as we prepare learners for a shifting global society. The vision is to provide opportunities for every student to be successful, offering rich curriculum experiences, supporting students based on individual strengths and needs. The purpose of the organization is to prepare students for a future where they will make a positive impact on society, inspiring innovation and building inclusion within their community.

As one path to achieve the goals of building community and implementing rich programming, CES has established professional learning structures. Staff engage in collaborative planning that involves co-teaching and co-reflecting upon a designed lesson. Lead teachers have facilitated numerous co-planning sessions where classes join together to engage in co-created lessons (Sharrat & Planche, 2016). This has evolved into open door classrooms where teachers seek feedback from colleagues and critical conversations are valued.

Serving to further support the goal of student success, ESL/ELD specialist teachers provide in-class and withdrawal support for ELLs, with some collaboration occurring for planning and assessing. Specialist teachers support homeroom teachers with implementing appropriate accommodations and modifications. School-level learning, co-facilitated by these specialist teachers, around social emotional learning and developing a sense of belonging has been instrumental in pursuing the vision, emphasizing the need for change to improve practice.

## **Theoretical Underpinnings Which Drive the Organization**

The organizational theoretical frameworks utilized in this context necessarily rely on a transformative paradigm. Staff and administrators feel unprepared to address the unique and overwhelming needs of the students who have limited prior schooling and have experienced trauma and war (Birman, 2005). Principals leading in schools that are changing demographically should ensure cultural work is interwoven into their transformative practices (Cooper, 2009). Staff acknowledge that rapid change is required to address the shifting demographic of the school community, but struggle with what that transformation should look like. Staff are challenged to address the significant trauma that some refugee students carry and strive to provide instruction at considerably different academic levels within a given class. Many refugee students require ELD programming due to interrupted schooling experiences with a focus on orientation to school life (Selimos & Daniel, 2017). In addition, most intermediate teachers have not facilitated early literacy instruction before and have little training in the area. Drastic change is required to be able to serve diverse needs, both academically and socially-emotionally. There is a sense of urgency among staff for immediate transformation of programs and practices.

As newcomers began to arrive, a focus on culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy began, having been born from that sense of urgency from staff. A framework for culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy has been implemented (Kugler & West-Burns, 2010) at an emergent stage to address the immediate concern from the entire school team about their lack of tools to support the newcomer students. Focusing on assessment and instruction with staff and ensuring their practices are culturally sensitive is an effective starting point for the team. This builds upon the notions of establishing inclusive learning environments in diverse contexts.

However, there is still a need to build intercultural competence where diversity is increasingly valued and lived experiences of students are honoured, respected, and embedded in planning.

As part of the transformative paradigm, while questioning existing structures and practices which are oppressive to newcomers, critical race theory with a refugee lens emerges as a relevant theoretical framework. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) first introduced critical race theory with a focus on race as a factor contributing to inequities in our society and systems. An expansion of this concept includes refugee critical race theory (Strekalova-Hughes, 2018) which will be further explored later in this chapter as a foundational component of a conceptual framework when examining issues of refugee student settlement in school systems.

There is the possibility the critical theory work engaged in thus far, particularly around culturally responsive pedagogy, is not having enough of a positive impact on teaching and learning (Mack, 2010). The hope is to foster culturally sustaining practices (Ladson-Billings, 2014) that have more of an impact on refugee students and their families, while at the same time developing the intercultural competence within the school team. The result should be an alignment of the organization's vision and values, with staff being more adeptly prepared to serve refugee students. There is necessity for staff to hold a trauma-informed and social justice lens while building connections with the marginalized community, maintaining high expectations, and interrupting structures and practices deemed oppressive (Carlisle et al., 2007).

### **Leadership Frameworks within Calluna Elementary School**

Leadership frameworks which are drivers at the organizational level include an instructional and servant leadership approach. At the institutional level in RDSB, instructional leadership is valued as it supports the shared vision around improving student achievement, building safe and equitable learning environments, and implementing rich and innovative

curriculum experiences. Leaders within local organizations also implement servant leadership, with a focus on relationships and offering a nurturing community for diverse learners. However, for the purpose of this OIP, emerging implemented leadership approaches will be examined more closely.

An amalgamation of a transformative approach (Shields, 2010; Shields, 2014) and an adaptive approach (Heifetz & Linksy, 2009; Nelson & Squires, 2017) is key as rapid organizational evolution is required in this challenging context. Cooper (2009) highlights the important role of school leaders in diverse schools with changing demographics, calling for a transformative approach to make meaningful shifts in teaching practice. An integrated adaptive leadership approach is vital in a rapidly changing environment. Strong instructional practices interwoven into an adaptive and transformative leadership approach will be key to building capacity (Kose, 2009). These leadership approaches will be elaborated upon later in the chapter.

### **Political, Economic, and Socio-Cultural Contextual Factors**

Internal and external contextual factors which contribute to shaping the organization and leadership approaches will be touched upon here and expanded upon more deeply in the coming section under framing the PoP. Politically, in Canada the government supports bringing refugees into Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016), but at the provincial level in the areas of education and healthcare, there are limited resources to assist those with terrorism-related trauma (Statistics Canada, 2020). Economically, refugee families must initially rely on outside agencies and settlement workers to access food and health care. The school offers breakfast/snack club and clothing drives to supplement. Socio-culturally, for school leaders to implement equitable practices, there is a need to understand the changing demographics of a school (Pollock & Briscoe, 2020) and to place value in diversity.

The pandemic has also contributed greatly to the rapidly changing organization and further necessitates an adaptive and transformative leadership approach. Professional learning routines have been significantly impacted by Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Current professional development structures have been reduced to simply Board-directed professional activity days and monthly staff meetings. Staff meetings have also become increasingly directed by RDSB which has shifted the urgency in professional learning toward health and safety measures, overshadowing professional growth in culturally sustaining programming and intercultural competency. COVID-19 has augmented barriers for refugee students due to lack of access to technology for remote learning, reduced understanding of information because of limited English language acquisition, and the added trauma of experiencing the pandemic in an unfamiliar country. These barriers point to the implementation of a leadership approach that addresses social inequities and advocates for critical transformation within the organization.

### **Leadership Position and Lens**

Throughout my career as an educator in the roles of teacher and administrator, I have typically held a transformative worldview. Often aware of social injustices, highly analytical of perceived structures that may be oppressive to marginalized student groups, I have often sought opportunities to engage in meaningful positive change. There is an underlying belief that transforming systems can make a positive impact on the outcomes for our students. I also tend to hold progressive social views, concerned with inequities and societal injustices. There rests a moral obligation to advocate for change and use my positional power to amplify voices of newcomers. Leading in Ontario during neoliberal times while navigating complex issues of equity and social justice can be challenging (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017), particularly during a shifting landscape due to the pandemic.



## **Leadership Philosophy and Background**

My leadership philosophy has always centered around the idea of trusting relationships, considering them to be foundational for all else in the role of the principalship. A collaborative team approach is often employed in a variety of complex situations, placing value on the insights of others and being respectful of differing opinions. My core values as a leader involve a student-centred approach, emphasizing the importance of teamwork, and nurturing trusting relationships.

As a principal, day-to-day work varies and expands over areas of instructional leadership, managerial tasks, and general operation of a large and bustling school (Pollock et al., 2017). More recently, the position has continued to evolve due to COVID-19 with additional duties that include contact tracing support for Public Health, overseeing new health and safety protocols, and reviewing the daily screening requirements for staff, students and visitors. The role of principal is highly complex and nuanced, which requires effective decision-making skills, optimism, and resilience.

Having recently completed courses for Supervisory Officers in Ontario, my lens has grown to hold a system perspective. Through engaging in various system-level teams (new teacher induction program advisory group, newcomer advisory group, ESL/ELD steering committee, administrator operator working group, family of schools planning team), I have gained a wider lens when considering the experiences at my local level. This continues to impact my actions as a school leader in a local context, drawing from the views of a system approach.

## **Agency and Positionality**

In the context of this OIP, as a school leader in the role of principal of CES, I hold significant agency in decisions at the local level, but I am nonetheless constrained by system policies and professional learning content driven by the curriculum leaders within RDSB.

Multiple stakeholders have input and power over decisions in the organization which minimizes my agency. However, involvement in system-level activities like the newcomer advisory group and the ESL/ELD steering committee provide me with rich opportunities to advocate for refugee students beyond my local context. These groups bring together a variety of stakeholders who hold knowledge and experience about newcomer students and specialized ESL/ELD programming, guiding policy revisions, providing input into cross-departmental collaboration, and sharing of best practices. Settlement workers, community agencies, school teams, and curriculum leads come together with the intention of improving the schooling experience for newcomers.

As a white female leader in the system, I am aware of my power and privilege, feeling a need to be a continuous learner and to use my positionality to disrupt oppressive practices that may be impacting underserved marginalized student groups (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011). In my efforts to support refugee settlement, there is caution around saviourism, seeking to ensure the work is focused on the students and that their input is sought and valued. Taking a humble stance in my leadership, by minimizing performative events and instead regularly providing space for elevating student voice, notions of saviourism have been reduced.

### **Leadership Approaches**

Northouse (2019) outlines multiple leadership approaches that have been explored in my tenure as both vice principal and principal in CES, such as transformational, authentic, and team leadership. However, based on the current context, what has resonated most has been a combination of a transformative approach (Shields, 2010; Shields, 2014) and an adaptive approach (Heifetz et al., 2009; Nelson & Squires, 2017).

In my organization, I am required to be continuously flexible and adaptive while implementing rapid changes regarding programming and health and safety measures in response to the pandemic. During this complex moment in history, the leadership approach must be blend of an adaptive and transformative stance due to the shifting needs of the school community.

Shields (2004) speaks of transformative leadership as an appropriate stance when conducting social justice work, focusing on relationship building, and advocating for marginalized groups. Connecting to critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Cook, 2015), there is a component of challenging existing systems, practices and programs as part of this leadership approach. This also connects tightly with my transformative worldview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **Principals' Shifting Role: Emphasizing a Need for an Adaptive and Transformative Stance**

Principals in Ontario schools have encountered significant challenges and shifting roles over the last two years. In the 2019-2020 school year, there was job action for both the teacher union and support staff union placing additional stresses on administrators. Principals and vice-principals were required to navigate a balance of maintaining relationships with their role as manager during times of rotating strikes and work-to-rule job actions. This was limiting their ability to hold meetings and conduct professional learning sessions.

Since the beginning of 2020, Ontario schools have been wading through provincial lockdowns, school closures, and forced remote learning, necessitating leaders to take on an adaptive leadership stance. For example, at CES, many families do not have access to technology and many of the refugee families also do not have internet access. The school and system work collaboratively to ensure access to education is possible for each learner, providing technology when needed.

Presently, RDSB has begun this school year using a hybrid model where teachers are tasked to support both remote and in-person learners in their classrooms. As we undergo educational reform as a system, province, and world in response to the pandemic, school leaders are required to transform their leadership approach and evolve with the times (Netolicky, 2020). In this context, as school leaders we must ensure new practices best support our students with refugee background. The principal now also serves to support teachers in this exceptional teaching model, with limited resources for guidance and knowledge of high-yield strategies in this new setting. This calls for urgent transformation of practices in order to adapt in a shifting environment.

Pollock and Briscoe (2020) articulate the importance for Ontario principals to truly understand student diversity and emphasize the need for skill development for administrators in this area. For leaders to build inclusion in their communities, they are required to reflect upon their own belief systems and engage in ongoing learning around diversity and equity. It is important to note though that administrators in Ontario have a shifting role (Pollock et al., 2017), with more need for mental wellness supports and structures for connections between administrators, urging school leaders not to work in isolation.

In the context of this OIP, this is important because of the potential for compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma, with a need to share learning of best practices beyond the school level. Pollock et al., (2017) also note that the role of the principal actually has barriers to capacity building that need to be overcome, such as a heavy work load and leading through emotionally-draining challenging situations. The role of the principal in the context of the school team includes serving as a motivator, facilitator of learning, enactor of policies, connector between stakeholder groups, and the creator of conditions for the success of individuals within the

organization. There is a constant struggle to find balance while the role of the principal is changing during the pandemic, which also happens to be a period of time when the demographics of the school community has also shifted. The result is a need for the school leader to seek stability and refocus on the purpose, mission, and values of the organization.

### **Principal's Role in the Change Process**

As a change leader, I do hold opportunity to lead creatively within existing policies and conduct professional learning sessions at the local level, which allows me to serve a significant role in the change process where intercultural competence is built and culturally responsive practices are developed. A key element of this leadership role is to encourage staff to engage in the learning by developing an understanding of the purpose behind our collective work, and also to offer a listening ear when team members feel overwhelmed by the needs of the students being serviced. My role in the change process also involves developing intercultural awareness by creating conditions where voices of refugee students are amplified, and their opinions, values, and insights are embedded into the practices and structures of our organization.

### **Leadership Problem of Practice**

The leadership PoP addresses a concern in my organization which requires urgent change. The building of intercultural capacity within the school team to provide an improved response to the influx of newcomers will address the gap between current practices and the vision for an enhanced organizational state.

The PoP that will be addressed is the lack of intercultural competence and teachers' understanding of effective culturally responsive pedagogy to support the needs of refugee students in CES. Principals who implement an adaptive (Nelson & Squires, 2017) and transformative leadership approach (Shields, 2010; Shields, 2014) can impact the professional

learning staff receive, elevate advocacy for refugee students, and build deeper connections with the refugee community. They are however limited in their actions by existing systemic structures and policies which are oppressive to newcomers, further marginalizing this unique group of learners. Teachers voice frustration over inadequate classroom supports, resources, and training to be able to best serve refugee students, and school leaders themselves require further professional development on intercultural competence, leading to a general lack of understanding of effective practices which support newcomers (Tuters & Portelli, 2017). Building culturally responsive practices within the school team is necessary (Arar et al., 2019), but without opportunities to identify and remove barriers within existing structures, there will not be meaningful change in the success of refugee students in our schools (Rose, 2018). Traumatic experiences due to war and migration, and interruptions to schooling, affect students who arrive in an unprepared system with challenges such as lack of effective programming for students requiring ELD instruction, and deficit thinking by members of the school staff (Liou & Hermanns, 2017). Principals require urgent support in skill development that goes beyond overarching themes of inclusion and moves toward actional frameworks to lead effectively. What strategies might address school-based oppressive programs and practices to better support refugee students and strengthen newcomer family-school connections?

A strength of this PoP is that the content and explored solutions should prove useful for other schools and districts who find themselves in similar circumstances. The PoP is imaginably one experienced in organizations around the world and may be relevant to school teams who welcome both refugees and newcomers in general. A struggle with this PoP is the limited research available on the settlement of refugee students in school systems, particularly in Ontario. Topics of inquiry that are being considered moving forward include identification of

tools that can be used to recognize current barriers, ways school leaders can effectively disrupt oppressive practices, and how intercultural competence can be developed.

### **Framing the Problem of Practice**

Change in the organization is urgently required because our existing practices are not meeting the individualized needs of the organization's changing demographic. With the influx of refugee students over the last few years, and the interruptions COVID-19 has had on the education system, many barriers exist which prevent refugee students from having the education they are entitled to receive. School leaders and teams have a moral obligation to learn innovative practices and transform the organization to meet the changing needs of the community. Kotter (1996, 2009) explains that for change to occur in an organization, creating a sense of urgency must first be established. This is already present in the organization and the change model (Kotter, 1996, 2009) will be explored further in the next chapter.

This sense of urgency exists because the current structures and programs in place in the organization do not best support refugee students. Staff are limited in their training in culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy and lack intercultural competence. The PoP will be situated within broader contextual forces that have shaped the issue. This will be done through an historical overview, an exploration of a theoretical framework, results of a social, political, economic, legal, intercultural, and technological (SPELIT) factor analysis (Schmieder-Ramirez & Mallette, 2015), sharing of relevant internal and external data, and a description of the social justice context of this PoP.

### **Historical Overview of the Problem of Practice**

In the organization previously, there was significant professional learning which took place, mostly around mathematics and some learning on culturally responsive pedagogy. Social-

emotional learning was also a topic at staff meetings, along with strategies to create inclusive and welcoming classroom environments in order to create a sense of belonging for our students. With an already richly diverse school community, building an equitable learning environment has been an area of focus for the last few years. Intercultural competence has been an emerging professional learning topic and significantly more work is required to develop coherence between classrooms. Analysis is required to determine current intercultural sensitivity, design school goals around intercultural competence, and improve international mindedness (Blair, 2017; Deardorff, 2006, 2017; Murray-Garcia & Tervalon, 2017).

### **SPELIT Analysis**

As a variation of the traditional political, economic, social, technological, and environmental (PESTE) analysis (Descza et al., 2020), the SPELIT factor analysis (Schmieder-Ramirez & Mallette, 2015) will be used as a method to systematically analyze the organizational environment and those influencing dynamics. This tool is more beneficial than the traditional PESTE factor analysis due to the explicit inclusion of an intercultural analysis and the complex matrix for analysis, which enhances the relevance for this PoP. The framework examines the social environment, political, economic, legal, intercultural, and technological aspects of the organization and speaks to a multi-level approach.

### ***Social Environment***

Socially, for school leaders to implement equitable practices, there is a need to understand the changing demographics of a school (Pollock & Briscoe, 2020). Refugees have narratives that should be understood and honoured through culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012), not exploited. This section considers the way stakeholders within the organization interact. Though we have student groups, teacher groups, leadership teams, and



family/community stakeholders, the organization is seeking ways for there to be increased interaction between this group of stakeholders. Relationships between these groups will be key to informing change readiness. Tenkasi and Chesmore (2003) refer to the importance of these network ties which are vital for the implementation of change in an organization.

### ***Political Environment***

Politically, the federal government supports bringing refugees into Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016), but at the provincial level, there are limited supports for successful settlement (Statistics Canada, 2020). Education and health care systems are limited in resources to help those with terrorism-related trauma. Also considered is power and influence leaders hold, with agency over decision-making lying with those further up the hierarchical structure. Though other stakeholders may provide input, decisions about the school typically lie with the formal leaders in the system.

### ***Economic Environment***

Economically, families of refugee background must rely on outside agencies and settlement workers to access food and health care. We do have programs in schools like breakfast/snack club, winter clothing drives and after-school extra-curricular activities, but they all require a level of cultural understanding to ensure needs are actually met. This section considers resources and money within the organization, with current funds being focused on purchasing technology, books, and manipulatives for use in ELD programming.

### ***Legal Environment***

Legally, there are policies and plans which are required to be implemented, both by the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) and by the RDSB. For example, the Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan (OME, 2017) guides the work school boards conduct to ensure spaces are

equitable and inclusive for diverse learners. Educators across the province supporting ELLs are required to implement ESL/ELD programming based on guidelines and are provided with supports from the province through the OME Capacity Building Series (OME, 2013; 2017). Boards are required to implement policy, provide staffing, and ensure resources are available to effectively educate ELLs. This section also includes the ethics of the organization.

### ***Intercultural Environment***

Interculturally, CES is a diverse and multicultural learning environment. There is a need to build intercultural sensitivity which involves recognizing differences in cultures and building awareness of the views of others (Schmieder-Ramirez, Fortson, & Majidi, 2004). This section explores how the differences between cultures within the organization might influence the organizational environment. The influx of newcomers shifted the cultural context of the school, causing greater figurative space between groups, pushing the urgent need for the building of intercultural competence.

### ***Technological Environment***

Technologically, especially during the global pandemic (Netolicky, 2020) and shifts to online learning, it is necessary for every refugee student to have access to technology and internet. In this context, there is a reliance on the school to provide devices and internet for equity of access. Many students initially had no access to computers and internet and the organization was tasked with ensuring access was made possible for each refugee family.

### **Relevant Internal/External Data**

Current organizational data shows that this school has the highest number of refugee students in the board. School climate results indicate a strong sense of belonging for students in the school community. An equity scan shows the team feels valued (Gregory et al., 2009) and is

eager to support newcomer students, but need different resources and more training in culturally responsive programming. Newcomer parent surveys indicate they are happy with current events being organized but want to be more engaged in the school community, and data may be skewed as messaging goes through a translator. At the system level, survey results for RDSB demonstrate necessary implementation of anti-oppressive policies and leader training.

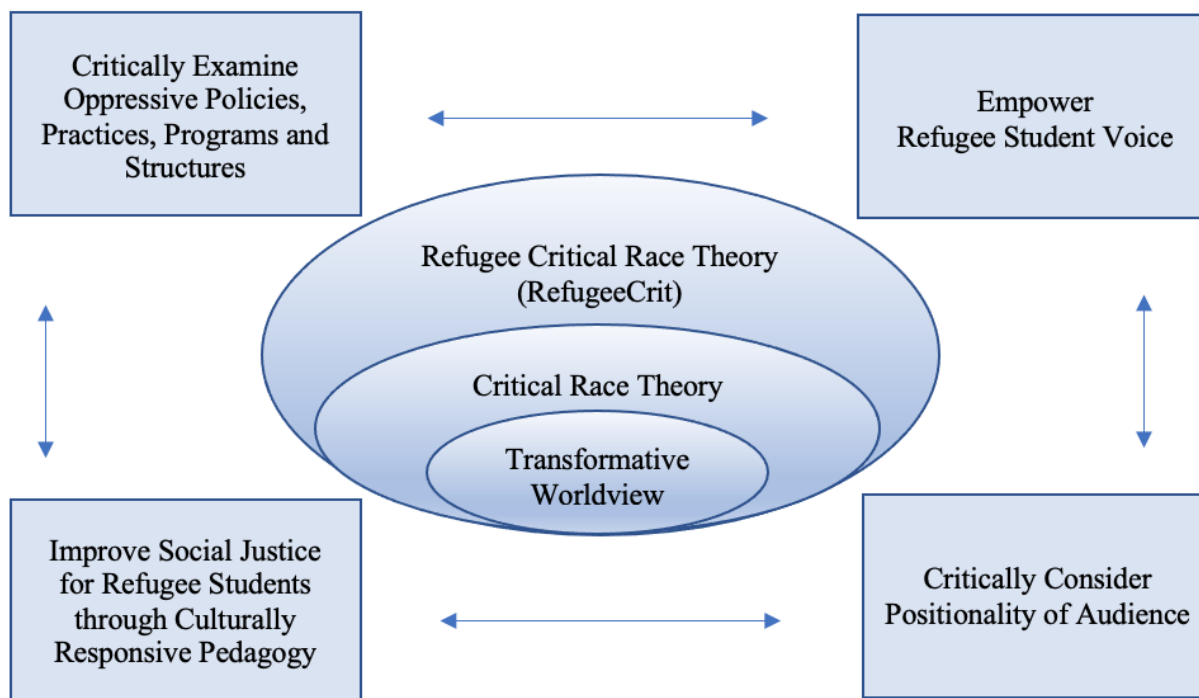
### **Theoretical Framework: Refugee Critical Race Theory**

The underpinnings of this OIP stem from a transformative worldview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Critical theory is part of that way of thinking as a means of uncovering and challenging oppressive structures, striving for social justice (Murphy et al., 2010). Murphy et al. (2010) argues that for there to be change, there needs to be understanding of our identities and relationships with others. This leads to the key tenets of critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and notions of social justice (Dantley & Tilman, 2006). Critical race theory is centered around the idea that unjust societies and organizations implement oppressive practices which negatively impact races and cultures within them, perpetuating social injustice, stereotypes, and racism. Further, Strelakova-Hughes et al., (2019) proposes refugee critical race theory, or RefugeeCrit (critical race theory in the context of refugees specifically), as an appropriate theoretical framework as outlined in Figure 1.

This is based on key components of RefugeeCrit (Strelakova-Hughes et al., 2019). This framework depicts how empowering refugee student voice, critically considering identities of actors, implementing culturally responsive pedagogy, and examining oppressive practices, all contribute to a theoretical framework which addresses inequities that exist for refugee students in our organization, and in our society.

**Figure 1**

*Theoretical Framework: Refugee Critical Race Theory in the Context of Education*



*Note.* Adapted from “Refugee Critical Race Theory in Education: An Emerging Ontological and Epistemological Lens,” by E. Strekalova-Hughes, A. Bakar, K. Nash, & E. Erdemir, 2018, *Paper Presentation at Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association*.

### **Social Justice Context**

There are clear connections of supporting refugee students as part of a social justice context. Members of the school team frequently articulate a moral obligation to improve school experiences for refugee students. Empowering the voices of newcomers and implementing their ideas into our organization is one path staff are beginning to implement to shift oppressive practices. The impact of building intercultural competence within the school team will also ideally impact refugee families in the community as well, as the intention of education is to build a socially just, inclusive, and equitable society for future generations. Social justice work will

continue to be interwoven in future sections of the OIP, particularly as inclusion of social justice work is necessary when making change in an organization to address existing oppressive programs (Carlisle et al., 2007).

### **Guiding Questions from the Problem of Practice**

Challenges which emerge from the main problem include a lack of tools to identify barriers, need for clarification on how to disrupt oppressive practices, and further understanding required for how school leaders can develop intercultural competence with staff. These issues lead to potential lines of inquiry which stem from the PoP. Based on this, there are several questions that are raised, three outlined here will be addressed in the OIP.

#### **Tools to Identify Barriers**

What tools will support the school team in the identification of barriers which hinder the success of refugee students? This first question to be explored includes recognition that there are multiple complex layers of oppression within the organization's existing practices and structures. Determining which tools can support with this process will be necessary as the school team undergoes processes to analyze programs and routines, looking for hidden elements of oppression that may be negatively impacting the effective settlement of newcomers. This path of inquiry is selected because an essential first step is to engage the school team in a process of identifying existing barriers, through an anti-oppressive framework. This aligns with the leader's transformative worldview and need for implementation of an adaptive and transformative leadership approach.

#### **Disrupting Oppressive Practices**

What intentional actions can the school leader take to disrupt oppressive programs, structures, and practices that are being implemented by the organization? Once identification of

the barriers has occurred, there will need to be explicit steps the leader takes to interrupt, disrupt and dismantle existing structures that are deemed oppressive. Exploring effective processes to transform routines is in alignment with the transformative paradigm previously discussed. This guiding question is selected because once the team gains insight into oppressive practices, specific actions must result to shift the structures and routines within the organization, again aligning with a transformative paradigm and leadership stance.

### **Developing Intercultural Competence**

As a final line of inquiry, how is intercultural competence developed, sustained, and woven into daily program and practice by the school team? Through the PoP description, the need for development of intercultural competence is clear, but how to achieve this desired state is not. As one pathway for instilling anti-oppressive practices, building intercultural competence within the school team will be key. Blair (2017) discusses using tools to map the intercultural competence of the organization. Understanding how to actually do this will be explored further within the OIP as a key line of inquiry. This final question is selected since this is an area requiring further development which is an essential component of meaningful change. With the knowledge that intercultural competence must be developed, there needs to be a solid grasp of how that can occur. Adaptive leadership is highlighted here, with the leader being required to flex as innovative ideas are brought forward and are implemented.

### **Factors Contributing to the Lines of Inquiry**

There are several factors which contribute to and influence these lines of inquiry. This includes the willingness of staff to change practices, the acceptance by the team that our programs may actually be oppressive, and recognizing that growth is required in the area of intercultural competence. Challenges may emerge in these areas that could impact the progress

of change in the organization. This accentuates the urgency for transformation to ensure the refugee students receive the best possible education, which will also serve to improve the experience for other minority groups.

### **Leadership-Focused Vision for Change**

The vision for change involves a collaborative and wholistic approach that involves rich professional development in the area of culturally responsive pedagogy and the building of intercultural competence. By implementing this vision, the result will be an improved educational experience, addressing both the academic success and well-being of refugee students.

The 4C model (Sharrat & Planche, 2016) of co-planning, co-teaching, co-debriefing, and co-reflecting, as a pre-existing professional learning structure in the school, will be included in the vision for change as a pathway to explore and implement new ideas around intercultural competence. The model has been utilized in the context of mathematics with great success. The process has been implemented in isolation with one-off lessons, but more often is used with school teams as an iterative process as outlined in Figure 2.

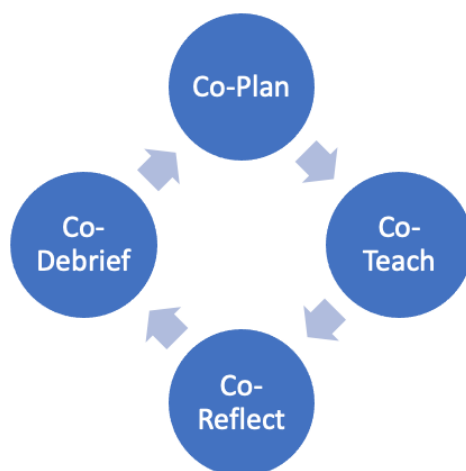
The figure, developed by the author and adapted from Sharrat and Planche's (2016) 4C model shows an effective structure for professional learning and outlines part of the how the vision for change will occur within the organization. Groups of educators together plan a rich task which is culturally responsive, collaboratively teach, co-debrief the success and set-backs of the lesson, and then participate in a reflective experience to determine next steps and uncover new schema developed through the process.

Staff meetings, webinars, professional activity days, and sharing of valuable resources is also part of the vision for change, with intentional planning for the development of intercultural

competence being interwoven into a variety of pathways for growth. Bringing in the voices of knowledgeable others, such as curriculum consultants, will be valuable as we highlight current innovative anti-oppressive practices as we seek to improve the capacity of the school team.

## Figure 2

### *The 4C Model*



*Note.* Adapted from “Leading Collaborative Learning: Empowering Excellence,” by L. Sharrat and B. Planche, 2016, *Corwin*.

## Gap Identification

The gap between the present and the envisioned future state of the organizational context centres around the lack of knowledge and experience that the school team (administrators, teachers, support staff) have on best practices to support refugee students in the school system. The envisioned future state is a space where staff are better supported through resources and training in intercultural competence and culturally responsive practices. This requires collaboration both within the local organization, between the school and the larger system of RDSB, and with the community (including families, settlement workers, and community agencies).



The future state will improve the situation for other social and organizational actors in a variety of ways. Staff members themselves will have improved intercultural competence which will serve them well in our diverse society, potentially disrupting oppressive factors outside the organization in support of an increasingly social just community. Refugee families will be more appropriately supported with strong connections established between home and school. Refugee students will be educated in an environment that is globally-minded, where diversity and differences are valued. This will positively impact their settlement in their new country, and better prepare them for their future as global citizens.

### **Priorities for Change**

Priorities for change include ensuring implementation of a variety of pathways for professional learning and also effective communication of the shared vision. Balancing stakeholder and organizational interests will be key. There must be an emphasis on the importance of the anti-oppressive work despite the presence of existing barriers, such as the pandemic and heavy workload for educators. Staff who may feel overwhelmed will need to be supported to ensure the vital professional development on intercultural competence moves forward. Regardless of challenges faced, capacity needs to be built in order to improve our service of refugee students in the system.

Ideas for change will need to be achievable and implemented in small steps to ensure effective implementation. Inspiring and innovative ideas must deeply connect to the organizational context, such as by building upon the pre-existing professional learning model and theoretical underpinnings of the organization through emphasizing a transformative approach in order to affect necessary change.

## **Change Drivers**

As part of this vision for change, there are clear drivers for transformation. Through a transformative and adaptive approach, with the lens of a transformative paradigm, three change drivers will be discussed in this section. This includes staff articulation of a feeling of urgency to change practices, a need for barrier identification to disrupt oppressive practices, and the importance for school leaders to engage in intercultural competence learning themselves. The envisioned future state will be constructed in collaboration with the organizational and broader community by intentionally seeking input into valued models of professional learning for educators, offering virtual open houses to gain insight from families, and continuing partnerships with outside agencies, all with the common goal of providing improved educational experiences for refugee students.

One driver for change emerges from staff reflections and their sense of urgency to receive help with intercultural understanding in this unique circumstance. There is a need to intentionally build culturally responsive practices (Arar et al., 2019) which begins with seeking the voices of refugee students and their families to help define the required supports.

Also, for the organization to move forward, there must be time and space to reflect upon, identify, and remove barriers and oppressive programs and practices that exist. Rose (2018) acknowledges that for meaningful transformation to occur within the organization, the opportunity to dismantle oppressive structures needs to be part of the change plan. Liou and Hermanns (2017) also reflect upon the unprepared school system, not ready for ELD programming and deficit thinking held by staff toward refugee students. We need to strive toward relevant programming and shift to an asset-based lens in the organization through a shared co-created vision.

Finally, school leaders themselves require urgent training that goes beyond diversity and inclusion (Tuters & Portelli, 2017). They also require support and resources in the area of intercultural competence (Khalifa et al., 2016) that connects to leadership in diverse settings and weaves in strategies for anti-oppression in an educational setting. The role of the school leader is also to gauge, promote and nurture change readiness within the organization, which will be discussed in the next section.

### **Influence of Equity and Social Justice on the Vision for Change**

Equity and social justice play a vital and interwoven role into this vision for change. The mission of this work is to ensure an inclusive, welcoming, and equitable learning environment for all refugee students (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). This stems from the critical stance that current programs and practices are not adequately providing sufficient support for the group's unique needs, which creates a socially unjust environment for families who have already experienced trauma and forced migration. This OIP inspires a movement of the organization to a socially just learning environment, which has the potential to address social injustices and remove oppressive practices beyond the school level.

### **Organizational Change Readiness**

Organizational change readiness is complex and multi-layered. When staff are motivated for transformation within the organization and believe they are capable of making change, organizational change readiness is high (Weiner, 2009). This section will focus on identifying and analyzing organizational change readiness. A description of organizational change readiness based on the selection and use of available tools to assess change readiness (Deszca et al., 2020) will be included.

When assessing the organization's readiness for change, in this context, initially criteria from Holt's (2002) simple scale indicates that the school team is ready for change. All criteria from the scale are met including staff believing they can implement a change, the change is appropriate, the school leaders are committed to this change, and the proposed change is needed (Deszca et al., 2020; Holt, 2002; Holt et al., 2007). The school team have voiced belief in their power to implement change in the practice given the appropriate time, resources, and support. They also have reflected through surveys and informal conversation that the required changes are appropriate as there is an immediate need to build intercultural competence to better serve refugee students in our school. School leaders, including myself and the vice principal, as well as members of the leadership team are strongly committed to implementing this urgent change in practice, feeling an ethical obligation to transform existing programs and structures. All members collectively agree that urgent transformation, guidance, and support are required immediately as current practices are inadequate.

### **Analyzing Organizational Change Capacity**

To explore change readiness further, Judge and Douglas (2009) introduce a more complex approach and have an eight-point model that may be more relevant in my situation. Organizational change capacity (Judge & Douglas, 2009) includes several components which the organization can be measured against to analyze and assess readiness for change and includes the following:

1. Trustworthy leadership,
2. Trusting followers,
3. Capable champions,
4. Involved mid-management,

5. Innovative culture
6. Accountable culture,
7. Effective communication, and
8. Systems thinking.

Trustworthy leadership is present as there are long-established relationships within the school team, ongoing communication occurs and a team-approach is emphasized. There are trusting followers, believing that the leaders are supportive of their development and minimize external distractions for the team (Deszca et al., 2020; Kõiv et al., 2019). Next, capable champions exist at all levels of the hierarchical organizational structure, further indicating readiness for change. Middle managers are involved and take an active role in school improvement planning, leading to the existence of an innovative and accountable school culture (Deszca et al., 2020). New ideas are valued and team members hold each other accountable for improving upon teaching and learning practices within the organization. Finally, effective communication methods are in place throughout the system and there is a systems-thinking lens within the organization, particularly by school leaders (Deszca et al., 2020). Analysis of these points indicates readiness for change within the organization (Judge and Douglas, 2009).

### **Proposed Tools to Track Change**

Deszca et al., (2020) outline an iterative change path model which includes the awakening stage, mobilization stage, activation stage, and institutionalization stage. The school team within the organization has experienced the awakening stage through the acknowledgement that urgent transformation is required. The mobilization stage is where team is currently situated, eager to begin meaningful professional learning and access appropriate resources, but struggling to identify actions that will bring about movement to the activation stage.

Tools to measure, monitor, and track change as the school team moves through the stages of the change path model will be important in order to measure growth and ensure common visioning. Regular informal check-ins to monitor progress will be used as a tool as well as formal structures such as staff surveys and feedback forms following professional learning sessions. Change will also be measured by other stakeholders including the students themselves who can serve as self-advocates for immediate needs and supports. Tools to measure intercultural competence will also be explored as a means to monitor progress and track change, such as the Intercultural Development Index (Schmieder-Ramirez et al., 2004). The impact reflected by these tools will be guided by readiness for change at various levels, including the individual, school, and system level, and each level has both antecedents and consequences of change readiness (Rafferty et al., 2013) which are further explored in the next section.

### **Competing Internal and External Forces**

There are competing forces within the organization that impact change. For example, change readiness of the individuals within the team will contribute to growth and those who lag behind the collective group readiness may impede progress. Coming from a place of positivity and adaptability, staff are more likely to change if they are well-supported by leaders. This makes change more manageable and less overwhelming, improving readiness for change of each individual in the group (Hetzner et al., 2012). Also, the change plan needs to be appropriate and fit within the context of the organization in order to be implemented by the team. There must be buy-in from the staff and belief that, if implemented appropriately, the change plan will have a positive effective on the educational outcomes for refugee students in our school. Vakola (2013) describes change readiness at three levels which include micro-individual readiness, meso-group readiness, and macro-organizational readiness. In this context, there needs to be consideration on

the part of the school leader for how to prepare for, plan, and implement change at all three levels and varying leadership actions are necessary based on intended audience. For example, building trust at all levels and assessing that readiness for change on a micro, meso and macro scale will be important to successfully implement change.

### **Consideration of Equity and Social Justice**

As a continued interwoven thread into this OIP, consideration of equity and social justice as part of an analysis of organizational change readiness is vital. Creating an equitable, inclusive, and socially just learning environment is the purpose and ethical obligation of this important work. As leaders, we will ensure that the organization meets those criteria to prepare for transformation in order to successfully move as team through the stages of the change path model. The result will be improved academic success and well-being for refugee students within the organization. The broad diversity of staff from CES who bring a cross-cultural perspective and unique lived experiences provide value and wisdom in this area. The staff in the building bring unique strengths and assets from their own distinct outlooks that are valued and serve as an additional layer of expertise to access as newcomers are supported.

### **Chapter 1 Conclusion**

This initial chapter has outlined the leadership PoP around building intercultural capacity within school teams to better support refugee students entering the Ontario school system. Adaptive and transformative leadership approaches are briefly explored and will be further expanded upon in Chapter 2 as relevant to use with in a transformative theoretical framework. As the principal of CES, my leadership lens, agency, and positionality are discussed. While framing this PoP, a SPELIT factor analysis has been reviewed, and the vision for necessary change has been considered. Finally, a reflection upon the organization's readiness for change has been

included. In the next chapter, a framework for leading the change process will be explored and possible solutions for the leadership PoP will be discussed.



## **Chapter 2: Planning and Development**

Chapter 1 of this OIP outlined a leadership PoP on building intercultural capacity of school teams to support refugee students, and reflected upon a vision for change with consideration for theoretical frameworks, and a framing of the PoP with support from a SPELIT analysis. Chapter 2 further develops these ideas by exploring transformative and adaptive leadership approaches which are relevant in this context. A framework for leading the change process is outlined which includes Kotter's eight stage process (Deszca et al., 2020; Kotter, 1996; Kotter, 2009). The organization is critically analyzed using Sterman's systems dynamics change model (Sterman, 2001), followed by consideration of three possible solutions as a means to propel the organization forward. The chapter concludes with a discussion around leadership ethics, equity, and social justice.

### **Leadership Approaches to Change**

As the demographics have changed drastically within the school community over the last few years, so too must the leadership approach of the principal in order to be responsive to the shifting student need. An urgent change is necessary in the organization and therefore requires that administrators implement a blend of a transformative and an adaptive leadership approach. This is particularly relevant as this context also exists during a pivotal moment in educational history, where drastic change is innately occurring due to the pandemic.

#### **Transformative Leadership**

The foundational leadership approach that will be implemented is a transformative one (Shields, 2004, 2010, 2014). This approach is grounded in critical theory and calls for rapid responsive change, but with an emphasis on relationships and taking an adaptive stance while implementing that change. This approach is appropriate when working for social change, as it is

inherently critical of inequities (Shields, 2010) and seeks to remove oppressive practices. The results of which positively impact students, staff, but also society as a whole. Though this may appear a lofty vision, by leading in this way, there is potential to make improvements around intercultural capacity, the impact of which could transcend beyond the school walls and reach students, staff, families, and community partners.

There are eight key tenets of transformative leadership which are applicable to this PoP as described by Shields (2014, 2019). First, there needs to be acceptance of the mandate for deep and equitable change, something that was established immediately as newcomers began arriving, and there was a realization that current practices were insufficient. Next, changing of mindsets must occur in order for the school team to move forward, as part of the acknowledgement of a need for improvement. Power must be redistributed in more equitable ways, which in my context does not necessarily mean distribution of leadership among staff, but also providing power to students and families through the amplification of their individual and collective voices, with relationship building in consort with refugee families being key (Kandel-Cisco et al., 2020). The balancing of public and private good explores the notion that the impact of this leadership work will address individuals and the community as a whole. Next, as part of a transformative approach, there needs to be a focus on democracy, emancipation, equity, and justice, which in this context involves ensuring unique student needs are addressed. As part of the focus on intercultural capacity building, another key tenet involves establishing interconnectedness, interdependence, and global awareness. Also, this approach involves balancing critique and promise, exploring realistic and attainable goals for change. Finally, transformative leadership encompasses exhibiting moral courage as it addresses inequities in established systems, and seeks to make significant changes coming from a social justice lens (Shields, 2014).

Transformative leadership comes from a revolutionary stance, as it challenges inequities, imagines a reformed organization, and specifically calls for disruption of the status quo (Hewitt et al., 2014). The approach also seeks to challenge systemic racism, deficit thinking, and low expectations (Liou & Hermanns, 2017), in this context by building the capacity of a school team to disrupt oppressive structures and programs in order to serve newcomers in more culturally responsive ways.

Kose (2009) articulates that transformative leadership is necessary when principals are conducting social justice work in their schools. Noting that transformative leaders are visionary co-learners who consider politics and cultural elements when leading change, Kose (2009) emphasizes that intercultural competence should be interwoven throughout social justice professional training. Transformative leadership will propel change forward in this area, building upon Kotter's sense of urgency stage (Kotter, 1996, 2009) for rapid revisions to existing practices. To support this notion further, Cooper (2009) states that when principals are leading work in cultural competency, a transformative approach is appropriate. In particular, transformative leadership is especially effective in communities where demographics have changed rapidly as transformation in the organization is inevitable. This further supports the value of implementing a transformative leadership approach due to the element of social justice, the need for intercultural competence development, and a community where demographics have changed rapidly.

### **Adaptive Leadership**

To supplement the transformative approach, bringing an adaptive leadership style (Heifetz et al., 2009) will also be appropriate as the theory is relevant when an organization encounters a complex problem. Nelson and Squires (2017) discuss collaborative problem-solving

and the importance of engaging the input of stakeholders. This approach is particularly relevant for change implementation during the pandemic noting that systems everywhere are currently in a cycle of adaptation (Netolicky, 2020). As school leaders navigate through unprecedented times, adaptation and transformation is vital. Harris and Jones (2020) reflect on this leadership during disruptive times, also arguing for an adaptive approach which calls for connection and collaboration. When the external environment is unsettled, there will inherently be a need for adaptation within the organization. Similarly, Uhl-Bien (2021) reflects upon the incredibly complex circumstances leaders are navigating through and calls for an adaptive leadership approach to be implemented in order to ensure there are appropriate responses by stakeholders within the organization.

Flexibility and adaptability in organizational leadership is truly essential when leading through a changing environment (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). However, Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018) wonder if that adaptive leadership is sufficient and also call for organizational adaptability in order for meaningful change to successfully occur. To do so requires a navigation of tensions and an establishment of an adaptive space where ideas can grow, collaboration is embedded through networking, and we become ambidextrous at all levels of the organization, building adaptive capabilities (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

### **Propelling Change Forward**

These chosen leadership approaches will propel the change forward in the organization by building upon the sense of urgency that exists as the school community welcomes newcomers. Examination of existing programs and practices which may be oppressive require an adaptive stance based on a transformative worldview. Reviewing current structures with a

critical lens will be important for leading rapid responsive change in order to reflect upon innovative ideas to better serve refugee students.

These leadership approaches align with my organizational context as they are grounded in a relationship-focused approach, with an underlying element of activism and hope for improved social justice for a marginalized group of learners. The approaches specifically relate to the PoP because staying the course with current programs and practices is simply not sufficient to prepare staff to support these students. Building intercultural competence with the school team will require an overhaul of the organization. A transformative leadership approach nestled in a philosophy of ethics, anti-oppression, and social justice is vital in this unique circumstance. This OIP will approach organizational reform through a both transformative and adaptive stance as a means to move the change process forward.

### **Framework for Leading the Change Process**

Two frameworks are being considered as a means to lead the change process. The first is Lewin's stage theory of change which focuses simply on unfreezing, changing, and refreezing (Deszca et al., 2020). The second considered framework is Kotter's eight stage process (Kotter, 1996, 2009) which provides eight steps for the organization to proceed through to achieve desired outcomes. A thorough examination of each follows in the next section.

#### **Lewin's Stage Theory of Change**

Lewin's stage theory of change is a framework which seems relevant in this context, as it outlines a simple three-stage model; unfreeze, change, and refreeze (Deszca et al., 2020). An organization first unfreezes where previously held beliefs are questioned in response to shifting from the status quo, potentially due to a crisis. This unfreezing opens stakeholders to necessary change. When change is complete, new beliefs and practices are secured or refrozen (Deszca et

al., 2020). This framework provides a straightforward path for organizations to follow, with consideration for departing the status quo, exploring new possibilities, and then locking into that new normal once change has occurred.

Though elegantly simple, the framework is not reflective of a dynamic and complex system that is fluid and is susceptible to external variables. Also questionable is the notion of refreezing, when instead leaders may prefer that learning never be over, but rather iterative. Therefore, another change framework needs to be explored for this context.

### **Kotter's Eight-Stage Process**

Kotter's eight stage process (Burke, 2018; Kotter, 1996, 2009) involves a clear process that is more complex than the previous framework outlined. Kotter (1996) explains that an organization needs to ensure achievement of one step prior to moving on to the next. Eight steps are outlined and organized into three phases, which Kotter (1996) admits does take considerable time to accomplish.

A limitation of Kotter's framework for leading the process of organizational change (Kotter, 1996) is that it too is a linear model that neglects to consider shifting dynamics and the impact of external variables. There may be circumstances which push the organization backward or times when parts of the organization are ready to move to the next step but others are not. The framework will need to be implemented with flexibility, again supporting the use of an adaptive leadership approach to supplement the transformative leadership stance.

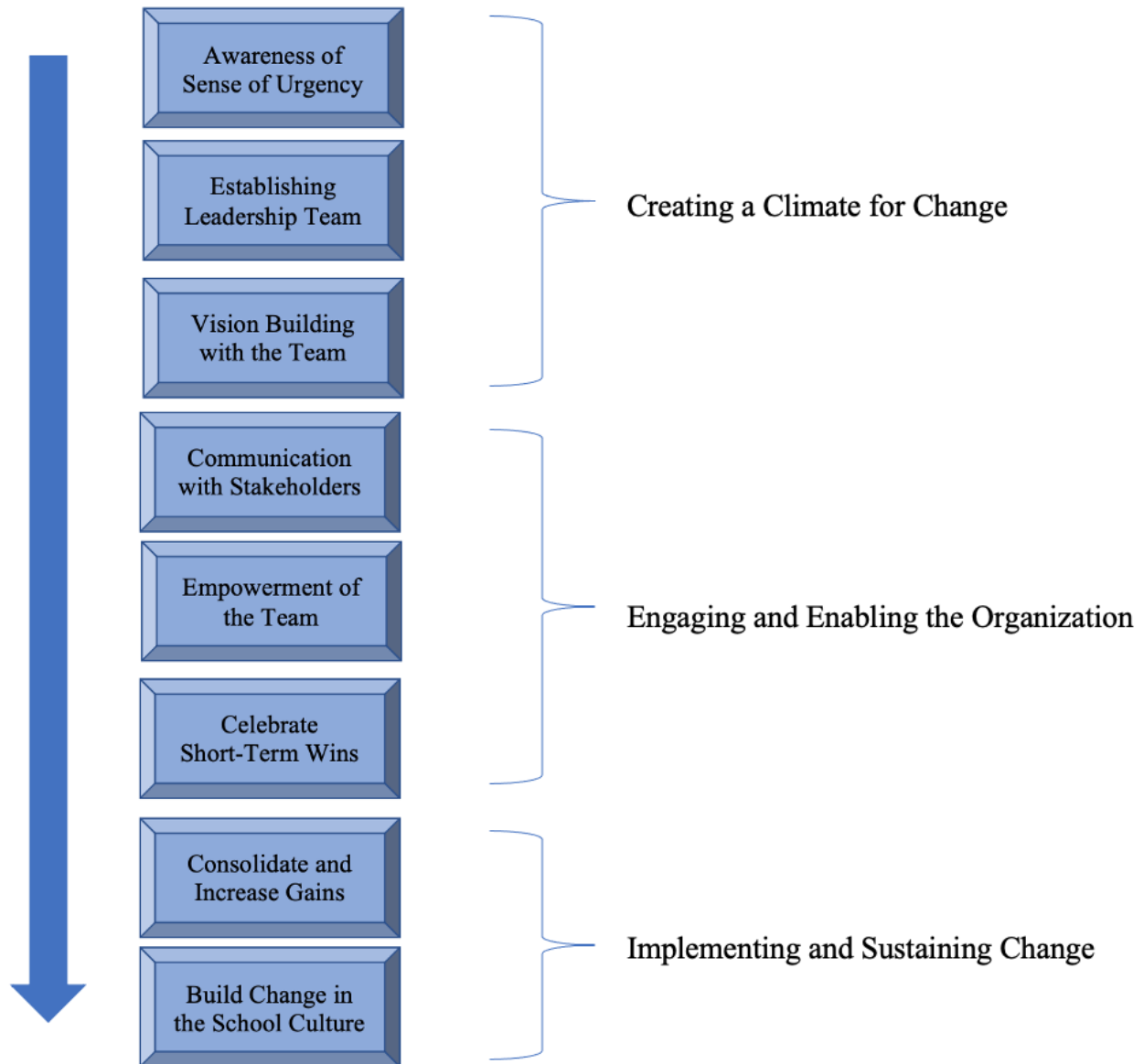
Kotter's eight stage process (Burke, 2018; Kotter, 1996, 2009) could serve as a useful process to engage in reactive transformative change in the school. A sense of urgency is already firmly established with staff describing need for training and resources. A leadership team is in place, with involved staff members representing a variety of roles and divisions. Vision building

with the team and communication with stakeholders will be essential in the process with ongoing empowerment of the team, acknowledgement and celebration of short-term wins. Consolidation of progress and key ideas will support further gains, leading to impact on practice. Finally, the goal will be for transformation of the school culture essentially, with further development of capacity in the area of intercultural competence (Blair, 2017; Deardorff, 2017).

### **Selected Framework**

Implementing a transformative and adaptive leadership approach alone will not cause change. In this context, the selected framework which provides the most relevance when moving through the change pathway is Kotter's eight stage process (Burke, 2018; Kotter, 1996, 2009), which should lead to achieving the desired state (see Figure 3).

Kotter's three phases (Kotter, 1996, 2009) will be explored as a framework for leading the change in this organization. The first phase involves creating a climate for change within the organization where necessity for change is established and the team collectively establishes goals for this transformation. The next phase involves engaging and enabling the organization, essentially bolstering stakeholders while focusing on positive relationships during the period of adaptation through communication and empowerment. The final phase involves implementing change and sustaining change, a notion that extends from Lewin's model (Deszca et al., 2020) where the end result was refreezing. On the contrary, in Kotter's model (Kotter, 1996), the end result is embedding change as part of the culture of the community. This enhances organizational adaptability and prepares individual stakeholders for future inevitable changes (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

**Figure 3***Kotter's Eight Stage Change Process*

*Note.* Adapted from “Leading Change,” by J. Kotter, 1996, *Harvard Business School*.

### **Types of Organizational Change**

Two types of organizational change include reactive and anticipatory (Deszca et al., 2020) with consideration for incremental versus radical change. Anticipatory changes involve



fine tuning and reorientation as proactive measures are implemented within an organization (Deszca et al., 2020).

In the context of the sudden influx of newcomer students, our organization is in a position of necessary reactive change in order to respond to the urgent needs of the shifting school community. Re-imagining of programs and practices is required with a focus on many organizational components to achieve change across the system. This rapid change involves creation of a shared vision with a focus on motivating team members and instilling optimism while undergoing the change process (Deszca et al., 2020). Rapid change in professional learning foci and an overhaul of current ESL/ELD programming models is vital to ensure effective settlement for newcomer families.

Alternatively, an adaptive reactive approach does not appear radical enough in this context as incremental changes are implemented more slowly with modest responsive actions. This type of organizational change appears less urgent than the type of change that involves an overhaul and critical examination of existing practices.

### **Alignment with Leadership Models**

Using a transformative (Shields, 2010, 2014) and adaptive approach (Heifetz, 2009) when undergoing this type of reactive organizational change is important as the leadership lens is in alignment with the type of change required. There also should be alliance the approach and selected framework for leading that change. Kotter's process (1996) outlines three phases for that organizational transformation which will nurture that change climate, prepare stakeholders for necessary adaptability, and implement reform. Perhaps most important in Kotter's model (1996) is the outcome of creating a culture of change, which is necessary as we continue to experience a

period of unsettlement due to the pandemic, shifting responsive educational practices, and continue to welcome new refugees from around the world due to forced migration.

In this dynamic context, a transformative approach (Shields, 2010, 2014) is vital for school leaders in challenging times which calls for a drastic overhaul of existing practices. At the same time, while working through the eight-stage process (Kotter, 1996), maintaining an adaptable approach (Heifetz, 2009) will be important as flexibility of the organization is essential. When considering how to change, there is a centering on a transformative approach which relies on the tenets of critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and more specifically, RefugeeCrit (Strekalova-Hughes et al., 2018). The underpinnings of this focuses on the critical examination of oppressive programs and practices, and on the improvement of social justice for refugee students (Strekalova-Hughes et al., 2018), in particular through culturally sustaining practices (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012).

There is a call for critical examination of oppressive structures and programs, empowerment of student voice, and improving social justice through the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy (Strekalova-Hughes et al., 2018). To implement these actions, utilizing Kotter's process (Kotter, 1996) will provide structure during this responsive period of transformation. The linear process will provide some clarity and guidance while external factors continue to impact the organization, necessitating a transformative and adaptive approach.

### **Critical Organizational Analysis**

This section will outline change readiness findings, an organizational analysis using Sterman's systems dynamics model (Sterman, 2001), and a description of what is needed to change and why. The framework for leading change will be further explored in this context and the change path model to diagnose needed reform will be discussed.

## **Change Readiness Findings**

Based on change readiness findings which stem from observations and conversations with multiple stakeholders, there are several changes that are needed in the organization in order to propel change forward. Holt (2002) and Holt et al., (2007) reflect that change readiness is multidimensional and requires that stakeholders hold beliefs that the change is possible, appropriate, and will benefit stakeholders. In this context, a tool for organizational capacity for change will be explored (Judge & Douglas, 2009).

Organizational change readiness is complex and multi-layered. When staff are motivated for transformation and believe they are capable of making change, organizational change readiness is high (Weiner, 2009). When assessing the organization's readiness for change, in this context, all the criteria are met from Holt's (2002) simple scale including staff believing they can implement a change, the change is appropriate, the school leaders are committed to this change, and the proposed change is needed (Deszca et al., 2020; Holt et al., 2007). However, Judge and Douglas (2009) introduce a more complex approach and have an eight-point model that may be more relevant in my situation, which will be further explored here.

First, trustworthy leadership is present and there are trusting followers (Deszca et al., 2020; Kõiv et al., 2019). Next, capable champions exist and middle managers are involved, leading to the existence of an innovative and accountable school culture (Deszca et al., 2020). Finally, effective communication methods are in place and there is a systems-thinking lens within the organization (Deszca et al., 2020). These all indicate a readiness for change within the organization (Judge and Douglas, 2009).

Further, there are factors within the organization which impact change, including change readiness, which contribute to growth. Coming from a place of positivity and adaptability, staff

are more likely to change if supported by leaders in this way, making change more manageable and less overwhelming, improving readiness for change (Hetzner et al., 2012). Further, Hetzner et al., (2012) point out that individual self-determination is an important element of change readiness. The change plan needs to be appropriate and fit within the context of the organization in order to be implemented by the team.

### **Implementing the Framework for Leading Change and Change Path Model**

While Kotter's (1996) eight stage process serves to guide how to lead the organization through the change process, Sterman's systems dynamics model (Sterman, 2001) will be implemented when determining what needs changing. To diagnose and analyze change, there will be value in using Sterman's model (Sterman, 2001), which is dynamic and acknowledges fluidity, particularly when Kotter's structured step-by-step process (Kotter, 1996) will be used to undergo change. This is intentional to provide balance between structure and variability.

### ***Implementing Kotter's Eight Stage Process***

First, the sense of urgency is established as concerns from multiple stakeholders are gathered. Key team members will be part of the leadership team, including specialist and homeroom teachers, administrators and support staff. Vision building will occur around intercultural competence, with a common goal of implementing culturally relevant practices. Communication with stakeholders will occur with a plan of responsive professional learning and access of resources. Intentional inspiration through a transformative leadership style will empower the team, with further motivation emerging from the celebration of short-term measured gains. Ongoing responsive work will lead to consolidation and the notion of change will be built into the school culture.

### *Implementing Sterman's Systems Dynamics Model*

A sense of urgency exists as a new vision begins to address the shifting community. To diagnose gaps in the organization during this period of change, Sterman's systems dynamics model (Sterman, 2001) will be used. Nadler and Tushman's congruence model (1980) is considered as an option, and system dynamics are also contemplated as part of this structure. However, the model emphasizes too linear of an application with focus on alignment and perhaps an oversimplification of input and output that would not be as appropriate in my fluid context (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). In this organization's rapidly changing environment, a more complex model is more relevant. Sterman (2001) instead considers multiple dynamic forces at play which influence outcomes. Complex interactions between variables impact results. Challenges are anticipated due to the multifaceted elements of the process and the evolving organization.

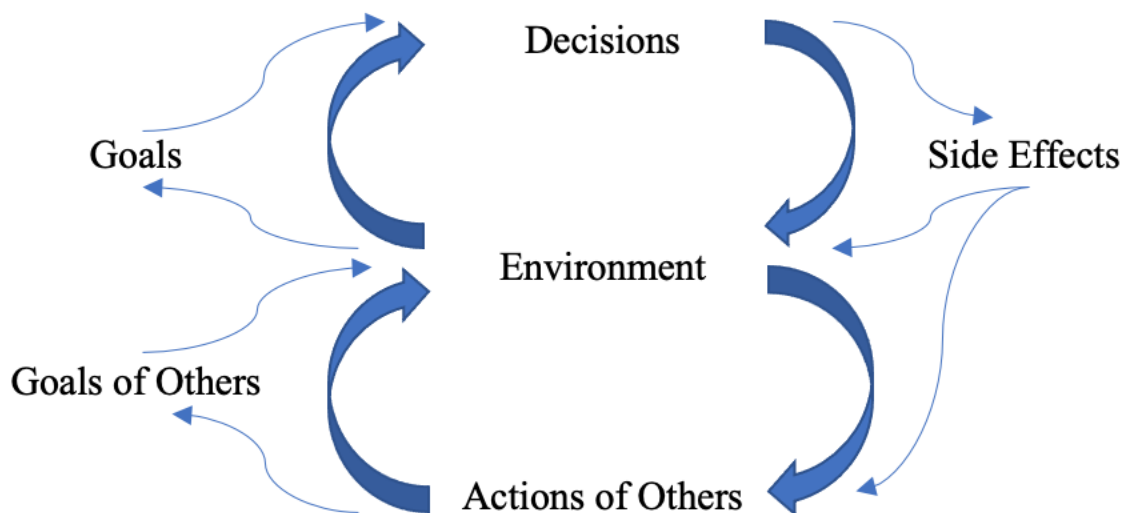
Sterman's systems dynamics model (Sterman, 2001) connects with my PoP due to the acknowledgment of organizations as nonlinear, interactive and dynamic with a focus on the interaction of forces such as leadership decisions, environment, and actions of stakeholders (Deszca et al., 2020). A simple change method of finding a gap, making a decision, taking action and expecting rational results proves ineffective in this setting as there are many competing variables that must be considered (Deszca et al., 2020). Perceived gaps could have a delay with a solution becoming effective in a longer than anticipated time frame, which may be considered unsuccessful in the short-term (Deszca et al., 2020).

Sterman's model (2001), as evident in Figure 4, builds on the notions of double and triple loop learning (Argyris and Schön, 1996). This involves a necessary revisiting of complex ideas in an iterative process. In my context this may involve the school team circling back to reflect on

learning and intercultural development at key points in the process. This underscores the complexity of interaction between decisions, environment and actions of others and the resulting unintended side effects (Deszca et al., 2020). A key strength of this model therefore is the consideration of that system-level complexity when conducting a gap analysis, being mindful that organizations are dynamic. In the context of CES, with multiple stakeholders, unique instructional challenges, and input from multiple levels in the system, there is a necessity to conduct an analysis using a model focused on the dynamic nature of organizations.

**Figure 4**

*Sterman's Systems Dynamics Model with Feedback Loops*



*Note.* Adapted from “System Dynamics Modeling: Tools for Learning in a Complex World,” by J. Sterman, 2001, *California Management review*, 43(4), 8-25.

There are limitations to this analysis tool including the resulting challenges with vision alignment. As the organization evolves through interplay of numerous variables, creating a shared vision proves difficult. In fact, Sterman (2001) suggests increasing the variables which are considered in order to handle the augmented complexity of organizations. Though the tool

urges the exploration of hidden assumptions and biases, uncovering them may be difficult. Unintended side effects result that may not be discovered until sometime after the fact, which may also lead to wrongful attribution to another decision or stakeholder action.

### **Gap Analysis**

A gap analysis is explored to describe what is needed to change in the organization and why. A critical analysis of the organization using Sterman's systems dynamics model (2001) will assist with gap identification between the current and future desired state. Also acknowledged will be the visible and invisible drivers and forces at work that have shaped the PoP.

### **Goals**

Staff need to be better prepared to help refugee students cope with trauma. Teachers require knowledge and skills in culturally appropriate trauma-informed practices, which is currently lacking. A goal of the organization is the implementation of culturally responsive programming and practices, but staff do not yet consistently have this skill. Goals of others impact in this circumstance as some staff seek therapeutic tools to support their students, which lies outside their role. For example, trauma-informed education requires a level of sensitivity and understanding of existing trauma, and a need to put measures in place to prevent future trauma (Venet, 2021), but therapy does not rest in the sphere of influence of the educator.

Another gap involves early literacy instruction of refugee youth, some of whom have never attended school or who have had interruptions to schooling. For example, students in our context may be thirteen years old and have not learned how to read or write, in English or another language. Many educators of young adults may not have experience with early literacy instruction and teachers struggle to find effective instructional methods and age-appropriate engaging texts that are culturally responsive (Birman, 2005; Strekalova-Hughes, 2019).

Achieving the goal of effective reading and writing instruction for refugee students then becomes a challenge due to this lack of training for teachers who typically instruct older students who typically hold strong pre-existing foundational knowledge in early literacy.

There is a collective lack of teachers' intercultural capacity. Since all staff cannot formally be ESL/ELD specialist teachers, there must be a mindset shift since most homeroom classes hold refugee students. This involves building collective capital (Fullan et al., 2015) to understand how to be responsive to cultural differences and ensure practices are culturally relevant. Leadership decisions around professional learning have focused on anti-oppressive practices, social-emotional learning, and accommodations/modifications. However, progress in the area is slow.

### ***Decisions***

Refugee youth often struggle with adaptation, partly due to unprepared school systems that fail to understand how to adequately address their unique challenges, experiences of war, and forced migration (Rossiter et al., 2015). In many situations, decisions are being made on behalf of a family and there are oppressive barriers which exist. There have been observed limitations and challenges to seeking the voices of families, for example, due to lack of translators in their first language, or the amount of time it takes to make arrangements for the process to take place. There are unintended side-effects of decisions made, which may impact families and the effective integration of students into the school community.

System-level decisions made about programming sometimes rest in assumptions about refugees such as lack of resilience, limited academic progress, and generalized experiences of war, and are made with very limited interactions with this particular group of students. At the local level, responsive decisions have been made with class placements, timetabling, staffing



assignments and allocations in order to provide structure for successful programming. However, without knowing about effective program models, these decisions were made without full understanding of best practices.

### ***Environment***

The environment contributes to gaps as existing structures ensure students are in homeroom classes but are with non-specialized teachers who have little awareness of the complexities involved in working with newcomers. A focus on creating a caring learning environment has remained a priority when programming is lacking, but further understanding of effective processes is required.

Shapiro (2014) articulates a common challenge which involves deficit-thinking of staff toward ELLs. The learners themselves are often considered problems to be solved, rather than approaching their learning with an asset-based lens, and considering that the system itself is the problem (Venet, 2021). This gap exists in my context as well with critical race theory guiding the shift in thinking toward finding the problem in oppressive practices instead.

### ***Actions of Others***

The actions of others have had significant impact on programming. Stakeholders including settlement workers, translators, and community group advocates continue to provide input and call for increased support. However, there is not a full understanding of the school system and there is lack cohesion in their requests. In this context, there is an assumption that families fully understand the vision of programming. Similarly, at CES community advocates sometimes make unreasonable demand for the students, such as requesting full-day withdrawal programming without comprehending the blended intensive support and inclusionary model. To

address the gaps which exist in these key areas, solutions to address the PoP are explored in the next section.

### **Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice**

The gap analysis has identified a series of issues that will need to be addressed through the potential solutions. First, there is a current lack of formal programming for students with interrupted schooling. Next, there has been limited previous professional learning for teachers around culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014), intercultural sensitivity and competence (Strekalova-Hughes, 2017), and trauma-informed practices (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Finally, though staff collectively strive to build an inclusive school community, there is a need for cohesion and a clearly articulated vision for how to achieve this goal with newcomers. In order to effectively compare these proposed solutions in relation to addressing goals, Appendix B explores contrasting elements to determine the best possible preferred solution which addresses identified gaps and develops the organizational capacity around intercultural competence.

Planning for solutions is vital in order to address these challenges that have never previously been experienced by the system. A transformative approach will guide the solutions (Shields, 2010, 2014) using RefugeeCrit as a theoretical framework to lead the thinking (Strekalova-Hughes et al., 2018). This framework will focus on empowering refugee voice and critically consider positionality of the audience (Strekalova-Hughes et al., 2018).

### **Suggested Solutions**

Three possible solutions have been identified and each will be compared and contrasted based upon time required, fiscal needs, support of others, and analysis of expected goal achievement. Each solution is focused on transformation of existing programs and/or practices as

a means of organizational adaptability. Solutions are evaluated in order to seek the outcome which holds the greatest impact on developing intercultural capacity within the school team. The intended outcome of this professional growth will be effective settlement of newcomers, developing their sense of belonging and ensuring their academic success in the system.

The three possible solutions include (1) the implementation of an intensive withdrawal ELD program, (2) focused professional learning on intercultural competence and culturally sustaining pedagogy for staff members (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014), and (3) collaboration with multiple stakeholders to develop a clear shared vision for improving inclusion and sense of belonging in our school community, particularly for newcomers (Stewart & Martin, 2018). Though it may be argued that maintaining current strategies is an option, transformative leadership comes from a place where oppressive practices are challenged, reform is urgently required, and status quo is simply insufficient (Hewitt et al., 2014). Therefore, in this context of rapid demographic changes, staying the course will not be proposed as a solution.

### ***Solution 1: Implementation of an Intensive ELD Program***

Our school is in a unique situation where, because of the large number of refugee students who settled in our area in a relatively short period of time, we have access to a regional team who provide curriculum supports to school teams for students requiring specialized programming. Through the leadership of a curriculum co-ordinator, the principal supervising ELD programming, and the Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, a withdrawal elementary ELD program may be designed for math and literacy intensive support for accelerated learning and gap-filling in core concepts. This involves students attending ELD in a separate classroom, with a smaller group of students, to receive intensive instruction. In response to the significant needs of the refugee students with limited prior schooling, additional staffing is

available. However, due to the interruptions, barriers and restrictions associated with COVID-19, the vision for the program is still in the process of being implemented, forcing an adapted and evolving version of the program instead. The intention of the program is to provide rich small group instruction outside of the students' regularly assigned classroom, led by specialist teachers, for accelerated gap-closing in mathematics and literacy.

The fragmented implementation of the program is disassociated from the original vision. This has heavily relied upon a transformative leadership lens (Shields, 2010, 2014), and in particular an adaptive leadership stance (Heifetz et al., 2009) while being in a constant responsive state of flux. Though this solution may be positively impacting student achievement, there has been a struggle to continue to build the collective efficacy of staff during a time of disruption to the program. With multiple stakeholders holding diverse views of best practices, with core intentions identical, the voices of consultants, ELD specialist teachers, homeroom teachers and administrators emerge from different experiences and knowledge, leading to divergence of opinions for program adaptation. Also, during this period of adaptation there has been minimal transfer of knowledge to homeroom teaching staff.

In my leadership role, my sphere of influence and area of impact for this program is limited due to the system-level creation of the program, with most design input coming from those at the regional level. Navigating between contrasting stakeholder and change agent views requires flexibility, optimism and resilience. In order to make this solution successful in terms of building capacity of the whole school team, external stakeholder groups will need to gain deeper insight into the challenges experienced at the local level. Similarly, on-site staff will need to learn about the underlying philosophies and ideologies which have driven the creation of an intensive ELD program.

The original vision for the ELD program involves focused learning between regional consultants, regional itinerant ELD teachers and homeroom staff. This is an opportunity to specifically address the PoP at hand and build capacity with staff around culturally responsive pedagogy and intercultural competence. However, the pandemic has led to a pause on release days being provided for professional learning. Therefore, this lies outside my area of, leading to the conclusion that this is not the solution for the PoP at this time. Though the program continues to provide a rich academic learning experience for the students, the current structure and design of the program is not allowing for opportunities for intercultural capacity building across the school. And more importantly, those front-line educators working daily to meet the needs of your refugee students.

### ***Solution 2: Focused Professional Learning***

Even within the current context of restructuring during COVID-19, and the limited number of release days for teaching staff, there are certainly opportunities to continue our in-school professional learning using local specialized teachers as lead learners and facilitators at staff and leadership team meetings, and on professional activity days. Through the lens of the transformation process, we have the internal structures in place to allow for professional learning both formally through scheduled meetings, and informally through ongoing collaborative conversations. Also, necessary decisions are within my sphere of influence and common goals exist between stakeholders. We are in a position to bring together a group of staff with different titles, experiences and relevant knowledge who are believers that change is needed. This team feeds into a transformative leadership style (Liou & Hermanns, 2017; Shields, 2010, 2014) and can impact change while designing a professional learning strategy that empowers staff and generates short-term wins.

Team-led specific professional learning around culturally sustaining pedagogy and trauma-informed practices will enhance the collective capacity of the staff who are working directly with refugee students (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014). We have the opportunity to begin the work by bringing outside resources into the learning, such as through accessing consultants, reviewing Ministry of Education documents (OME, 2009), and exploring current research (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Stewart & Martin, 2018).

This solution is different from the first one proposed in that there is increased potential for short-term gains in response to the immediacy implementing a professional learning model. The area of impact is greater with this proposed solution because there are direct implications for an improvement in both individual and collective efficacy for staff members in intercultural competence, resulting in greater transformation of existing practices. Student achievement will also be positively impacted as both homeroom teachers and specialist teachers together build capacity to better serve the refugee students.

***Solution 3: Developing a Shared Vision for an Inclusive School Community***

The final potential solution to be explored is the reimagining of an inclusive school community. Developing a shared vision with the involvement of multiple stakeholders is important as we include the voices of those who are impacted by the common goals we put in place. To make this successful, this solution will involve surveying students on their sense of belonging, seeking input from families on how they would like to be more included in the school community, opinions from staff on how to improve inclusionary practices and also involvement from School Council, community groups, and settlement workers. Considering the structure to create a shared vision (Burke, 2018), there is a need for surveys, virtual connections and determining common views on the elements of an equitable and inclusive school community.

Active listening to inform change and a willingness for reflexivity of the leader, the team, and the organization is also important. This shared vision should impact on an improved sense of belonging, increasing promising practices for culturally responsive pedagogy and further developing relationships with families (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Accessing an activist and humanist lens, seeking the views of multiple stakeholders will be essential in developing common goals which will lead to a more inclusive school community, in particular for refugee students and their families. This work will be dynamic and complex, with the interconnectedness of stakeholder views. Kotter's model (Deszca et al., 2020) specifically outlines the need to develop a vision and strategy as part of transformation, focusing on that overarching dream to which the team aspires.

In comparison to the other proposed solutions, it is acknowledged that the creation of a shared vision to build an inclusive school may actually not directly impact the building of capacity in staff around intercultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Though this may be an output, there is a possibility to enhance sense of belonging with only smaller gains in collective staff efficacy in culturally responsive practices. Being responsive to the views of stakeholders, shifting existing practices of the community toward a common goal, and relying on strong relationships as a foundation for the work are all essential aspects connected to these leadership approaches (Tuters & Portelli, 2017). However, a consequence of this solution as a stand-alone is that there may not be direct impact on the PoP focused on building staff capacity to support refugee students.

### **Preferred Solution: Focused Professional Learning**

The solution which will have the biggest direct impact on the PoP is solution two, involving intentional formal and informal professional learning centering on intercultural

competence and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Implementation of professional learning in staff meetings, on Professional Activity Days, and through release time when available, will build the collective efficacy of involved staff on their ability and confidence to best support the unique needs of refugee students. Many challenges and barriers that teachers are facing, such as early literacy instruction for intermediate students, and considering resources that reflect lived experiences of refugee students, can begin to be addressed directly through focused and thoughtful professional development in these areas.

Having previously used a formal professional learning model of 4Cs (Sharrat & Planche, 2016) in mathematics, where small teams of staff participate in co-planning, co-teaching, co-debriefing and co-reflecting, this model could easily be used again in the context of culturally responsive lesson design. The previous use of this model has already established a collaborative working environment and a comfort with the 4C structure, risk-taking and willingness for shifting practice. Also, whole staff learning using the ELD specialist teachers as co-facilitators provides an opportunity for deepening collective understandings around effective means to support refugee students in the homeroom setting. A likely output of these various professional learning models are more informal learning opportunities between staff, when co-planning and co-teaching occurs naturally and ongoing supportive conversations take place.

### ***Leadership Approaches***

Meaningful change through the use of transformative (Shields, 2010, 2014) and adaptive leadership approaches (Heifetz, 2009), relying on the team, emphasizing relationships, and empowering employees as an explicit component of Kotter's change process (Deszca et al., 2020), will affect positive change in building capacity with staff. Though this solution is focused on staff in the building, there will also be leadership coming from external consultants as part of



this professional learning and the impact of the work of the solution will be felt by students and families.

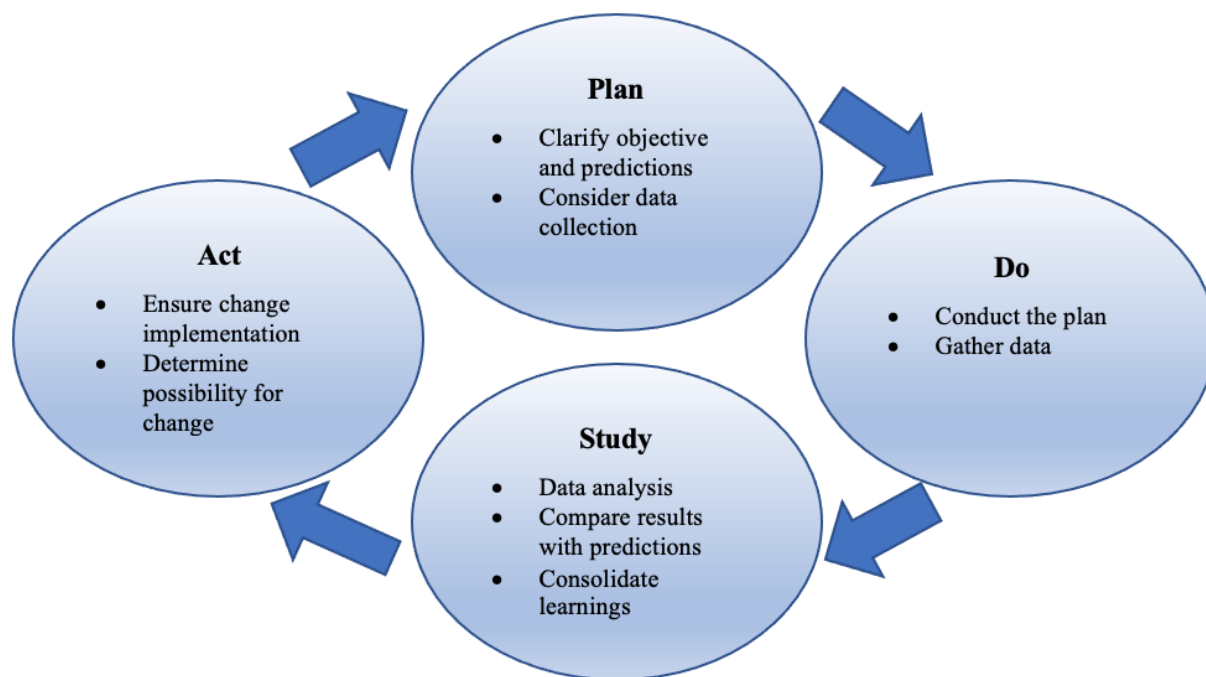
Alternatively, my role as a transformative leaders and co-facilitator for in-school professional learning certainly has a larger potential for impacting the collective capacity of staff in intercultural competence and culturally responsive practices (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014). As responsive change is required in the organization transformative leadership through an impactful professional learning will be vital to shift mindsets, and provide a platform to critically examine oppressive practices.

### ***PDSA Inquiry Cycle***

Edward Deming's PDSA Model (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015) as outlined in Figure 5 will be adapted for the context and used as a model to plan for and measure change as part of the improvement process when implementing this preferred solution. Also referred to as the Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) Model (Pietrzak & Paliszkievicz, 2015), the process is cyclical and responsive to data and key learnings. To monitor the gaps and effects on the PoP, the PDSA feedback loop (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015) will be enacted to plan for solutions, make the change, analyze the results, and implement shifts in practice. Ongoing planning, implementation, analysis and revisions will occur as part of the transformative process, leading to the refinement.

### ***Resource Needs***

The required resources to implement this preferred solution include access to an anti-oppressive framework tool (Kugler & West-Burns, 2010), funds to release school teams for professional learning, partnerships with curriculum consultants from the system level for co-facilitation, and dedicated time for ongoing learning over a period of months.

**Figure 5***PDSA Model*

*Note.* Adapted from “Use the PDSA Model for Effective Change Management,” by P. Donnelly and P. Kirk, 2015, *Education for Primary Care*, 26, p. 279-281.

Re-imagining professional learning structures and ensuring intensive support models for staff while implementing this reform will be necessary in order to have lasting impact on ideologies, and equitable and inclusive practices. In the next section, challenges are explored in the context of this organizational change through a lens of social justice and equity. Ethics of care and an examination of responsibilities and commitments is included.

### **Leadership Ethics, Equity, and Social Justice Challenges in Organizational Change**

There is a shifting concept of social justice in Ontario (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017) and the work of school principals across the province is nestled in this area as we strive to identify oppressive practices, disrupt racism and amplify the voices of marginalized groups. As a principal, there is an ethical responsibility to serve all students to ensure they are successful and

supported. In my context, the voices of refugee students and their families need to be sought in order to ensure practices are responsive to their actual needs and hopes, rather than being responsive to perceptions of others.

Sergiovanni (1996) describes how educational leadership must include a moral dimension to inspire commitment and service to the organization. Honouring emotion, building meaningful connections, and sharing common goals can strengthen the school team (Sergiovanni, 1996). Similarly, Starratt (1991) discusses ethical themes of caring, justice, and critique as essential for school leaders to implement in their school communities. Leading with ethics, equity, and social justice at the core makes an impact on student achievement (Ehrich et al., 2015) as the focus of the school's work is on care for the children and youth. The work of inclusivity, diversity and developing a sense of belonging is tightly linked to social justice and ethical leadership. In the context of being principal at CES, social justice includes serving as an advocate for students and families new to both a country and a school system while they overcome overwhelming obstacles. Even a decision as simple as enlisting a translator is an example of how leadership grounded in social justice and ethics create a platform to seek voice. Community members' authentic voice is valued, honouring their heritage, emphasizing the worth diversity brings to the school community.

### **Responsibilities and Commitments**

The responsibilities of my role as principal at CES include dedication to serving all students, while ensuring our most marginalized learners are well supported to ensure their academic success and social-emotional well-being. There is commitment to providing each student with effective instructional practices and ensuring a safe, equitable, welcoming, and

inclusive learning environment is created, and the principal is tasked with creating the conditions for that to occur.

Vogel (2012) explores the responsibilities and commitments of school administrators through a reflection on their beliefs and values as educational leaders. Through an examination of ethics of critique, justice, and care, participants clarified that school leaders innately balance academic pressures with care for students, demonstrating the complexity of their responsibility and commitment to the role and their dedication to students. Also, Vogel (2012) noted school leaders' reflections on existing inequities which may be perpetuated by systemic structures, calling on an ethical obligation to be critical of oppressive practices. The experiences throughout the OIP from the perspective as principal of CES are echoed here.

On the school team, organizational actors have various commitments and approach situations from a variety of lenses. Teachers, generally speaking, may be focused on their commitment to academic improvement. Support staff may center their work on nurturing social-emotional interventions. Refugee advocates often approach the organization with their commitment to ensuring families receive the greatest possible transition to the school system. School leaders are then tasked with overseeing all of these commitments and responsibilities, building connections between stakeholders while balancing multiple viewpoints.

### **Challenges and Considerations**

During change planning, there will be challenges of equity and social justice that are important to consider. For example, there are some barriers that are beyond the scope of the local context to disrupt. Though advocacy will be key, in some cases there may be challenges experienced that are outside the sphere of influence of the school leader. Also, there are elements of this PoP which are highly political, with outside community groups representing families,

settlement workers seeking support beyond the scope of the school, and media attention of refugee families arriving in the community. Liu (2017) speaks of the reimagination of ethical leadership as involving a community element, making political connections but in the interest of the goals of social justice and equity.

Another challenge and a topic which requires careful consideration is the competing views which exist between those stakeholders. Though intentions are sound and hope for the students is the same across groups, often there is dissonance between perceived best practices. This may be the result of individual experiences, independent learning, or underlying assumptions and beliefs. A significant challenge as an ethical leader is navigating the organization through that dissonance, ensuring stakeholders views are heard and the best of ideas is implemented. This may be achieved through a learn-unlearn-relearn process (Azmi, 2008) which is particularly important in a rapidly changing environment where stakeholders carry differing views. Diverse opinions are valued and principals are tasked with creating open spaces where input can be shared.

### **Ethics of Care**

Ethics of care, or duty of care, is major contributing factor woven throughout this OIP. Streitwieser and Madden (2019) refer to a school leader's duty of care as an ethical obligation to our students. We are charged with finding innovative ways to support newcomers, and to reconceptualize existing practices. Refugees are a unique group of newcomers, as they have typically experienced mobility for survival purposes, resulting in students in our school system who are necessarily experiencing international learning. Frameworks for duty of care are important to embed when considering ethics of care, acknowledging trauma, insisting on reform, with the hope for an outcome of a stronger school community with equitable access to resources

for all. This area highlights additional reasoning for the selection of the chosen solution, with ethics of care embedded into decisions.

### **Social Justice and Transformative Leadership**

The selected transformative leadership approach (Shields, 2010; Shields, 2014) certainly can be considered grounded in social justice and activism. There are ethical considerations when implementing this approach as transformation is necessary in response to the urgent needs for shifts in an unprepared system. As a principal, there is a moral agency and ethical decision-making component which requires an ongoing understanding of ethical issues of stakeholders within the organization (Cherkowski et al., 2015). Principals are entrusted with the care for others within their school community. My vision for change and my agency to build capacity in intercultural competence in the school team is grounded in ethics, equity and social justice.

Dantley and Tillman (2006) further advocate that when school leaders are engaged in social justice work with their communities, a transformative leadership style is most appropriate to impact change and make true shifts in more equitable and inclusive practices. Similarly, Kose (2009) articulates that transformative leadership is necessary when principals are conducting socially just work in their schools. Noting that transformative leaders are visionary co-learners who consider politics and cultural elements when leading change, Kose (2009) emphasizes that intercultural competence should be interwoven throughout social justice professional training.

As a school leader in this unique context, there is also importance to ensure stakeholders maintain an asset-focused lens, and develop collaborative professional learning structures which will enhance inclusive spaces for all students (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). Carlisle et al., (2007) also call for implementation of a social justice framework when transforming organization to reflect anti-oppressive practices.

## **Chapter 2 Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the leadership approaches to change relevant in this organizational context. Kotter's eight stage process (Kotter, 1996) was explored as a framework to lead change and Sterman's systems dynamics model (Sterman, 2001) was used as a critical analysis model to determine the necessary changes. Three relevant solutions to the PoP were examined with a final preferred solution being selected as an effective means to propel change forward. Finally, leadership ethics, equity, and social justice were discussed. Moving into the final chapter, the change implementation plan and monitoring of the change process will be explored. A plan to communicate the need for change, and future considerations will be shared, to conclude the OIP.

### **Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication**

This final chapter will outline the change implementation plan that supports intercultural capacity building with staff at CES. Using Kotter's eight-stage change model (Kotter, 1996), the plan will be described, including goal identification and timelines. Priorities for focused professional learning will be discussed, which contribute to the capacity building via the preferred solution proposed in the previous chapter. The change process will be communicated to stakeholders and ongoing monitoring will take place using the PDSA model (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015). Evaluation of the plan is considered, as well as stakeholder reactions, resources required, and potential challenges. This chapter will later include the overall conclusion of the OIP, next steps and future considerations.

#### **Change Implementation Plan**

Implementing a plan for transformation in an organization requires planning, an adaptive team approach, and a school-wide lens in order to navigate challenges and move the system forward. Many areas need to be taken under consideration when implementing change, including local context, stakeholder perspective, and the leader's agency. The change implementation plan discussed will provide a framework to improve capacity building with staff to better support refugee students and essentially guide the approach to the desired state of the organization.

To ensure my change plan aligns within the context of the organization, it will be important to ensure there is shared vision-building and that stakeholders are in support of the belief that change is necessary (Rafferty et al., 2013). Building the intercultural competence of staff is embedded within the multi-year strategic plan and director's action plan in the board where professional learning is grounded in anti-oppressive, ethical, and equitable practices. The



school plan is nestled here as well, focusing on enhancing inclusive practices, and supporting achievement and well-being.

### **Practical Application of Leadership Theories**

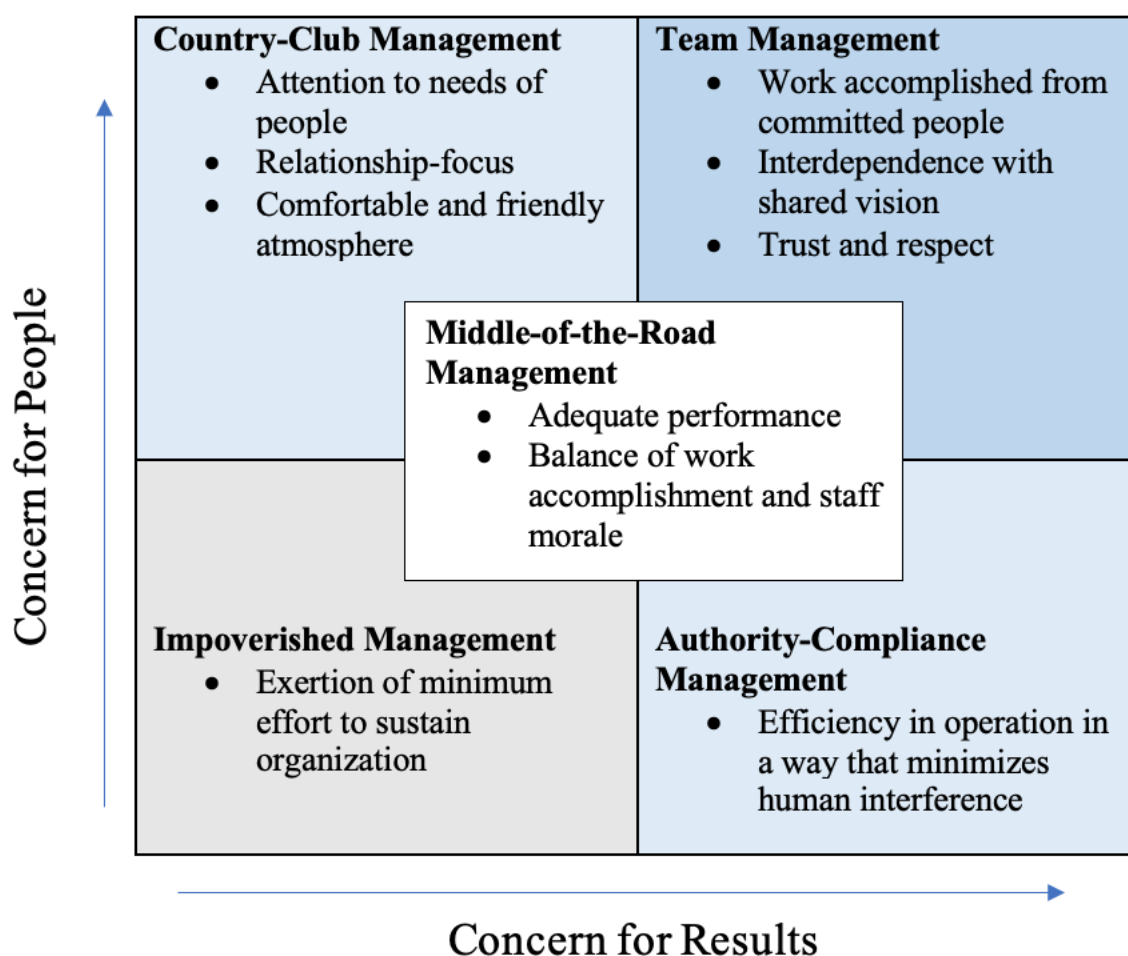
In planning for managing the transformation that will occur within the organization, it will be necessary to rely on previously discussed leadership approaches, particularly transformative (Shields, 2010, 2014, 2019) and adaptive (Heifetz et al., 2009). The associated behaviours which include a focus on establishing trusting relationships, empowerment of staff, and being flexible (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010), will be important when implementing the change plan. Blake and Mouton (1962) outline a leadership grid (see Figure 6) which emphasizes the team management approach, which is vital for transformative and adaptive actions of a leader. By establishing a shared vision and purpose, nurturing trust and respect, a great deal can be accomplished when the group is collectively committed to a common purpose. Following this notion of a strong and equal focus of both people and results (Blake & Mouton, 1962), the outcome of the change process will be a stronger, more effective and resilient team who are interdependent and are more likely to achieve success.

Figure 6, adapted from Blake and Mouton's (1962) work, highlights that when a leader holds little concern for both results and people, there can be impoverished management which will not lead to any meaningful change. When the leader has higher concern for results but little concern for staff, an authority-compliance management may result. Contrarily, a high concern for people and little concern for results leads to a relaxed country-club management style. The middle-of-the-road management leads simply to adequate performance. Therefore, the desired leadership approach must rely on both a high level of concern for results, and also a high level of concern for people. This evolves into the effective team management approach where a shared

vision exists, trusting relationships are emphasized, and collaborative work is accomplished by those dedicated to a common cause.

**Figure 6**

*The Leadership Grid*



*Note.* Adapted from “Managerial Grid,” by R.R. Blake and J.S. Mouton, 1962, *Advanced Management – Office Executive*, 1(9), p. 12-15.

There are leadership behaviours which connect between Blake & Mouton’s leadership grid (1962) and a transformative and adaptive approach. A strong network of colleagues is required for any transformation to occur and there needs to be a willingness to change the

implementation plan as necessary when considering stakeholder views. Relationships are at the heart of each of these approaches and will be an essential component woven throughout the change implementation plan.

### **Managing the Transition**

The transition will be managed using Kotter's (1996) model as a framework and guide for implementing change. The eight stages outlined in Chapter 2 and also in Appendix C will provide an outline for implementing the preferred solution. As discussed in the previous chapter, the preferred solution to achieve the desired state of the organization is to apply increased focused professional learning for staff on culturally sustaining pedagogy in order to build intercultural competence more deeply (Blair, 2017). This will lead to an improvement of the support for refugee students at CES. Though Kotter's model includes eight stages (Kotter, 1996), these essentially are broken down to three overarching areas for development within the organization.

### ***Creating a Climate for Change***

First, there is a need to create a climate for change. This involves building a shared vision and developing a common understanding of a sense of urgency. Goals will include providing space to gather concerns from a variety of stakeholders and weaving results into the school plan for improvement. Key leaders will be identified with a focus on building cohesion, trust, and respect within the team. Vision-setting and dream-building are important at this stage.

### ***Engaging and Enabling the Organization***

Next, there is a need to engage and enable the organization. The motivation and empowerment of the established team will help propel change forward. Accessing professional learning resources from consultants and connecting with families occurs at this stage. Inspiring

and motivating team members is key during critical examination of existing oppressive barriers and engaging in strategies to remove those obstacles to success. Monitoring progress, evaluating evidence of impact of professional learning, and celebrating gains leads us toward lasting change.

### ***Implementing and Sustaining Change***

Finally, the implementation of the transformation and establishing pathways to sustain that change will be necessary (Kotter, 1996, 2009). Ensuring a culture of acceptance for necessary changes and adaptability will better situate the organization to be responsive to shifting demographics (Kose, 2009), policies, and priorities in the future. Ongoing work to build intercultural capacity while onboarding new staff, and accessing resources which supports innovative practices in culturally sustaining pedagogy will be included in this final stage.

### **Establishing Short, Medium, and Long-Term Goals**

Short-term goals include establishing a core leadership team and engaging in vision-building activities. Once initial data has been gathered and there is a clear sense of urgency established, there will be greater ease to move forward with the preferred solution by engaging in professional learning. A key performance indicator in this area may include gathering of baseline data in intercultural competence, creation of the leadership team, and articulation of common objectives. Staff will need to be clear on the purpose for why change is necessary. Mid-term goals highlight effective communication, empowerment of team members, and finding short-term gains to celebrate. Benchmarks in this area may include documentation of communication to a variety of stakeholders, the examination of oppressive practices, and the beginning of formal professional learning with the team. Long-term goals will focus on establishing the professional learning structure longer term while identifying key areas of growth in developing a shifting

school culture. Appendix C outlines these goals in relation to Kotter's eight-stage process and includes a timeline to guide progress. Following these steps will close the gap between the current and desired state of the organization and deepen the collective intercultural competence of the school team (Blair, 2017). Implementation of the change plan will be adjusted accordingly, being responsive and adaptable along the process. Gaining feedback at various stages of change to monitor those understandings will be essential as part of the complex change initiative (Dudar et al., 2017).

### ***Supports and Resources***

Woven throughout the short, medium, and long-term goals outlined, there are numerous supports and resources, as outlined in Figure 7, which will be essential in order to proceed through Kotter's eight stages of change (Kotter, 1996). The implementation of a rich professional learning structure to build collective efficacy in culturally responsive practices requires reflexive leadership practices and an openness within learning communities to be prepared for adaptive transformation.

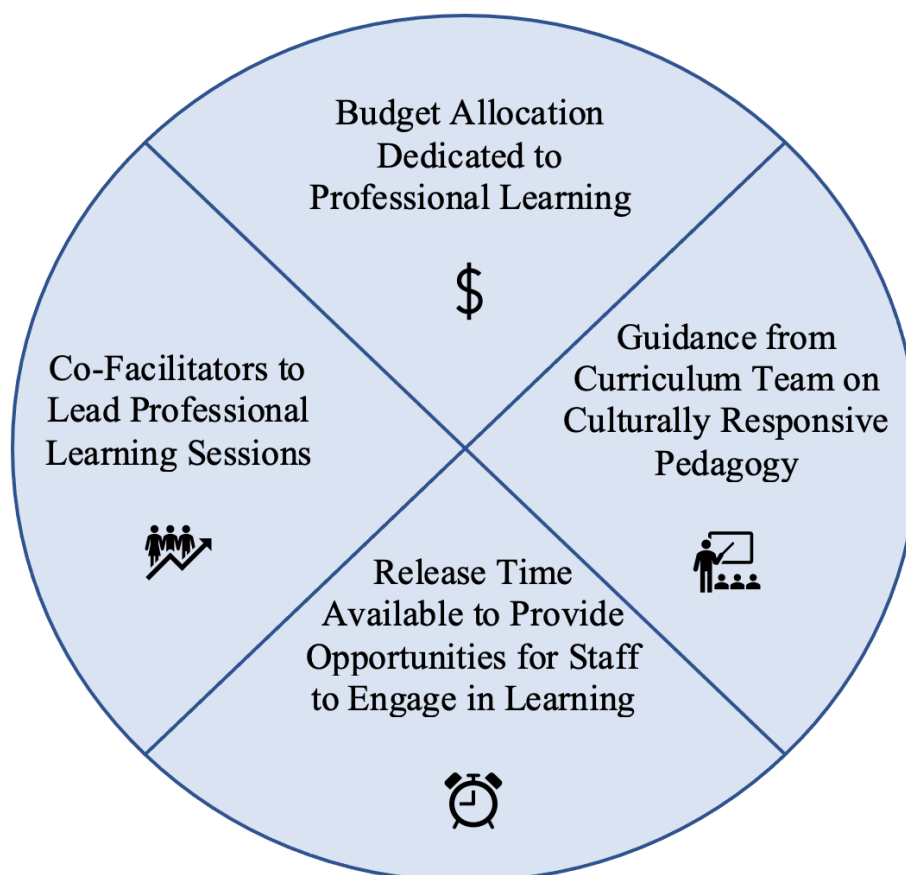
Time will be provided for professional learning which may include specific release time for teachers and other educators to be engaged in focused co-learning during typical instructional time, rather than simply during voluntary staff meetings. Fiscally, there will be support needed as well for this change implementation plan. Budget will be allocated for appropriate resources, such as culturally responsive texts selected through an anti-oppressive text selection tool. Funds will be set aside for payment for occasional teachers to provide coverage for homeroom teachers.

The professional learning itself requires human resources who will engage in the co-facilitation of the sessions. These leaders will need to be knowledgeable of the content and also

confident with the professional learning structure, such as the 4Cs model previously outlined (Sharrat & Planche, 2016).

### Figure 7

#### *Required Supports and Resources*



*Note.* A reflection of four key areas required for effective implementation of the change plan.

Working through co-planning, co-teaching, co-debriefing, and co-reflecting sessions will not only build competence, but also support a rich collaborative culture that has more change readiness. Also, support from the curriculum team around culturally responsive practices will be key to building understanding around intercultural competence. A stakeholder analysis serves as instrumental in the process as outlined in the next section.

## **Stakeholder Analysis**

Seeking to understand stakeholder reactions throughout the change process will be important, particularly while taking an adaptive stance during transformation and adjust plans to reflect concerns (Heifetz et al., 2009). Gathering data from a variety of stakeholders through surveys, informal conversations, and observations will be key to moving through each stage of the change implementation plan. Blair (2017) reflects on rubrics for mapping intercultural competence development which will also be useful here.

Considering the change recipient network, there will need to be strong established connections between and within groups of staff at the school in order to successfully impact meaningful organizational change (Tenkasi & Chesmore, 2003). There will be the selection of personnel to engage with and seek support for facilitation of learning. There will also be those who will be empowered to drive individual and/or cultural change that will support the shift of the organization toward the envisioned future state. Members of the leadership team, ELD specialist teachers, board-level consultants and administrators will serve to engage and empower others (Kõiv et al., 2019) while building momentum with the development of intercultural competence with staff.

Resistors to change are inevitable and will also need to be considered in the change implementation plan. Gaubatz and Ensminger (2017) describe the immense barrier a contentious resistor can cause, negatively impacting the progress of an organization through the change process. Seeking their voice, spending time to develop common understandings, and essentially creating buy-in is important. Resistors may be part of various stakeholder groups which enhances the need to seek feedback and monitor progress at each stage of the change model.

Considering actions which promote culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy through a social justice lens will be key, examining stakeholder beliefs in the areas of school climate, family-school relations, community connections, and the culture of professional development (Kugler & West-Burns, 2010). Embedding this framework, with inclusion of intercultural competence building, into the change implementation plan will be important, providing guidance on key transformative actions principals can take, such as challenging oppressive structures, empowering members of the team, and communication with an equitable lens at the core (Kugler & West-Burns, 2010). This will lead to an improved situation for other stakeholders invested in the school community and promote equity and social justice, through implementation challenges are still considered.

### **Implementation Challenges, Limitations, and Priorities**

Implementation challenges are certainly anticipated, particularly in terms of interruption to professional learning plans during the time of COVID-19 (Harris & Jones, 2020) when in-person training sessions have been paused. This is where adaptability will continue to be essential to meet priorities. Another challenge that may occur is the conflicting views for effective professional learning models and developing common beliefs of best practices to support refugee students among the various stakeholders. For example, homeroom teachers and curriculum consultants may hold diverse views as they hold varied experiences of theory and practice. Valuing differing opinions and collaboratively finding common ground will be a strategy to employ. When engaging in collaborative work grounded in critical race theory, there are challenges to work through such as the theory not having concrete connections to teaching practices (Mack, 2010) and the critique of a neoliberal system that emphasizes colour-blindness, preventing movement forward along a continuum toward intercultural competence, and



perpetuating oppressive structures (Capper, 2019). Also, some staff at the school feel compassion fatigue and may be limited in their involvement due to stress and being overwhelmed with system initiatives.

Implementation issues may include staffing changes with new team members joining the organization, and onboarding being necessary to continue to propel the organization forward toward the desired state. This will be addressed by ensuring new staff have access to and can engage in the learning shared in previous professional training sessions. There are also leadership limitations as some decisions will be outside the scope of influence by the principal, leading to necessary creativity within existing constraints.

Priorities will include ensuring time for collaboration and professional learning, regardless of the format. Removing the barrier of health and safety protocols, meeting virtually may be important to build that time for collective training and team-building. Another priority will be to establish an agreed-upon structure for professional learning with buy-in from multiple stakeholders, that will have the necessary impact on making an improvement in intercultural competence. The 4C model (Sharrat & Planche, 2016) will likely be that prioritized structure as the format was used successfully with different content previously at CES. Despite the implementation challenges encountered, maintaining focus on the purpose of our work will allow the team to overcome obstacles, adapt, flex, and transform to best support this unique group of learners. Change process monitoring and evaluation will be explored in the next section, with a discussion of the role of the PDSA model (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015).

### **Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation**

In order to ensure meaningful change within an organization, it is necessary to implement a tool for monitoring progress which effectively measures growth related to a given plan or goal

(Deszca et al., 2020). The role of the principal includes establishing a method within the school team that intentionally gathers evidence of this growth. Connected to my PoP of building intercultural capacity in staff to better support refugee students (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Strekalova-Hughes, 2017), measuring the progress through staff professional learning will contribute to organizational change.

The chosen solution to the PoP focuses on intentional professional learning sessions to improve capacity within the school team. The model for monitoring change in this area is Edward Deming's PDSA model (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015) which will be applied to the implementation plan. The model is intended to be an iterative and cyclical four step process which provides leaders with a tool to monitor and evaluate the change initiative in a critical way (Pietrzak & Paliszkievicz, 2015). Through the use of Kotter's Eight-Stage Process (Kotter, 1996), there are several key steps in the plan that will lead to a shift toward organizational change in the area of improving intercultural competence in supporting refugee students effectively, each of which requires monitoring through data gathering and reflection.

Using both an adaptive (Heifetz et al., 2009) and transformative leadership approach (Liou & Hermanns, 2017; Shields, 2010, 2014), to affect meaningful change in this area there is a natural connection to social and transformative theory due to work that is grounded in making shifts in social justice reform for newcomers in Ontario (Stewart & Martin, 2018; Tuters & Portelli, 2017). Underlying these theories remains an element of neoliberalism with an emphasis on data gathering and accountability (Apple, 2006) through this social justice lens (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017).

The PDSA model (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015) is relevant here as the process is cyclical and requires planning, implementation, analysis, and refinement. Brown (2020) highlights theories of

action as an approach to measure impact which may also be useful in this context and aligns loosely with the PDSA model (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015). Exploration of learning, measuring changes in behaviours of stakeholders, and a reflection on what difference those changes have made on the organization, serves as a useful approach to monitoring progress (Brown, 2020).

### **PDSA Model**

Edward Deming's PDSA Model (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015) will be adapted for the context and used as a model to plan for and measure change. Also referred to as the PDCA Model (Pietrzak & Paliszkiewicz, 2015), the process is responsive to data and key learnings at each stage. Figure 8 expands the PDSA Model (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015) to include considerations for the change implementation plan in this context.

#### ***Plan***

During the planning stage (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015), the leadership team can work collaboratively to formulate questions, gain clarity in goals, and make predictions about outcomes. Data be collected by the team, under the guidance of facilitators and administrators, and the planning stage will involve decisions around which tools to use, such as surveys, checklists, and informal observations.

#### ***Do***

During the implementation stage (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015), the pre-determined tools and measures that will be used to track change will be carried out. Documentation during this stage is vital in order to gauge progress and also unearth unexpected results.

#### ***Study***

The verification stage (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015) will involve a complex analysis of data from various perspectives. This will include observations, surveys, and leadership team review

of system-level data sets. Important to note is an awareness of assumptions and biases of those conducting the review. Consolidation of findings, summarizing emerging learnings, and being critical of the process of data-gathering is enacted at this stage.

### ***Act***

The final stage involves action based on these results (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015), and leads to planning to move into the following cycle. Reflexivity, adaptability, and openness are key throughout this stage as next steps are taken to make changes across the organization. Critical consideration on the effectiveness of the implemented solution is imperative and will inform future actions of the school leaders and team. This adaptation is outlined in Figure 8.

### **Connections to Change Model and Implementation Plan**

The proposed change implementation plan involves the integration of Kotter's eight stage process (Kotter, 1996). The application of the PDSA model to this implementation plan involves specific consideration for data gathering and plan revision based on key learnings. The objective is to cycle through the PDSA model three times while working through the beginning, middle and final stages of the implementation plan.

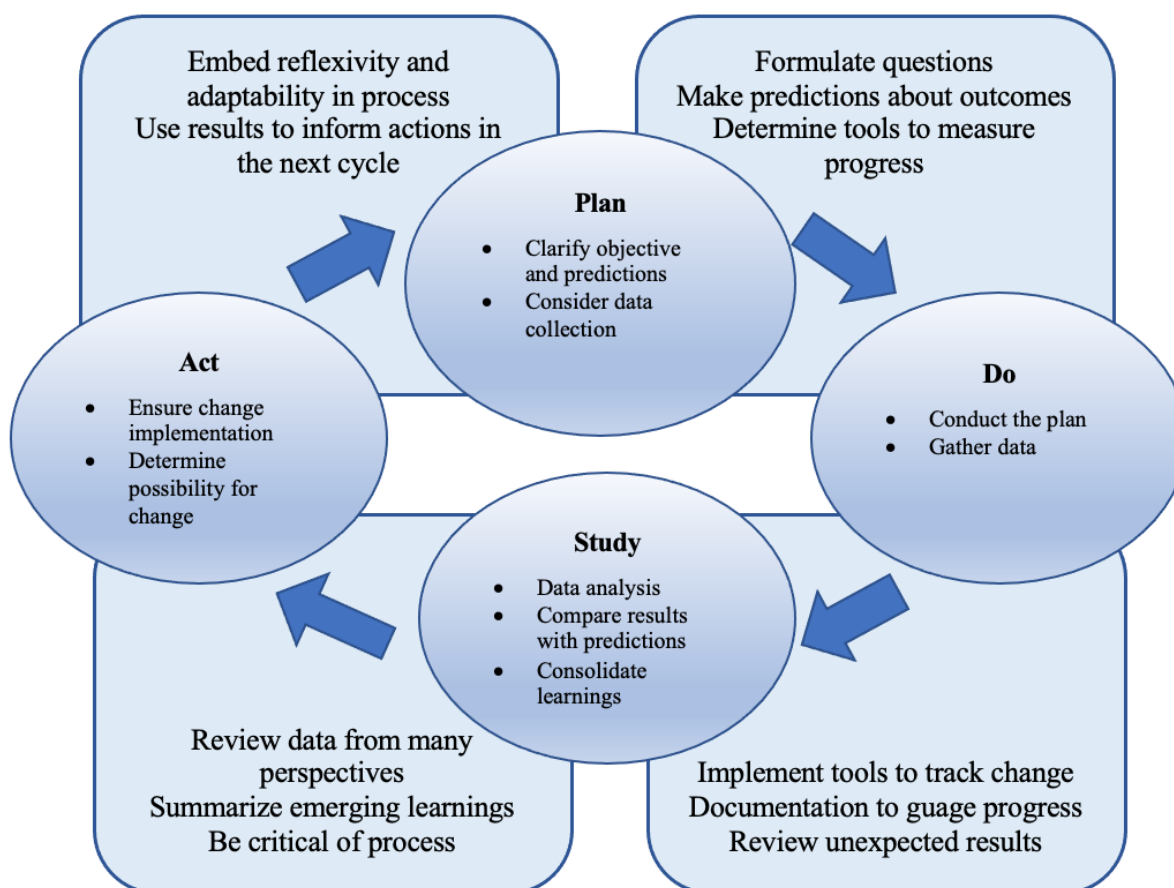
### ***Beginning Stages of Implementation: Creating a Climate for Change***

In the beginning of the implementation plan, developing awareness of a sense of urgency to support refugee students in our school, along with establishing team leaders and engaging in vision-building activities, are the key first steps to affecting organizational change. Planning will involve determining team members, such as teachers, administrators, and consultants; identifying their roles; and together articulating shared goals of professional learning around culturally responsive and trauma-informed practices (Deszca et al., 2020). Conducting the plan will involve

team sessions for dream building, documenting the collaborative work, and exploring potential unintended outcomes (Sterman 2001).

**Figure 8**

*PDSA Model with Connections to the Change Implementation Plan*



*Note.* Adapted from “Use the PDSA Model for Effective Change Management,” by P. Donnelly and P. Kirk, 2015, *Education for Primary Care*, 26, p. 279-281.

Studying the developed vision and reviewing climate surveys will be key to clarifying future work and in determining if the professional learning goals will make an impact in developing the collective capacity in staff to support refugee learners. Action will lead forward into the middle stages of implementation, while determining possibilities for change based on

data gathered in this initial stage. In particular, plans for the 4C model (Sharrat & Planche, 2016) will be underway, considering groupings, potential facilitators, areas of focus, and text selection tools.

### ***Middle Stages of Implementation: Engaging and Enabling the Organization***

Communication with involved stakeholders, empowering the team and celebrating short-term gains are components of the second cycle (Deszca et al., 2020). The planning involved will focus on developing responsive training for staff, accessing relevant resources and inspiring others through transformative leadership actions by the principal and leadership team (Shields, 2010; Shields, 2014). While conducting the plan, ongoing data will be gathered particularly focused on the efficacy of the professional training. Studying the impact and ensuring appropriate evidence on development of intercultural competence has been gathered will provide for a rich analysis of the effect training has on practice when supporting refugee students and the resources accessed (Stewart & Martin, 2018). The celebration of wins is connected to the analysis where gains will be identified based on evidence. This will then feed-forward to the decisions made in the final stages of implementation where long-term gains can be anticipated.

### ***Final Stages of Implementation: Implementing and Sustaining Transformation***

Longer-term change is affected through gain consolidation and continuous improvement which will begin to shift school culture and build deeper capacity in staff to support refugee students with culturally relevant and trauma-informed practices. Studying data and checking to ensure initially established long-term goals have been met will be important in the analysis of the impact of change. The consideration of updated research in the field will be important at this stage as well. Finally, the resulting actions, such as co-planning and co-teaching between teachers and increased inclusive practices within the school community, will be responsive to

this data and will determine future work in the area of supporting refugee students at the local level (Deszca et al., 2020).

### **Tools and Measures**

A variety of tools and measures will be necessary to track change and gauge progress over the course of the plan being implemented. Particularly with the intention of cycling through the PDSA model three times, it will be important to plan for which tools will be helpful at the various stages. Also, it will be vital to ensure common measures are used to accurately determine growth over time, rather than gathering scattered evidence not specifically related to the goals.

One tool to track progress will be an inventory checklist that will be reviewed by the leadership team and administrators to represent the ideal culturally responsive and trauma-informed classroom. Feedback will be provided to staff for continuous improvement. Consideration will include evidence that staff can provide to showcase their developed intercultural competence. This inventory will be conducted once during each PDSA cycle, consistently measuring the staff's perceived comfort, knowledge, understanding and application of culturally responsive and trauma-informed practices at the classroom level. There will also be an opportunity for reflection specifically on intercultural capacity building (Strekalova-Hughes, 2017) and their confidence with supporting refugee students in homeroom classes (Stewart & Martin, 2018).

Another tool will include a revision of a previously incorporated school climate survey. Editing the survey questions can further explore trusting relationships, culturally responsive practices, and the presence of a safe learning environment. Asking these questions during each PDSA cycle, where all students will have an opportunity to reflect on school climate, sense of belonging, and speak about how they see themselves in their learning, will provide data needed

to move through the stages of the change model. As all students are surveyed, there will be an embedded layer of data specific to refugee students that can be extracted from this survey. The survey will need to be accessible to every student and will need to involve staff support and translation for completion.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

To monitor change, steps will be taken to develop a monitoring plan (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). First, the team will identify a focus for monitoring, followed by developing performance indicators and targets. Relevant baselines will be established. Next, identifying data collection processes and tools will take place, ending with determining responsibilities and timeframes (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Monitoring is essential in the change process as it improves results, supports better accountability, improves stakeholder learning, enhances decision-making abilities, and improves programming (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016).

To develop the evaluation plan, the team will determine a suitable evaluation approach and identify evaluation questions requiring criteria and standards (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). The team will identify a focus of evaluation and methods for each question, determine responsibilities and timeframes, and then review monitoring and evaluation plans, reassessing capacity through routine monitoring and periodic evaluation (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016).

The monitoring and evaluation plan has been created (Appendix D) which builds upon guiding questions particularly in the areas of appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

### ***Appropriateness***

To monitor and evaluate this appropriateness, there will be a review of attendance to determine how many staff engage in the professional learning, with a target of 75% participation



rate. Team leaders will review this data monthly which will guide next steps and allow for reflection on relevance of the learning for participants.

### ***Effectiveness***

To measure effectiveness of the learning on intercultural competence, facilitators of the learning will be looking for a difference between knowledge before and after participants engage in the sessions. Pre and post surveys will be conducted to ensure an increase in knowledge with a target of 75% of staff indicating a positive change in their understanding of intercultural competence.

### ***Efficiency***

In this area, the administrator team will review financial records to confirm the cost of program delivery is within budget, with less than 10% variation. A monthly review will be appropriate to ensure the program stays on target.

### ***Impact***

To measure the impact of deepened intercultural competence, the team will measure the extent to which an inclusive and identity-affirming learning environment exists. Climate surveys conducted every six months at the school level and every year by the board, ongoing checklists at the classroom level, and family surveys will all be important to gather this evidence from diverse data sets.

### ***Sustainability***

Finally, the team will look for evidence of further ongoing benefits of the learning. For example, this may be indicated through community connections and cross-departmental initiatives. Team leaders will review annually the community partnerships created with ongoing documentation of events and initiatives held throughout the school year.

### ***Implementation of the Plan***

In the beginning stage of implementation of the monitoring and evaluation plan as the first PDSA cycle is enacted, monitoring of progress will need to be focused on developing a plan for training, establishing the team and clearly articulating the long-term goals. Evidence will be gathered that measures change through the establishment of a defined vision and the outline of professional learning sessions for culturally responsive and trauma-informed practices. Before proceeding to the second cycle, there will need to be strong evidence that the vision and training plan are clear for all involved.

During the middle stage of implementation, when there is focus on initial professional learning for staff, monitoring will be closely connected to impact of learning on classroom practice. Adaptive leadership (Heifetz, 2009) will be essential at this stage as flexibility within the professional learning model will be necessary in response to staff and student needs. Evaluation of the professional learning model will also be critical prior to moving ahead with longer-term implementation of the change plan. Ongoing conversations between team leaders, facilitators, consultants and administrators will be key to reflection and on monitoring efficacy, guiding next steps for the team.

The final stage of implementation will involve careful monitoring and evaluation over a longer period of time. When collaborative work becomes embedded in the school culture, there will need to be close monitoring and the willingness to pivot when more change is necessary. New research will come to light about supporting refugee students, innovative professional learning models will emerge and the school community may change. The result is an ongoing need to monitor progress and refine the vision as necessary.

As part of monitoring and evaluation, there may be failure along the change path and it will be important to be cautious, looking for deficit thinking in the team when there are challenges (Dudar et al., 2017). Initiative fatigue may set in so implementing strategies to address this throughout the process will be key to the success of the plan (Dudar et al., 2017). As part of the steps of monitoring and evaluating the change process, Dudar et al. (2017), discuss four areas which include conceptualizing the desired change, enacting change accelerators, evaluating change efforts as change comes to a conclusion which includes gathering data, and finally sustainability. In action, this may include vision-building with the team, providing platforms for input gather, monitoring impact, and observing a more settled learning environment.

Current monitoring looks like observations and conversations, and the review of older data from two system level surveys. New ideas to monitor progress include seeking ongoing feedback from various stakeholders through focus groups, and incorporating a tool to specifically measure intercultural competence (Bennett, 2006; Deardorff, 2009).

Monitoring to measure success may also include reflection upon guiding questions to help gauge the progress of the school team. These guiding questions may include, as modified from Markiewicz and Patrick (2016):

- Is the program significantly developed based on the gap identification and conducted needs assessment?
- What is the evidence of significant positive outcomes in key areas of focus?
- How are key stakeholders engaged in the design of the change plan and implementation?

## Proposals for Refinement

Based upon reflection of cycling through the PDSA cycle three times while implementing the change plan, and anticipating data gathered, there is an expectation that the plan will need to be refined. In response to what is learned through ongoing monitoring at each stage, adaptive revisions will be necessary. Table 1 outlines those stages of implementation and lists proposals for refinement.

**Table 1**

*Stages of Implementation and Proposals for Refinement*

Stage	Proposals for Refinement based on Data	Process
Initial	Revisiting trauma-informed practices Revisiting strategies for cultural sustainability Adjusting vision statement Additional data gathering	Professional learning Mentoring Lead team session Observations, survey
Middle	Review professional learning model Adjustment to timelines Reiteration of purpose Improve instruction and assessment Intentional team motivation at key moments	Feedback on structure Lead team session Facilitator training Access consultant support Administrator reflection
Final	Review leadership stance Support of new staff members Review monitoring process Review longer-term goals	Administrator reflection Onboarding Lead team session Lead team session

*Note.* A chart to visually represent the three stages of implementation of the change plan and consideration for various proposals for refinement at each stage.

In the initial stage of implementation, when surveys are first conducted with staff and students, there is the possibility of uncovering data that leads to new starting points. Trauma-

informed practices may be further along than anticipated based on previous professional learning, but culturally responsive pedagogy may require more attention than first assumed. These results could impact who is part of the leadership team and may also alter the vision statement. Being aware of concerns, based on clear evidence, will allow for appropriate revisions to the plan. This may involve cycling through the stages of establishing the team and dream building (Deszca et al., 2020) until there is a commonly understood shared vision.

In the middle stage of implementation, refinement may be focused on the professional learning model selected, perhaps accessing outside facilitators rather than in-house school leaders as part of the 4C process (Sharrat & Planche, 2016), or adjusting timelines if outcomes of training are slower than anticipated. Shifting thinking on a larger scale leading to visible change in classroom-level instruction and school-level culture will require a transformative approach (Shields, 2010, 2014) which continues to inspire and nudge the team forward with a social justice lens. Work is being done at the system level to promote inclusive culturally responsive practices therefore making connections to that initial sense of urgency (Deszca et al., 2020) will be key to keeping the team motivated in this ongoing learning.

In the final stages of implementation, as time passes, needs of the school community will most certainly evolve as demographics change and the capacity of staff will begin to shift. The adaptive leadership stance (Heifetz, 2009) will once again be critical as refinements to the proposal will be inevitable throughout the transformation. New staff will require onboarding, initial vision statements may no longer be as relevant and ongoing growth will need to be considered for those stakeholders who have achieved goals. Reflection on the monitoring process will guide future steps in the area of supporting refugee students. Documenting growth and

revising long-term plans as new data comes to light will be important moving forward, particularly when outlining the plan to communicate the need for change.

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

Throughout the change process, there will be an ongoing need for communication to a variety of stakeholders. Delivering important information, ensuring the presence of a shared vision, guiding future steps, and celebrating gains are areas which will require communication in several formats to reach necessary audiences. The key objectives of the communication plan include knowledge mobilization, persuasion of stakeholders, creating buy-in, and sharing of resources. Communication throughout the change implementation plan is necessary for the success of the plan. To develop intercultural competence across the school team, inclusion of clear messaging from the leader and between team members is essential.

Knowledge mobilization is important as individuals within the school team build capacity, there must be pathways for new understandings to be transferred between one another (Lavis et al., 2003). In this context, knowledge mobilization looks like having specialist teachers working with system-level consultants to engage in professional learning in key areas such as early literacy instruction, trauma-informed practices, and anti-oppressive lesson design. New ideologies and intercultural understandings are then further spread in a networked design within the structure of the 4C model (Sharrat & Planche, 2016). Facilitators and knowledgeable others build common understandings within the professional learning groups and competence and confidence of staff is further developed. Members of the school team such as office staff and custodians who may not directly receive ongoing professional learning in this area may still receive knowledge of the big ideas of the learning as the culture within the school community shifts through hallway conversations and observations. As best practices are implemented and

buy-in ensues, communication in formal and informal paths will reach more stakeholders within the community.

Communication needs to be well structured and thoughtfully planned; frequent and transparent. Just as the change implementation is carefully designed, and the 4C professional learning model is organized, so to must the communication plan. Persuasive communication, management of information, and encouraging active participation will be necessary elements of this plan (Armenakis et al., 1993). Persuading stakeholders involves building and maintaining a shared vision and creating a common sense of purpose in the collective work of the organization. In many paths, this involves a moral obligation to shift the organization in response to the changing demographics of the community. Management of information will involve some control by facilitators and school leaders over key messages and timelines for communication delivery. Seeking ongoing feedback and creating structures for amplifying stakeholder voices will be useful in order to encourage active participation.

### **Communication Framework**

The following communication framework takes into account stakeholders, strategies, and tasks. The knowledge mobilization plan (Lavis et al., 2003) outlines clear communication and strategies to persuasively connect with relevant audiences. The transfer of knowledge will move through the networks within the school team and effectively to decision makers and those who are in positions of power over the culture of the school community. This may include those in leadership roles but also those who hold influence within the school team.

Persuasive communication will be through both formal (e.g., memos, emails, letters to families, information sessions) and informal processes (e.g., hallways conversations, phone calls to community members, discussions with students), and include a format for active participation

to improve impact (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). This will ensure relevant audiences receive appropriate information in a timely manner through an effective format. Part of this communication will include celebrating short-term gains (Kotter, 2009), empowering the team, and ensuring equity is the foundation of messaging (Kugler & West-Burns, 2010). Mayasari (2019) further notes communication from principals should provide information, the implementation of ideas, while embedding an element of emotion. A collaborative engagement approach will be used to communicate with refugee families as part of the transformative work and building family inclusion, (Kandel-Cisco et al., 2020) involving developing trust and establishing a strong connection between home and school.

Table 2 outlines details of the communication plan through four key phases including the pre-change approval, developing the need for change, midstream change and milestone communication, and celebrating the change success (Deszca et al., 2020). This will include details of stakeholder groups involved in each phase, the actions required which encompass strategies and key tasks, as well as the specific communication that will be intentionally shared at each stage.

### **Stakeholder Communication Analysis**

To build awareness of the need for change within the organization, there will need to be sound use of data which highlights the need for transformation to better support refugee students. Using student feedback from school climate surveys, sharing observations and conversations from teachers articulating urgent need for support with programming, articulating concerns to enhance trauma-sensitive practices will be key. Communication of these issues with the school team will be important for all members to understand the purpose for change.



**Table 2***Communication Plan*

Phase	Stakeholders	Actions	Communication
Pre-change approval	Specialist teachers; board consultants; administrators	Meetings virtual and in-person to discuss vision and build sense of urgency and plan next steps	Main communication through conversations in meetings; discuss 4C model of learning
Developing the need for change	School team such as teachers and support staff; students	Planning key messages for different stakeholder groups; provide platform for feedback from staff	Explaining the need for change; providing rationale; empowering staff; explaining steps in change process
Midstream change and milestone communication	4C group members; broader school team; students and families; school council members	Spotlight learning shifts; ongoing messaging through 4C sessions; articulation of short-term gains; clarification of any new structures; clearing misconceptions	Communication to families and broader school community through newsletter and emails to highlight progress and seek feedback; clarification of evolving anti-oppressive practices
Confirming and celebrating the change	Students; school staff; families; broader school community	Emphasizing the growth which has developed through professional learning; loop in feedback sessions	Communication methods to inform the team of measured success; provide opportunity for reflection on change process; prepare for next steps for the organization

*Note.* Adapted from “Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit,” by G. Deszca, C. Ingols, & T. Cawsey, 2020, *Sage*.

Communication will be framed in slightly different ways for each stakeholder group. For example, the student and family audience will need to hear that the school would like to improve their practices in order to better serve the changing community. The homeroom teacher audience will need to feel heard in regards to struggles with areas like early literacy instruction for older

students. Specialist ELD teachers will receive communication about their leadership opportunities to support the growth of the wider team.

Communication with all stakeholder groups is important throughout the change implementation plan. Lewis (2019) outlines a stakeholder communication model of change that acknowledges relationships with and between stakeholders and intersecting identities. Opinion leaders, connectors and counselors are all those that are played and should be considered in communication planning (Lewis, 2019). Rather than simply formal titles within the structure of the organization, there are others within existing networks who take on these other identities which can support or hinder the progress of the broader organization.

Anticipated questions from stakeholder groups include:

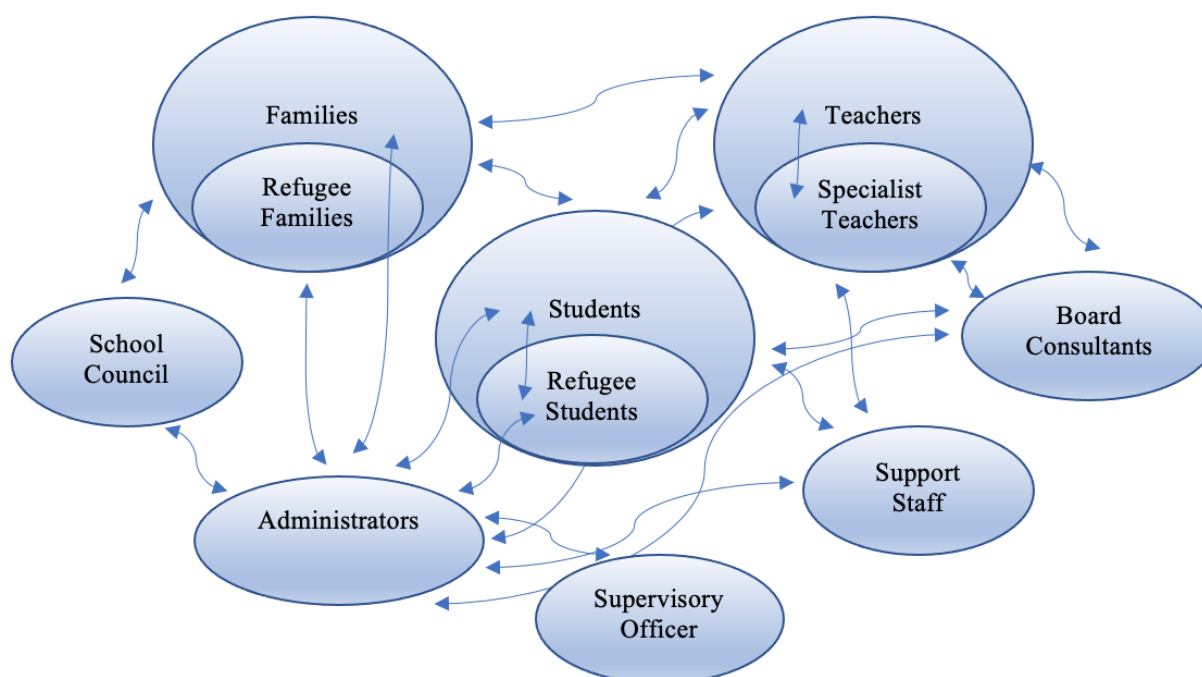
- From families: how are you supporting my child in their settlement in your school both academically and socially?
- From students: how will you really hear what my needs are and how are you planning to get to know me better?
- From teachers: what is the plan so that we can get the support we need to be able to provide the instructional and emotional support urgently necessary?

Though anticipated responses to these lines of questions may vary, ongoing communication will be important to maintain trusting relationships throughout the change implementation process. Reassuring families, providing translators and settlement workers, and planning for cyclical feedback opportunities will serve as starting point to respond to questions. For students, providing space for leadership opportunities and intentionally learning about each child's identity and lived experiences will improve the intercultural competence of staff (Deardorff, 2009). Teachers will ideally respond to the professional learning structure and feel

confidence in their ability to support refugee students as time passes, with a strong reliance on the networked team. Figure 9 outlines the key stakeholder groups which require a path for communication and leads into a reflection on communication flow between those stakeholder groups.

**Figure 9**

*Communication Flow Between Key Stakeholder Groups*



*Note.* A visual representation of the complex and fluid movement of information and knowledge mobilization between key stakeholder groups as part of the change implementation process and communication plan.

### **Communication Flow**

To communicate the path of change, it will be important particularly for school staff members who are participating in the 4C professional learning sessions (Sharrat & Planche, 2016) to understand the steps of change model, the three phases within that model, and the

cyclical implementation of the PDSA model (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015). By understanding the clear vision and the organized structure behind that thinking, there should be enhanced buy-in. Having deeper knowledge of the phases of the change model, benchmarks will be better articulated and understood. This in turn will allow shorter-term gains and longer-term wins to be celebrated.

These areas of communication will be shared using a variety of models such as emails, newsletters, informal conversations, staff meetings, 4C follow-up meetings, and other professional learning sessions. The channels for communication will necessarily involve different layers within networks, which will enhance and deepen knowledge mobilization and lessen the likelihood for information gaps along the way.

Equitable and anti-oppressive actions of school leaders and other stakeholder groups will be thoughtful and intentional as all voices are valued. In order to truly understand the needs of the refugee community, and to honour their culture and experiences, there must be ongoing pathways for refugee students and families to provide feedback to the school (Kandel-Cisco et al., 2020). These venues may be through virtual meetings or school visits, and must consider existing structural barriers which need to be removed to ensure equitable access to the educational system.

### **Accountability and Measurement**

There will be purposeful plans to enhance the accountability. Support and guidance must come first for staff in order to ethically expect accountability (Muhammad & Hollie, 2011). The professional learning model of the 4Cs (Sharrat & Planche, 2016) provides an opportunity for collaboration which spreads accountability onto the team and off of the individual. Clear and

achievable expectations will be articulated at each stage of the change process which will provide staff with attainable goals.

To measure how effective the communication tool is, there will be a cyclical reflection at each stage of the tool to determine if the actions described are having the desired effect on gap closing. Monitoring the progress of the school team in relation to intercultural competencies along the way will be an indicator if changes in the communication plan is necessary. Following formal communication methods with informal check-ins will allow for confirmation that appropriate information has been transferred and that knowledge is being mobilized successfully.

### **Next Steps and Future Considerations**

Supporting refugees in schools will continue to be an urgently worthwhile, meaningful, and relevant area to study in the coming years as political unrest lingers overseas. Newcomers arrive due to forced migration, experiences of war, and hope for a peaceful way of life. As Canada embraces diversity and welcomes immigrants from many nations, school systems must also continue to strive for increasingly inclusive and equitable learning environments. Schools must also ensure staff members develop intercultural competence through culturally sustaining practices (Bennett, 2008; Blair, 2017). The learning that has been gained throughout this OIP will be applicable to other schools with similar contexts.

### **Next Steps**

There are several next steps for the organization once the change implementation plan has been fully enacted. As the process is indeed cyclical, and staff turnover continues to occur naturally, ongoing professional learning will be required in the areas of trauma-informed practices, intercultural competence, and culturally responsive practices.

Onboarding for new staff who come into the organization will be essential to ensure continuity of existing practices. As the organization continues to grow and demographics shift, the staff must be responsive to the changing community so that culturally sustaining practices (Ladson-Billings, 2014) are in place and the environment remains welcoming and inclusive. Next steps in the change process specifically will involve a fourth reiteration of the PDSA model (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015), as the school team plans for appropriate next steps based on most recent data.

Another next step for the organization involves seeking ways to share this learning with other school teams in the system who are experiencing similar circumstances with an influx of newcomers. The application of the collaborative work can extend beyond the organization into the system level. As a transformative leader, one path that is being explored is the creation of an administrator's working group to examine best practices at schools in all areas of the system who have high numbers of refugee settlement. To create this working group, data examination of settlement patterns in different areas of the school board will be beneficial so appropriate school teams will be involved in the learning.

### **Future Considerations**

In the context of the PoP, future considerations for the organization include shifting demographics, supporting refugee families through community agencies, reflection on effective programming, and contemplation of leading change in uncertain times. As CES is located in a key settlement area in southern Ontario, the community is home to many refugee families. Previously, families arrived from Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran, but in the near future, there is likelihood of families settling from Ukraine and other areas of political unrest as they flee from war experiences in Eastern Europe. As Canada and Ontario continue to embrace refugees, our

school community must evolve, transform, and adapt to meet changing needs based on shifting settlement patterns.

Previous learning in the organization around culturally responsive pedagogy will still be relevant but there must also be intentional collaborative work around determining innovative best practices to support this unique group of learners. As migration patterns continue to swell (StatsCan, 2016), systems across the world will need to rely on one another to explore and share processes and practices which sustain cultures, enhance diversity, and promote inclusivity. This is a period of humanitarian crisis and there is an obligation of school systems across the globe to provide peaceful and equitable learning spaces, with a call for learning continuity (UNESCO, 2022).

Examination of the school as a community will prove beneficial as the organization serves as a microcosm for society as a whole. Shifting thinking beyond just the students, schools may be in a position to serve as connectors for refugee families to outside agencies, settlement workers, and reception centres. Opening doors and providing opportunities for voices of family members will contribute to a safe and embracing learning space that supports families as a whole. Considering anti-oppressive pathways to seek input from families, to make available necessary support systems, and to deepen intercultural understandings of school teams becomes a moral imperative of the school community.

A careful examination of ELD programing is also an important future consideration. Intensive instruction will continue to be necessary for students experiencing gaps in education due to forced migration, experiences of war, and time spent in refugee camps. However, there should be exploration of the most effective model for this required program, considering in-class support with peers or withdrawal support with others requiring intensive programming.

As we continue to teach and learn during the time of COVID-19 and political unrest in Eastern Europe, the organization sits in an environment that is unpredictable, volatile and complex (Kotter et al., 2021). Implementing cultural change in a small setting while there is ongoing ambiguity on a larger scale is multifaceted and dynamic. This requires an adaptive and transformative stance on behalf of school leaders. What is coming next has never happened before. Forward-thinking and implementation of anti-oppressive innovative pathways will be urgently necessary as we move into uncharted territory and lead schools in the future.

### **Chapter 3 Conclusion**

This final chapter outlines the change implementation plan and considers the practical application of the leadership approaches previously discussed. Short, medium and long-term goals are shared, along with discussion on potential issues, challenges, and limitations within the plan. Stakeholder perspectives are included to better determine the effectiveness of the implementation of the change plan. Also reflected upon is change process monitoring and evaluation using the PDSA cycle (Donnelly & Kirk, 2015), and the plan to communicate the needed change and change process. Next steps are outlined and future consideration for the organization within this context are described.

### **Organizational Improvement Plan Conclusion**

The development of intercultural capacity building, increase in anti-oppressive programs and practices, and implementation of culturally sustaining pedagogy at Calluna Elementary School will better support the effective settlement of refugee students in the school community. By employing a transformative and adaptive leadership approach through a refugee critical race theory lens, change is inspired in an organization with rapidly shifting demographics and a rise in diversity and multiculturalism. On a broader scale, this work may influence administrators and



school teams in other schools in Ontario, and potentially across the globe where refugees are welcomed, as best practices are explored. While key learnings have been examined in the context of one school, there are significant implications for similar organizations in other countries who are experiencing an influx of newcomers and may benefit from these reflections and the consolidation of research ideas.

In my own setting, there has already been a connection of learning with administrators across our system as part of an extended change process. A working group has been established to explore effective means to support newcomers, allowing the ideas that began here at the school level to extend across the system. This important thinking can positively impact the lives of refugees as they settle in Canada, supporting both their academic and social-emotional success, while implementing anti-oppressive practices and building collective intercultural competence. As globalization increases and refugees continue to be forcibly displaced, how will schools around the world prepare themselves to address the unique needs of newcomers, while honouring their voice, and placing value on their unique lived experiences?

### **Narrative Epilogue**

The deep contextual learning in this program has been instrumental in building my own competence to lead in a richly diverse school setting. There has been a reciprocal nature between my research and day-to-day work. Real life experiences inspire search pathways to seek guidance and wisdom from knowledgeable others, and scholarly readings motivate application of innovative strategies. As the writing of this document concludes, the work and learning will continue through an iterative process, always seeking areas for improvement. This paper remains a snapshot in time of my evolving thinking and perspective around ways to support newcomers

in schools. This journey has humbly shaped me to be a stronger leader, a bolder advocate, and a deeper-thinking scholar-practitioner.

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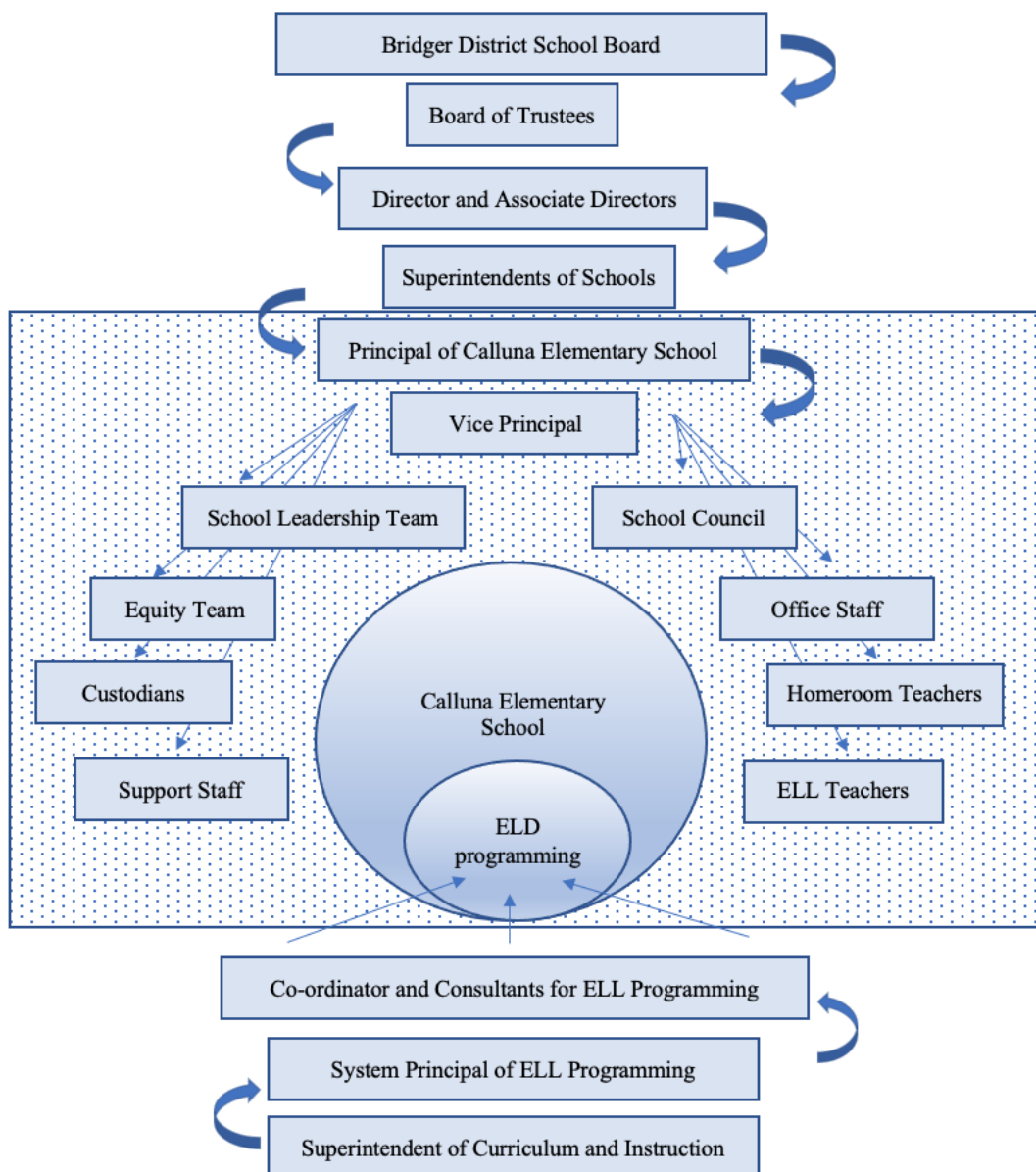
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## Appendix A

### Organizational Structure








Appendix A. Developed by the author to indicate the hierarchical structure of RDSB. The author, as Principal of Calluna Elementary School, has agency within the school team, and collaboratively impacts the school community. Another section of RDSB includes curriculum and instruction who guides ELD programming within the school.



## Appendix B

### Comparison of Possible Solutions

Possible Solution	Area of Consideration			
	Time Required	Fiscal Needs	Support of Others	Goal Achievement
Intensive ELD Program		✓	✓	
Professional Learning	✓			✓
Team Vision Building	✓	✗	✓	



Indicates significant resources required in this area



Indicates some resources required in this area



Indicates no/little resources required in this area

Appendix B. Developed as a visual tool to compare and contrast three possible solution. This will provide guidance for the determination of a final preferred solution to be implemented in order to effectively build intercultural competence with the school team.

## Appendix C

### Change Implementation Plan Goal Overview through Kotter's Model

Stage of Change	Goals	Timeline
Awareness of Sense of Urgency	Gathering concerns from stakeholders Integration of results in school plan Identifying gap between current and desired state	Spring 2021
Establishing Leadership Team	Identification of key leaders (formal and informal) Consideration of homeroom and specialist teachers Building cohesion within the team, relationship-focused	Fall 2021
Vision Building with the Team	Team establishment of common goal Maintain whole-school approach with vision Intercultural competence dream-building	Fall 2021
Communication with Stakeholders	Promote plan for professional learning Access professional learning resources from consultants Reach-out plan with families	Winter 2022
Empowerment of the Team	Intentional inspiration through transformative leadership Critical examination of oppressive barriers Implementation of strategies to remove barriers	Spring 2022
Celebrate Short-Term Wins	Motivate staff with identification and celebration of gains Monitoring progress during ongoing professional learning Measuring evidence of impact	Fall 2022
Consolidate and Increase Gains	Continue ongoing work of intercultural capacity building Access current research - culturally responsive pedagogy Refer to new best practices for intercultural competence	Fall 2022
Build Change in School Culture	Embed professional learning model in school plan Ensure onboarding for new staff Highlight growth in culturally responsive pedagogy	Winter 2023

Appendix C. Developed as a visual tool to highlight short, medium, and long-term goals in relation to Kotter's eight-stage change model (Kotter, 1996). This will provide an outline for actions at each stage of the change process that will improve intercultural competence of staff.

## Appendix D

### Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

<i>Evaluation Questions</i>	<i>Focus of Monitoring</i>	<i>Indicators and Targets</i>	<i>Data Sources and Tools</i>	<i>Responsibilities and Timeline</i>
<b>Appropriateness</b> To what extent did the staff participate in the learning?	Participant characteristics	Number of staff participating in learning (75% of staff)	Attendance records	Team leaders  Monthly review
<b>Effectiveness</b> To what extent did participants develop their intercultural competence?	Change in knowledge of intercultural competence	Difference between intercultural competence pre and post learning (75% of staff report increase in knowledge)	Pre and post surveys	Facilitators of professional learning  At beginning and end of professional learning session series
<b>Efficiency</b> Was the cost of program delivery within budget?	Costs against budget	Performance against budget (Less than 10% variation)	Review of financial records	Administrators  Monthly review
<b>Impact</b> To what extent was there deepened intercultural competence in the school community?	Inclusive and identity-affirming learning environments	Students and families voice indicate learning spaces are inclusive and identity-affirming	Climate surveys at board and school level  Family surveys  Checklists	Team leaders  Every six months at school level  Yearly at board level
<b>Sustainability</b> Was there evidence of further ongoing benefits of the learning?	Community connections and cross-departmental initiatives	Partnerships developed  Innovative initiatives implemented	Documentation of events  Record of partnerships with community	Team leaders  Review annually

Appendix D. Based on the work of Markiewicz and Patrick (2016), this monitoring and evaluation plan will provide the team with a useful tool to review areas of focus, key indicators of success, data sources, and implementation timelines.