

7-25-2023

Building Collaborative Systems to Support Elementary School Principals in Ensuring all Students Flourish

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Brach, K. (2023). Building Collaborative Systems to Support Elementary School Principals in Ensuring all Students Flourish. *Dissertation in Practice at Western University*, 340. Retrieved from <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/oip/340>

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Abstract

This organizational improvement plan addresses the problem of practice of how a district leader can support elementary school leaders in a small, rural school district to work towards improving their schools to become more culturally responsive and meet the needs of all students.

Historically, there have been many students, particularly those who have been underserved, who have not had a positive school experience that considers their identity and learning needs.

Schools have been unsuccessful at being places that accept all learners and strive to ensure that they are able to grow and flourish. Although there are some classrooms that are experiencing success, a traditional, teacher-centered model rather than a student-centered model has been the norm for many school districts and there is resistance to change. This plan utilizes the lens of sociocultural theory and culturally relevant pedagogy with a blended leadership approach of authentic, transformative, and compassionate system's leadership to consider how to support school leaders to shift schools into culturally responsive spaces that meet the needs of all students. This plan identifies the critical importance of the role of school leaders in shifting these practices and why they should be a primary focus for district leaders. The theories of a blended change framework using the coherence framework and the mandala for systems change will guide the direction of the proposed solution to this problem which includes building collaborative structures to develop the collective efficacy of elementary school leaders involving a variety of differentiated learning opportunities.

Keywords: culturally responsive, school leaders, equity, opportunity gap, collective efficacy, district leadership

Executive Summary

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) considers how to support school leaders to meet the needs of all students, particularly those who have been historically underserved, to ensure that they are flourishing and have the skills and knowledge they need to transition successfully to secondary school. The plan considers the role of the director of instruction, which in this school district reports directly to the superintendent who reports to the board. The importance of district leaders supporting school leaders is essential to help build their collective efficacy as they have the greatest impact for change in elementary schools.

Chapter one explains why this organizational improvement plan was developed and the context, lens, and leadership approach through which this problem of practice was determined. It outlines the theoretical lens through which this plan is developed which is a blend of sociocultural theory and culturally relevant pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy recognizes the ongoing historic racism that has and still occurs in Canadian school systems, which continues to create disparate experiences of school for learners who have been historically marginalized (Chrona, 2022). Sociocultural theory helps guide us towards solutions by recognizing that collaborative approaches are key to meeting everyone's learning needs and to helping solve problems (Eun, 2008; Eun 2021). This is followed by a brief discussion of the approaches to leadership that are recommended in this OIP, which blend authentic, transformative, and compassionate system's leadership.

Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the organizational context followed by an in-depth exploration of the problem of practice of how to support school leaders to meet the needs of elementary students who have been historically underserved. It provides a brief outline of a vision for change that includes creating structures that support school leaders to

transform their schools into spaces that are culturally responsive. The gaps in the system, change drivers, and change priorities will all be considered in this section.

Chapter 2 begins by further exploring the leadership approaches that will be utilized. Authentic leadership recognizes the importance of building relationships and trust to create a collaborative organizational culture (Duigan, 2014). The urgent need to improve the system and focus on equity, inclusion, and social justice drives the need for transformative leadership (Shields, 2011; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Transformative leadership is reflective of transforming the system to create a culture of high expectations (Shields, 2011; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Compassionate system's leadership identifies the need for a new approach to schooling which complements transformative leadership to ensure that everyone is treated with compassion as we strive to meet everyone's needs (Senge et al., 2019b).

This discussion of leadership is followed by an analysis of a change framework that blends the coherence framework and the mandala for systems change and explains why they were selected. Both frameworks reflect circular models of support and dependence that consider several elements that must be worked on in tandem. The coherence model places the work of leaders at the center, which is particularly relevant to this problem of practice and approach.

Chapter 2 concludes with a detailed analysis of the Ocean View School District (OVSD; a pseudonym). The Burke-Litwin model of organizational performance and change (1992) is used to address the school district's complexity and determine which areas provide the optimal opportunities for change (Burke, 2018). Several solutions are proposed that consider the organization, the problem of practice, the theoretical lens, and the leadership approach. Each of these solutions is thoroughly analyzed and the selected solution is aimed at building the collective efficacy of elementary school principals.

The third and final chapter details the implementation plan and how it will be deployed to occur simultaneously. There are several steps to be undertaken to create a collaborative learning environment between elementary school leaders and the director of instruction who supervises the school leaders. The process accommodates differences, recognizing that leaders and schools are all different and will require unique learning and support. The learning process will be co-constructed with the school leaders as the steps progress and will involve one-on-one sessions, group sessions, and learning-team sessions with the team of school leaders. This chapter also considers communication approaches for this change process as well as how each of the steps will be evaluated for effectiveness. The plan will need to be refined as it progresses, and the team helps to guide its direction.

As school leaders build their collective capacity through these authentic, transformational, and compassionate approaches, they will be encouraged to use these some of these collaborative processes within their own school teams which will help the school district become an organization that reflects ongoing learning. Through this work, school principals will build the leadership skills necessary to positively influence teaching practices that concretely improve outcomes for traditionally underserved students.

Acknowledgements

With great respect and recognition, I acknowledge and honour the lands of the Coast Salish peoples, specifically the łaʔamɪn (Tla'amin) Nation, whose traditional territory I learn, reside, and work on. As I reflect on my learning journey, I'm often struck by how many of my ideas about how to strive to be a leader have been part of the culture of many generations of Indigenous peoples. We have so much to learn from these incredible people who have had so much taken from them.

I also want to acknowledge the many people who have helped me along this learning journey. When I started this program during the COVID-19 pandemic, I felt so blessed to have something to occupy my time and my quest for learning. However, as the program proceeded, I realized how challenging and time consuming this process had become. My husband, Steve, and my three sons, Zachary, Tyrus, and Isaiah, as well as my almost-daughter-in-law Claudia, have been my rock through this process. When I was upset because I felt I did not receive a high enough mark, they reminded me that marks were not important. When I could not do many of the things I might normally do, they took on extra responsibilities. Most of all, they provided me with a hug, support, and encouragement when I needed it the most. I feel so grateful to have such a caring family.

I must also do a shout out to my sister, Jennifer, who became a regular reader of my papers. Although she is not an educator, she always read things carefully and asked questions that I might not have considered. Again, she was an advocate and kept me going and I could not have done it without her. The hours she put into this are beyond what I would expect from anyone! I also want to thank my mother, Juanita, and my stepfather, Sam who have always encouraged and supported me in anything I do. I could feel the love from all of you.

My beautiful friend Rachelle was also an incredible support to me. She encouraged me, she cheered me on, and most of all when I would complain that it was so difficult, she would remind me that it is supposed to be hard! She also never complained when I could not spend time with her because I had schoolwork to do but was always there when I needed a break.

There were many colleagues who supported me on this journey including my superintendent who was incredibly supportive, Kristy who provided encouragement and the name of a fabulous copy editor, Jessica who shared ideas, as well as Allison and Tawnie who were my critical friends, cheerleaders, and champions.

Finally, last but not least, I would like to thank Kristi, Paige, and Shendah, the three beautiful souls that I met during my first course. We had an incredible cohort and I feel close to many of the members of our group; however, these women will forever be my friends. It truly amazes me that I could feel so close to someone whom I have only spent time with virtually. We will forever refer to each other in what Brene Brown (2018) describes as a “square squad,” those critical friends we all need; I cannot wait to spend time with them in person at our convocation.

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Chapter 1: Problem Posing and Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

The Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) described in what follows will look at how to build the collective capacity of elementary school leaders to provide them with the skills and knowledge necessary to then build the capacity of teachers in their schools. Its underlying focus is to develop practices that meet the needs of all elementary students, providing them equal opportunity to flourish regardless of their circumstances or background.

Within the Ocean View School District (OSVD; a pseudonym), there is an opportunity gap for many underserved students. Elementary school leaders struggle to find ways to support their teachers to ensure that all students acquire the knowledge and competencies necessary to flourish. Without acquiring the knowledge and competencies, students facing opportunity gaps will be challenged in their ability to move through the secondary school system successfully. This OIP will outline the complexity of this problem and explore possible solutions.

This chapter begins with a close look at my positionality and lens statement to determine the epistemological framework through which this problem of practice will be viewed. Following this, the organizational context will be reviewed to get a sense of how the current organization is situated to face this challenge. Next the problem of practice will be analyzed and framed while determining some guiding questions within the context. Finally, the leadership vision for change in terms of its present and future state will conclude this chapter.

Positionality and Lens Statement

When analyzing my position within the OSVD and how it connects to this OIP, it is important to share the positionality and lens I bring. I grew up always wanting to be a teacher and when that dream finally came true, I was incredibly excited to be able to make a difference for students. Throughout my teaching career, I worked to meet the needs of each of my students,

focused on building relationships with students and families, and did my best with at times somewhat limited knowledge. I always loved professional development and would attend any session I felt would help me in my practice.

Once I became an elementary school principal, my learning and growth continued through my own initiative and by learning from and with others. The last elementary school I worked at as a principal was a high-needs school with many students traditionally underserved and struggling. To try and shift the school culture to meet their needs rather than trying to fit them into existing structures, I established several new collaborative processes within the school. Through this collaborative model, school staff began acknowledging that each student was the collective responsibility of every adult, and we began to utilize more trauma-informed practices in our approaches. I saw what a difference this made for these vulnerable students, although I also recognized that there was so much more we could do moving forward.

I wonder now how much more of a difference we could have made for those students had I had the knowledge and capacity I have since gained, along with regular, structured support and guidance from my district supervisor and the collective knowledge shared among a collaborative team of school leaders. Unfortunately, although I felt supported by my district staff, those learning opportunities were not available at that time.

Now I hold the formal leadership role of one of two directors of instruction at OSVD and report directly to the superintendent who in turn reports directly to the elected school board. My primary responsibility is to supervise and support elementary school leaders to be able to ensure all students achieve success in elementary school. Although there are varying definitions of student success, in this OIP, the intended definition is that students are able to reach their full potential and thrive, regardless of their background, culture, or what they had learned before

entering school (Harris & Jones, 2019a). While ensuring that students experience success regardless of their circumstances and backgrounds is my primary focus, during this OIP journey I realized that my agency is more directly tied to school leaders since “they are the key link between the district’s central office and the classroom” (Katz et al., 2018b, p. 6). I have since come to understand that my role is to support school leaders to improve their instructional leadership practices in service of changing the culture and learning in their schools, to the ultimate benefit of the students.

I am a white, middle aged, cis-gendered mother of three with the honor of living on the traditional lands of the Coast Salish People. I have led a privileged life and have had access to many opportunities that others may not have had due to their race, socioeconomic status, or gender. I consider myself someone who advocates for social justice and who recognizes how unjust the education system has been historically.

My journey in this learning process is ongoing; however, I commit to bringing more equity to the world, particularly in relation to education. I understand inequities in student success should not be blamed on students’ intelligence but on a society and school system that is entrenched in systemic racism (Harris & Jones, 2019b). I know I have a great deal more to learn about the experiences of Canada’s Indigenous people and others who have been historically marginalized by colonization and systemic racism as it manifests in microaggressions, a culture of low expectations, and the many inequities that exist for children in the OSVD school system (Harris & Jones, 2020). I continue to learn with intellectual humility, deepening my learning, and practicing what I learn (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014).

My background contributes significantly to the lens I bring to this OIP and many different leadership theories and beliefs have impacted and shaped my ideas. Culturally relevant

pedagogy is a key epistemological framework that underlies this OIP. Culturally relevant pedagogy identifies that “students must experience academic success”, “develop and/or maintain cultural competence”, and “develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160).

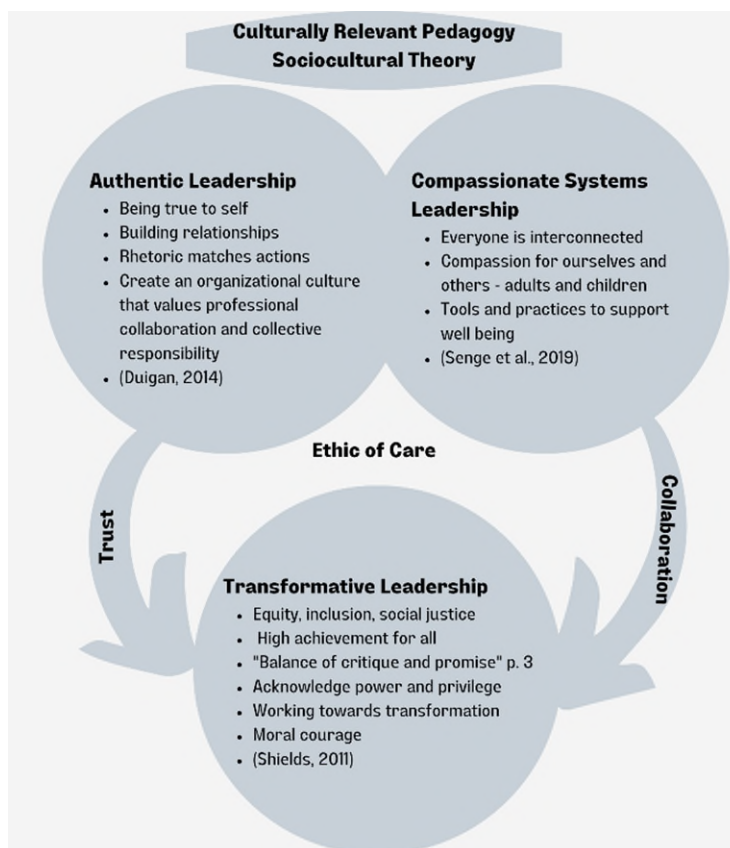
When analyzing the development of educational theory in Canada, it is alarming how racism impacted systemic decisions that were and continue to be made to this day regarding the establishment of education systems (Capper, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021). These policies continue to plague our education system and perpetuate racism throughout British Columbia (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005).

As a district leader, I must create an antiracist identity that works to establish and support a culturally relevant system for all students, while reflecting on my own practice and what I might be doing to contribute to marginalization (Khalifa et al., 2018; Lopez, 2021). I must ensure that school leaders under my purview are striving to build elementary schools that have a culture of high expectations and culturally relevant pedagogy, which allows all students to thrive (Khalifa et al., 2018). By utilizing students’ own cultures as guideposts for learning and building a sense of critical consciousness that engages learners to critically analyze readily available information in this rapidly changing world, we are moving beyond more traditional models of teaching (Katz et al., 2018a; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This is an ongoing process requiring continuous improvement and collaboration to build my own capacity in support school leaders to challenge some of the inequities embedded throughout their classrooms and schools (Lopez, 2021).

Sociocultural theory emphasizes the social and cultural processes that are essential for learning. (Eun, 2021; Nasir & Hand, 2006). Throughout my career I have had the opportunity to

work with many different people in varying roles and I learned that for positive change to occur, people need to feel they are a genuine part of a collaborative process (Halbert & Kaiser, 2022; Hattie & Smith, 2021). Sociocultural theory will continue to inform the work that I do with school leaders as we all learn together. It also helps acknowledge the structures and processes embedded in school districts as well as identifies how schools traditionally reinforce the power distribution and perpetuate challenges (Nasir & Hand, 2006). By modelling this perspective in my approach with school leaders, it moves beyond top-down dynamics as well as providing them with an understanding of how to work with their own school staffs using a collaborative process. This genuine collaboration will develop school leaders who will amplify their own cultural competencies in turn supporting and encouraging their schools to grow into spaces where all students are able to experience success regardless of their backgrounds or identities (Honig, 2012; Khalifa, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The three leadership approaches that will be used in this problem of practice are authentic leadership, transformative leadership, and compassionate system's leadership. Authentic leadership is needed to ensure I am true to myself and my beliefs and can communicate this with my actions and words. Transformative leadership emphasizes the need to change the system to become more equitable, the intent of this problem of practice. Finally, compassionate system's leadership brings it all together to focus on equity, compassion, and interconnected relationships that build the collective capacity of myself and others in a compassionate way (Baron et al., 2021). These approaches will be explained in greater detail in chapter two. Figure 1 illustrates the blended leadership approach through a theoretical lens.

Figure 1*Blended Leadership Approach Through a Theoretical Lens*

Note. This diagram illustrates the theoretical framework and blend of leadership approaches.

My belief system comes from an ethic of care that aligns with my leadership style (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). I believe most people are trying to do the best they can, so I must provide support to ensure that transformative change works towards eliminating systemic racism to allow for equitable opportunities for all students. To encourage lasting impactful change, I need to embody what Safir (2019) defines as a leader who is a “warm demander” by asking questions in a compassionate and authentic way that allows others to contemplate their practices and the implications it has for students. They suggest that “rather than call people out, warm demanders call folks in and up to the work of equity” (Safir et al., 2021, p. 199). This practice will be essential in fostering school leaders who are consistently focused on equity for all

students and decolonizing systems in a compassionate way. To accomplish this will require reflection and reflexivity in my own practice as I am continuously learning and growing (Morton et al., 2020; Zembylas, 2013; Zembylas, 2014). I am aware I do not know all the answers, but I can support school leaders to create engaging school spaces where all participants can work collaboratively to critically engage in asking questions, conducting research, and exploring answers about why some students continue to struggle and how that can be rectified (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014). As a district leader, creating spaces to allow for this work and supporting principals to find ways to effect change in their schools and classrooms will be what truly makes a difference. This challenging but necessary work will help build capacity for continuous learning, growth, and improvement in making OVSD an equitable place of learning for all students.

Organizational Context

The OVSD is a small, rural school district located on the traditional lands of a Coast Salish Nation in British Columbia, accessible only by ferry or plane. The school district of approximately 3000 students is comprised of six elementary schools, one secondary school, and a distributed learning school that enrolls students from across the province. Although its demographic is changing as the community is becoming a popular coastal community to live, there remain many school leaders and teachers in the district who have resided here most of their lives and have taught for at least twenty years or more.

A significant number of school leaders and teachers experienced an education with a traditional model of schooling that utilized an authoritative approach putting the teacher, rather than the student, at the center (Katz et al., 2018a; Vujaklija, 2021). In this earlier model, the teacher delivers the lessons, and the students are responsible for learning what the teacher

presents to them (Safir et al., 2021). Styres (2017) defines this as “doing” education and this model has not worked well for most students, particularly students who have been traditionally underserved. Additionally, many current school leaders and teachers were also trained to teach with this model. Unfortunately, this model of schooling has become comfortable to many educators because it is the only one they have known as both a student and a teacher. This dynamic creates challenges for school leaders trying to impact change and encourage teachers to try teaching differently.

Within the OVSD, there is a small group of school leaders, many of whom started their careers as one of the teachers mentioned above. As with teachers, this demographic is slowly changing with some principals and vice principals being hired from outside of the district. OVSD’s superintendent has been in the position for around twenty years and had traditionally employed only one director and a secretary-treasurer as part of the district’s leadership team. Given the district’s complexities and demands presided over by few district leadership positions, it has been challenging to provide extensive support to school leaders. School leaders have been essentially left to do their job unless there was a problem that needed to be addressed. A large part of their jobs involved solving crisis situations and managerial tasks. School leaders tended to work in silos and typically only reached out to district leaders or other principals if there was an immediate problem to solve. Although school and district leaders participated in monthly meetings, these were organized more as business meetings than opportunities to increase professional learning or focus on continuous improvement. As a result, student achievement in terms of standardized assessments and graduation rates stayed consistent for many years.

The superintendent recognized the need for additional district staff to provide the capacity to improve the system and created several positions, including two directors of

instruction, a director of inclusive education, a director of human resources, a communications director, a district principal of Indigenous education, a district principal of technology, and a district vice principal of early learning and childcare. This extra staffing has provided opportunities to bring about systemic change in many different capacities throughout the district, but also brings challenges as the team learns to work together. Regularly scheduled meetings, as well as informal meetings, between the district team have been critical as we strive to improve our collaborative processes.

Previously, I was a classroom teacher, a vice-principal, then principal in my current district. I was hired as director of instruction from a large group of applicants, including many of my principal colleagues. In my new position, part of my role is to supervise and support the district's principals and vice principals within elementary schools. This has caused some initial tension as I now supervise my previous colleagues within this small district; however, with time and authenticity, trust is slowly beginning to build. Additionally, some of the long-standing school leaders who have been historically left alone to do their jobs may have found it challenging to have someone from the district office regularly checking in and asking them to reflect on their practices and focus on ongoing improvement. Within the OVSD, there has been an ongoing culture of mistrust between those who work at the school board office and those who work in the schools. Previously, the leadership style within the district has been perceived as being hierarchical with decisions made in top-down exercises of compliance; however, this seems to be changing to more of a collaborative approach. Throughout this OIP, I recognize that authentic leadership and compassionate system's leadership is what will allow me to build collaboration and trust with my colleagues and transition the culture throughout the district while

ensuring employees feel valued and heard (Duigan, 2014; Senge et al., 2019a; Senge et al., 2019b).

My position at OVSD involves many complexities such as working with a board, the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Education and Childcare, and the superintendent. For example, the BC Ministry of Education and Childcare has expectations clearly laid out in its *Framework for Enhancing Student Learning* (Province of British Columbia, 2022g). To align with these expectations, the OVSB has created a Strategic Plan (2019) with goals set by the school board, which are then led by the superintendent who is responsible for ensuring the goals from both governing bodies are fulfilled. Implementing these goals under the direction of the superintendent is part of the job description of a director of instruction.

One of the challenges I've faced is that much of the current system is set up to align closely with neo-liberalism and the functionalist paradigm and focuses on measures such as graduation rates, Foundational Skills Assessments, and the Literacy and Numeracy Assessments (Province of British Columbia, 2023c). However, many of the problems within this OIP are too complex to be solved merely by using these limited standardized data to make decisions. These problems must be looked at in depth and requires the collaborative work of all district leaders as well as school leaders with the involvement of their staff, students, and families to result in the necessary changes (Gunbayi & Sorm, 2018; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Winton & Pollack, 2016). This is one of the reasons why going forward it is important to entrench sociocultural theory, which utilizes a collaborative approach that reflects ideas and insights from all participants rather than the tried-and-failed top-down approach (Eun, 2021; Nasir & Hand, 2006). It is also necessary to define and identify other ways to measure student success than the Ministry of

Education and Childcare's standardized assessment requirements (Province of British Columbia, 2023c; Safir et al., 2021).

The local Coast Salish Nation, whose land this community resides on, was one of the first Indigenous communities in Canada to declare itself a sovereign nation (Indigenous Nation, 2016). Although this is an incredible success story, prevalent covert and overt racism, financial challenges, and intergenerational trauma from many years of abuse, residential schools, and colonization has left the nation attempting to overcome incredible challenges, as are other Indigenous communities across Canada (Fallon & Paquette, 2014; Tuck & Yang; 2021).

The nation works closely with the school district to determine the best way to support their students in local schools but, as can be expected, there are challenges establishing and maintaining trust. Additionally, there has been a history of the school district asking for input from the nation rather than genuinely listening to elders, families, and children to determine how to meet the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical needs of Indigenous students (Styres, 2017). Through the diligent work of the superintendent, the district principal of Indigenous education, and the new Indigenous nation's director of education, there is a more collaborative approach between the nation and school district, which is reflected in the recently signed Local Education Agreement.

Local Indigenous students, both living in the nation and the nearby town, traditionally have low graduation rates and often struggle to feel supported, connected, or engaged in school (Province of British Columbia, 2022c; Province of British Columbia, 2022i). These problems require a deeper analysis of how to ensure Indigenous students and their families are provided with what they need within our community's elementary schools. Embedding Indigenous ways of learning throughout the schools and curriculum is beginning to be embraced but it still occurs

in pockets rather than uniformly throughout the district. There have been some improvements in providing Indigenous resources and knowledge in the OVSD, but there is more that needs to be accomplished.

Although this OIP is focussed on all students who have been underserved in the OVSD, it is important to highlight Indigenous students given the ongoing systemic racism they have faced on the land that was taken from them. This work of decolonization is reflected in culturally relevant pedagogy; however, it deserves a much more robust analysis and solution than this OIP will explore.

The OVSD mission and vision statement acknowledges the need to ensure all children participate in a learning environment that is truly inclusive and supports all students in becoming responsible citizens; however, equity is not specifically addressed in the statements. Again, although there are pockets of educators doing this important work around equity, reconciliation, and anti-racism, it is not embedded throughout the school district. There are ongoing conversations at the district level for the need to engage meaningfully in this work. It is essential that this does not become what Safir et al. (2021) refers to as “siloes equity.” Instead of equity being something we simply *do* in our system, it must be embedded throughout, and this requires truly listening to the voices of all students, staff, families, and community members (Khalifa, 2018; Safir et al., 2021). Utilizing authentic and compassionate system’s leadership to create a collaborative system will help the district achieve a transformative environment where equity, reconciliation, and anti-racism is woven throughout (Senge et al., 2019b; Shields, 2011; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Supporting principals in this work within their schools will have a tremendous impact and is key to solving this problem of practice.

Leadership Problem of Practice

An ongoing challenge in BC elementary schools is that although school leaders are tasked with impacting change in their school settings, many have not been provided the knowledge or support to successfully make the large shift required to implement those changes. Current instructional practices are ineffective at closing the education gap of students who have historically been underserved to provide them the same opportunities as other students (Province of British Columbia, 2022c; United Nations, n.d.). Many schools and classrooms are currently unable to provide culturally relevant pedagogy which requires an emphasis on student learning, cultural competence, and socio-political/critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2021). When grade four, seven, ten and twelve OVSD students were surveyed about whether they feel satisfied with what they are learning at school, on average only 18–25% of all students answered, “most of the time,” indicating approximately 75% of students are not engaged or see value in many of the current learning opportunities provided (Province of British Columbia, 2023f). If students are not engaged in school, it makes it increasingly difficult to ensure they are learning what they need to experience success and develop cultural and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

School leaders are not adequately trained in building the capacity of teachers to ensure that all students experience culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms (Khalifa, 2018). Without the targeted guidance of school leaders to impact change in classrooms and schools, the opportunity gap will likely continue. Additionally, with the increasingly complex role of a school principal, many school leaders are engaged during much of their days in dealing with increasingly complex student behaviors, navigating the challenges of working with diverse students and staffs, and handling parents’ concerns. All these challenges distract from the need

for school leaders to create a collaborative culture in their schools and be able to implement a more culturally relevant pedagogy that allows all students to thrive.

The foundational role of the director of instruction is to support principals to ensure they learn and grow in their ability to support all students within their schools to achieve their full potential. With support and a strong grasp of these framework approaches, school leaders can guide their teachers to help transform their schools and classrooms into culturally responsive spaces. The problem of practice is how to support school leaders to work towards improving their schools to become sites of culturally relevant pedagogy that meets the needs of all students, particularly those who have been traditionally underserved.

Framing the Problem of Practice

We must acknowledge that school leaders come into the profession to support children and are practicing what they were taught and thus familiar to them (Katz et al., 2018a). There are some school leaders who will be resistant to working with teachers to establish changes in practice that need to occur to ensure an education system is truly inclusive. This is often because they are unsure how to accomplish it (Aguilar, 2020). Additionally, given the complexity of the role of the school leader, it can be challenging to find the time to ensure this work is a priority.

Within the OVSD's current structure, many school leaders operate in silos without any significant influence from district leaders. Some school leaders have embraced new ideas and perspectives on their own about how to support all children but may need some additional support from district leaders (Chrona, 2022). Without the concentrated effort of district leaders, as well as the collaborative effort of school leaders, the collective efficacy of believing positive change is possible and the continuous professional learning about how to make these shifts in all elementary schools and classrooms has not occurred. Sociocultural theory emphasizes that

learning is a shift in social relations, which is key to district and school leaders learning how to help solve these problems (Eun, 2008; Eun, 2021). Creating a learning environment in the school district that acknowledges and encourages school leaders' individual identities, recognizes the needs of school leaders-as-learners, and builds relationships with other school leaders to facilitate one another's learning will be essential to solving the problem of practice (Chrona, 2022; Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Muhammad & Love, 2020). As a district leader, I must support school leaders to strengthen their schools in becoming more inclusive and culturally relevant (Honig, 2008). Within my role as a director of instruction, I must ensure that resources, metrics, and messages consistently support that goal (Starr, 2017). Providing opportunities for school leaders to learn from and with each other will also be essential. These are not easy tasks, but it is imperative that the inequities in education are eliminated to help reduce societal inequities and school leaders are the key.

Through the lens of culturally relevant pedagogy, systemic racism exists throughout Canada, and shows it also extends further than the school system itself (Chrona, 2022). Looking beyond an emphasis on standardized data, we must also consider the many students and their families who have felt responsible for not being able to learn what is being taught, rather than the system failing to create opportunities for children to learn in a variety of ways that better meet their needs (Chrona, 2022; Muhammad & Love, 2020). Additionally, there has been an ongoing issue surrounding the lowering of expectations for students with the implication that such students cannot learn like more "typical" or white students (Hammond & Jackson, 2015). As Chrona (2022) so eloquently put it, imagine being a learner in an education system "where most of the educators have little knowledge about who you are and where you come from or believe only stereotypes about you and your family and community" (p. 61). These issues have

contributed to an inequitable system that provides opportunities for some students but not all. School leaders need to become aware of these challenges and find ways to respond to them within each of their schools. Although many leaders and teachers are aware of some of these issues, they do not have the capacity to make the changes necessary to support culturally relevant pedagogy.

When analyzing this problem of practice through sociocultural theory, we must consider the importance of multiple levels of analysis, cultural practices, artifacts and tools, and the social aspect of the learning process (Nasir & Hand, 2006). When analyzing cultural practices within schools this does not always translate in a positive way. The BC Ministry of Education and Childcare implemented a new curriculum several years ago which acknowledges that learners should be met where they are, focusing on developing competencies and not just skills, and learning should be strength-based rather than focusing on deficits (Province of British Columbia, 2023b). While this is beginning to be translated into school curriculum and teaching, it is not consistent throughout all classrooms in the OVSD. The gap at OVSD is reflecting differences among school leaders in terms of learning what needs to be accomplished, determining how it needs to be accomplished, and subsequently translating this knowledge into actions at each of the elementary schools. Although there are classrooms where this learning is being implemented, it is not consistent throughout the district or even throughout individual schools. A district-wide approach to this philosophy needs to be undertaken and the bridge to ensuring that it is implemented successfully will require the support of district leaders and the strong influence of school leaders.

As mentioned previously, there is no current cultural practice of collaboration in the OVSD. Yet, these collaborative processes are essential to building the collective efficacy of

school leaders. Collective efficacy is when school leaders believe together that the work they do can improve schools across the district (Hattie & Smith, 2021). This efficacy also can positively influence the motivation of teachers (Hattie & Smith, 2021). By keeping the focus on how to lead for instructional improvement, the impact can be significant (Hattie & Smith, 2021).

When considering multiple levels of analysis, ongoing and systemic use of many forms of data to inform decision making has not been used consistently. This OIP acknowledges that there are many important forms of data, including what Safir et al. (2021) refers to as satellite data, which involves the analysis of large-scale data that uncovers areas needing further investigation, map data that focuses on skill gaps that can be used by the teacher, and street data that helps us understand the experiences of all the people within a system (2021). Analyzing data is something that is not currently done regularly throughout the OVSD. This has created many problems, particularly at the school level, because without exploring all forms of data, how do schools know that what they are doing is working? An historical example of this in OVSD is that schools had reading intervention teachers to help students who were not reading at grade level. Unfortunately, the percentage of students needing this support did not change much over the course of several years with many students becoming intervention “lifers.” This seems to indicate that the interventions being utilized were not effective. How many other ineffective practices could have been changed had we been looking at data to inform our strategies? Similarly, if one school has data that indicates a practice’s effectiveness, other schools might be more willing to try that practice in their own classroom.

Utilizing a traditional model of teaching that puts the teacher as the holder of knowledge, teaching students the information they must retain is a cultural artifact that remains in many classrooms today (Nasir & Hand, 2006). Additionally, many students are viewed from a deficit

model that looks at where the student is struggling rather than focusing on their strengths which can significantly impact a child's school experience (Katz et al., 2018a). Although there is a great deal of focus on preparing students for future schooling or work in a traditional model, the skills that are encouraged are not what is needed in today's world (Katz et al., 2018a). Employers in the current work force prize competencies such as an ability to work with a team, relating to others of diverse backgrounds, problem solving, and persistence—more than skills—as essential in the corporate world (Katz et al., 2018a). Shifting our teaching to a more competency-development approach rather than a system that shares knowledge is necessary to provide students what they need both in and beyond their schooling (Katz et al., 2018a). How can school leaders learn to support teachers to engage in teaching practices that embrace culturally relevant pedagogy by focusing on students' identities and developing their competencies, which is then transformative in creating a new culture within the OVSD (Muhammad & Love, 2020)?

Guiding Questions from the Problem of Practice

There are many challenges in exploring the problem of practice. One of the most important for this OIP is how can the director of instruction engage school leaders to participate in this collaborative process when collaboration has not previously been a common practice? Leaders, administrators, and teachers within the OVSD have historically operated in silos without much collaboration on teaching and learning. Building the trust necessary to have these important conversations is essential to creating a space where collaboration on best practices becomes the norm rather than the exception (Aguilar, 2020; Hattie & Smith, 2021).

Another complex question raised by this plan is how to support school leaders to make utilizing data, in its many forms, a common practice to ensure that the steps taken are effective (Katz et al., 2018; Safir et al., 2021)? As stated previously, data is not used on a regular basis in

OVSD's classrooms and schools. Using data in its many forms helps us identify whether what is being tried has made a difference and to guide next steps towards positive change (Safir, 2018).

A third question that will be considered is how can the gap in learning and the shifting practices of elementary principals be addressed by leaders in the school district? This will require a shift in culture among school leaders at OVSD from one of limited guidance from district leaders to one in which there will be regular conversations and learning to ensure that schools are becoming more culturally relevant to enable all students to flourish (Honig & Rainey, 2020). How can these entrenched patterns of behavior be broken, allowing us to challenge biases and supporting these changes to occur (Khalifa, 2018)? These questions will continue to be explored throughout this OIP.

Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

The overarching vision for change outlined in what follows is for OVSD leaders to feel supported and empowered to continuously transform their schools to become culturally relevant and ensure all learners have an environment that fosters the ability to develop to their full potential (Safir et al., 2021). Schools need to embody cultures of high expectations, academic success, and teach all students to become critically conscious by utilizing their culture and experiences as a vehicle for learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Although this OIP is specifically focused on leaders of elementary schools, I am hopeful that progress in this direction will eventually be made at all OVSD schools. Currently, there are many underserved students experiencing opportunity gaps, pointing to a need for a significant shift in teaching and leadership practices to be able to create environments that are culturally responsive (Gay, 2015; Safir et al., 2021). To do this work, there need to be opportunities for

collaboration and a willingness to listen to all voices to ensure the approaches we take are those that really make a difference (Aguilar, 2020; Khalifa et al., 2018; Safir et al., 2021).

This process needs to be informed by data in its many forms (satellite, map, and street data) to ensure that what is being tried is working and that the process extends from the students, to teachers and other staff, to school leaders, and district leaders, and involves community partners and families (Khalifa et al., 2018; Park, 2018; Safir et al., 2021; Young et al., 2018). This will require school leaders who are supportive and encouraging to motivate and inspire everyone to engage in this challenging work.

Gaps in the Current System

Currently, there is an element of distrust between school and district leaders, which has eroded their relationship over time. As was discussed in the organizational context, there was limited guidance and supervision for principals due to the limited district staff. This has created an environment where school leaders feel unsupported which has contributed to the distrust. This has led to a similar approach within schools which has also an element of mistrust between school leaders and school staff, in some schools more than others. Helping school leaders build trust among themselves and their staff is another critical step to ensure the success of this problem of practice (Banwo et al., 2022; Hattie & Smith, 2021).

Additionally, the job of a school principal continues to be increasingly complex, so it is important to maintain the focus on working with teachers and staff on ensuring students have what they need to thrive (Honig, 2008). It can be challenging to maintain a focus on improving teaching practices with the many immediate demands on principals' time (Pollack et al., 2014). However, building capacity in bringing their school's teams together to continue to build culturally responsive classrooms and schools that support all students to experience success will

help maintain the focus (Honig & Rainey, 2020; Khalifa, 2018). As a district leader, it is important that I am able to support school leaders in continuing with this work in each of their schools.

One of the biggest challenges with this problem of practice is while there is an urgent need to change, the reality is that none of these priorities can be accomplished quickly (Safir et al., 2021). Unfortunately, the longer it takes to make these changes, the more likely it is that some students will not be afforded the opportunities they deserve. However, these processes take time and cannot be rushed (Safir et al., 2021). It is an ongoing challenge within this problem of practice and one in which there are no easy answers or solutions.

Change Drivers

A key factor for achieving goals is to identify the right drivers to create “a force for progress towards the goals of reform” (Fullan, 2011, p. 4). These drivers are what contribute to ensuring that all students are experiencing success (Fullan, 2011, p.4). In this OIP, there are several drivers that will contribute towards the goal of building collaborative systems to support elementary school principals in ensuring all students flourish. The change drivers that will be considered are articulating the need for why there is an urgent need for change, utilizing a district wide approach, and the need to provide quality professional learning.

One of the biggest change drivers in this problem of practice will be articulating why there is an urgent need for change by focusing on the impact on students and their futures (Hattie & Smith, 2021). Most school leaders would agree that they entered this profession hoping to make a difference for children. If this problem of practice can be successfully conveyed to them, there would likely be agreement as to the urgency of the problem and the need for change. As with any change, keeping the focus on the “why” will continue to be important throughout the

process (Hattie & Smith, 2021; Sinek, 2009). This process will need the leadership and support of the school board, the superintendent, and other district leaders within the school district, as well as all other school leaders and their staffs, students, and families (Khalifa, 2018; Safir et al., 2021).

An additional positive change driver will be utilizing a district-wide approach to change by supporting principals in making positive changes in their schools (Fullan 2011). As a district leader, I have the potential to influence change in a more systematic way. Fullan (2011) suggests that systemic synergy has a greater impact than a fragmented approach. OVSD district staff recognize the need to grow into a system that supports all learners. If district and school leaders are working towards the common vision of ensuring all students are learning in a culturally responsive space that provides them with opportunities they need to flourish, then the system will build momentum from the changes (Fullan, 2011). Additionally, building school principals' collective leadership efficacy has been proven to have a significant impact on students' success (Hattie & Smith, 2021; Leithwood et al., 1998).

A final important driver in this OIP will be the need to provide quality professional learning to ensure school leaders have the knowledge they need to be successful in this work (Fullan, 2011). The professional learning cannot just involve workshops but should reflect a structure for learning that cultivates "self-awareness and understanding, social awareness and understanding, community development, an individual and collective empowerment" so we can build systems that are transformative (Aguilar & Cohen, 2022, p. 11). As with students and teachers, fostering personalized learning opportunities for school leaders is most effective and will be an important component of this OIP.

Change Priorities

The three change priorities which will be considered in this OIP are establishing systems within the elementary setting, building collaborative conversations with school leaders, and encouraging school leaders to create similar systems within their own schools.

One of the first priorities of this change process in my role as a district leader will be to establish systems within the elementary setting where leaders feel safe to share ideas and work together, as well as to create an environment where people become warm demanders who ask critical questions of each other as to how OVSD can improve its systems for all children (Hattie & Smith, 2021; Safir, 2019). Much of the work of this problem of practice will be engaging school leaders in establishing schools that are culturally responsive (Honig, 2008; Khalifa, 2018). School leaders must identify “sources of inequity and marginalization” within classrooms and other spaces in their schools (Khalifa, 2018, p. 53). Additionally, school leaders must ensure that culturally relevant pedagogy is demonstrated in classrooms across the school district (Khalifa, 2018). This work needs to be reflective and ongoing and include “addressing inequities, system racism, and other forms of oppression, and coloniality must be named and addressed” (Lopez, 2021, p. 32).

Building collaborative conversations with school leaders will be an important step towards improving the overall system (Nasir & Hand, 2006). Valuing all voices in a collaborative process builds trust and community and honors everyone’s contributions (Nasir & Hand, 2006). If school leaders feel valued and heard, their well-being will be positively impacted, which will help them to be more successful at their jobs (Kuh, 2016). Additionally, working collaboratively gives people opportunities to learn from one another, which improves the collective efficacy of everyone involved (Hattie & Smith, 2021).

School leaders can be supported to build these same collaborative structures within their school staffs for the reasons stated above. Additionally, supporting school leaders to acknowledge the importance of community and family voices will benefit everyone involved in this process. Families are children's first teachers and have significant knowledge about their children's cultural and social identity (Katz et al., 2018a). If everyone is working towards building opportunities for children, it creates a seamless process where children are supported in the best way possible.

If we succeed, then underserved students will be provided the environment and opportunities necessary to flourish (Gay, 2015). This is not only critical for traditionally underserved students but will have a positive impact on all students and contribute to making schools and classrooms a better place for all (Safir et al., 2021). As identified previously in this OIP, utilizing culturally relevant pedagogy acknowledges that systemic racism is embedded in Canadian society as well as within its school systems (Capper, 2015; Chrona, 2022; Lopez, 2021). Acknowledging this provides the possibility that through the education and empowerment of students to help them become critically conscious so they can improve society and help find ways to negate systemic racism beyond their schooling, improving Canadian society (Chrona, 2022; Lopez, 2021; Safir et al., 2021). My hope is that by building momentum with OVSD's school leaders, our schools can collectively improve, raising up our school district from a place where many underserved students are not learning at grade level in literacy and numeracy, to one where *all* students have the skills, knowledge, competencies, and awareness to continue their learning into high school and beyond, to ensure they have a successful future while making the world a better place (Province of British Columbia, 2023e).

Conclusion

Chapter one identified the positionality and lens statement of the OIP which utilized a culturally responsive pedagogy and sociocultural theory within a blended leadership approach of authentic leadership, compassionate system's leadership, and transformative leadership. The organizational context was explained as well as the problem of problem of practice which explored how to support school leaders to create schools and classrooms that are engaging in culturally relevant teaching practices to shift the learning culture in schools. The problem was framed by identifying gaps in the system as well as the change drivers and change priorities. Finally, the chapter concluded with a leadership focused vision for change that strives to provide culturally responsive environments and opportunities for all students to flourish, especially those who have been traditionally underserved. Chapter two will explore the planning and development of this OIP.

Chapter 2: Planning and Development

This chapter explores the planning and development components that aim at addressing the problem of practice and will begin by analyzing the leadership theories that are used to approach this organizational improvement plan. Following this, the framework for change is identified and described, and an analysis of the organization's readiness for change will be conducted. Finally, three proposed solutions for change will be discussed in terms of how they fit within the leadership approaches and organizational analysis, and a preferred solution will be identified.

Leadership Approach to Change

This OIP encompasses a bridging of authentic, compassionate, and transformative leadership to help shift the culture in the elementary school leadership team to become more collaborative and culturally relevant to meet all students' needs (Duignan, 2014; Senge et al., 2019b; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). An analysis of these three leadership approaches reveals that they work well together and are consistent with what is needed for the problem of practice. Transformative leadership "emphasizes the need for education to focus both on academic excellence and on social transformation," a need that has been demonstrated in this problem of practice (Shields, 2011, p. 2). Authentic leaders "create and nurture professional and collective processes for leading change related to learning improvement," which is what I hope to see embedded throughout the culture of school leaders in our elementary schools (Duigan, 2014, p.166). Compassionate system's leadership helps develop the "skillsets of system's thinkers" to create the generative conditions for integrating different approaches crucial for education innovation, which connects directly to both authentic leadership and transformative leadership

(Senge et al., 2019b, p. 16). This section explores these approaches and shows how they will support this OIP more deeply.

Authentic leadership has four key components: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective (Hannah et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Self-awareness means that a leader is aware of their ideals, values, and beliefs but also their strengths and weaknesses. This component requires self-reflection, which involves thinking about how best to support school leaders by truly listening and relying on them to determine how the leader can help them to shift their school's culture (Begley, 2006). Relational transparency focuses on clearly sharing information and being able to admit mistakes (Hannah et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008). This is especially important when building collaborative relationships with school leaders. Balanced processing, the third component of authentic leadership, stresses the importance of ensuring all opinions are considered (Atwijuka & Caldwell, 2017; Hannah et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Finally, an internalized moral perspective is necessary to ensure the leader's actions are consistent with what they say and what is demonstrated, exhibiting an integrity between the leader's core beliefs and resulting actions (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Staying true to myself and my core beliefs will be essential; however, this process can only happen through relationships with others, and cannot be done in isolation (Hannah et al., 2011; Duigan, 2014). It is critical that my rhetoric matches my actions so I must always be genuine and clear about my beliefs about equity and encourage it in others (Duigan, 2014; Duigan 2020).

Building self-awareness, relational transparency, and an ethic of trust by practicing authentic leadership will help build a foundation within the organization and in myself as a district leader, something that has been identified as a necessity within OVSD (Atwijuka &

Caldwell, 2017). This should be a collaborative process and school leaders should feel a collective responsibility to impact change for their schools, allowing all students to experience a positive learning environment (Duigan, 2014; Kulophas & Hallinger, 2019). Duigan (2014) writes that authentic educational leaders should encourage all stakeholders to “embrace a collective ethic of responsibility for the well-being of students in their fields of care” (p. 166).

Authentic leadership aligns well with compassionate system’s leadership, which believes that leading with compassion is essential and recognizes how working or engaging in a system can influence people’s thoughts, feelings, and actions (Senge et al., 2019b). Compassionate systems’ leadership is a newer theory that developed from ideas studied in system leadership (Senge, 1994; Senge, 2012). There are three components to compassionate system’s leadership: self-leadership, relational leadership, and systems-thinking leadership and they all operate in tandem (Senge et al., 2019b). If any element is missing, the system becomes unbalanced (Senge et al., 2019b). The compassionate system’s framework continues to be established, tested, and adjusted, as many systems around the world continue to use its insights and collaborate around shared experiences (Senge et al., 2019b). In BC, the Ministry of Education and Childcare has offered several training sessions with school and district leaders to begin to foster these ideas within school districts, providing incredible opportunities for embracing this work (Province of British Columbia, 2023d).

The central idea of the compassionate system’s framework is to respond to a changing world and to face problems that have become increasingly complex and require a new type of leadership (Senge et al., 2019a; Senge et al., 2019b). It acknowledges educators join this profession to make a difference for children; however, many factors hinder their efforts (Cook et al., 2021). Delving deeper to understand the different aspects of a system such as the cognitive,

structures, and artifacts along with the feelings and emotions of those who shape the system, allows the challenges of this changing world to be navigated (Cook et al., 2021). Developing “compassionate integrity” in leaders leads them to better understand the structural sources of problems, and to recognize that no one can understand someone else’s experiences (Senge et al., 2019b). As stated previously, there are many school leaders who have been unable to shift their schools’ practices to more effectively better support students who are not currently flourishing.

One tool of compassionate system’s leadership is represented by the iceberg model (Perrenoud, 2018). This tool explores what sits underneath the surface of an issue such as mental models and artifacts (Perrenoud, 2018). Mental models are all of the underlying beliefs that an individual holds such as children must be quiet to learn. Artifacts are the systemic structures that are in place such as children seated in rows that prohibit communication or collaboration. Identifying the mental models and artifacts can assist in determining how to shift the beliefs they support (Perrenoud, 2018). This tool will be helpful when working with school leaders to help identify their mental models and their school’s artifacts. In doing so, leaders can then use this and other tools to shift their staff’s mental models, causing a ripple effect that changes beliefs and breaks barriers, allowing the changes necessary to solve this problem of practice.

Finally, transformative leadership is representative of the critical need to focus on an equitable education for all students (Shields & Hesbol, 2020). There is a need to challenge current practices to ensure we are creating deep and equitable change (Shields, 2010; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). It is essential that practices are challenged, and we overcome inequity to create the conditions that ensure all students can learn and thrive (Shields, 2011; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Shields (2010) defines a series of transformative practices, such as balancing critique and promise by explicitly making it clear that everyone has a role in creating equitable opportunities

for all students and a responsibility to seek to understand without a deficit lens (Shields, 2010; Shields & Hesbol, 2020; Watson & Rivera-McCutchen, 2016). Deconstructing current frameworks that “perpetuated deficit thinking and inequity and their replacement with new frameworks of inclusion and equity” should be the underlying idea behind continuous improvement (Shields, 2010, p. 576). Additionally, issues of implicit bias and deficit mindsets must be overcome (Shields & Hesbol, 2020). This clearly aligns with the problem of practice as OVSD has demonstrated they need improvement in these areas to ensure that all students are able to flourish and transition successfully to secondary school. These practices connect to compassionate system’s leadership as well as authentic leadership as they recognize that any change must be accomplished collectively and collaboratively.

Demonstrating moral courage in the interest of inclusion, equity, and social justice regardless of external pressures is essential to transformative work (Shields, 2010; Shields & Hesbol, 2020; Watson & Rivera-McCutchen, 2016). It is important in “both theory and practice that educators must do what they can to challenge unjust practices, to overcome inequity, and to create conditions under which all children can learn” (Shields, 2010, p. 582). Working collaboratively with other educators is essential “to push the social justice in education movement into the future, creating new visions, a new reality, and a better future society for all” (Makaiau et al., 2023).

The focus on equity also connects well to culturally relevant pedagogy which focuses on academic success within a culture of high expectations (Ladson-Billings, 1995). An important way to achieve this is teaching cultural competence, which embraces a child’s identity and culture and connects them to their learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Finally, developing a critical consciousness in students allows them to analyze information and ask critical questions to

develop them into twenty-first century citizens who can impact positive change in our world (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

As a transformative leader, creating safe spaces for sharing ideas, learning, and growing together encourages an environment where school leaders can be nurtured to help create change (Safir et al., 2021; Makaiau et al., 2023; Shields, 2011; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). All of this can be done through sociocultural theory insights, which has shown that the best learning happens collaboratively. It is essential to clearly identify and share the *why* or purpose for change then to work together with stakeholders to transform the current system and make the necessary changes that would be required so all students experience success (Hattie & Smith, 2021; Lopez, 2021; Shields, 2010; Sinek, 2009). Adams et al. (2022) suggest that transformative leadership is best done through conversations using framing, questioning, and listening techniques. Leaders that hone this approach can gain a deeper understanding of people's perspectives and more readily create an environment that allows for transformation (Adams et al., 2022).

The underlying theories of culturally relevant pedagogy and sociocultural theory along with the blending of authentic leadership, compassionate systems' leadership, and transformative leadership is paramount to the work that needs to be completed to address this problem of practice. Culturally relevant pedagogy addresses what needs to be accomplished to support each individual student in their learning, and particularly those who have been traditionally underserved. Sociocultural theory addresses how the process should be formulated in collective learning so that everyone is part of the process. While the need to transform leadership approaches in elementary schools is imperative so that all students can thrive and are able to transition successfully to secondary school, it is not something that can be done easily. Overcoming certain business-as-usual or inhibitory mental models of some school leaders will be

challenging because there is fear of change within the system, which is something compassionate system's leadership can analyze specifically. It is much more comfortable to maintain the status quo. Utilizing a top-down approach is not likely to create the trust needed to look critically at leadership practices. Creating the space for leaders to be able to analyze what needs to be changed and collectively determine how to improve their schools so that all children can thrive will be challenging. By utilizing a blend of these leadership approaches, the problem of practice and the organizational context can be addressed in a manner that will provide the most opportunity for change. School leaders can then take these same approaches with their school staff to begin shifting the culture to one where the staff works and learns together to impact change.

Framework for Leading the Change Process

When thoughtfully analyzing the system of this small, rural school district, there are many significant shifts that need to occur; however, within the context of the current system the changes must be incremental and ongoing to experience success (Deszca et al., 2020; Evans et al., 2012; Milkovich, 2016). Traditionally, a transactional style of leadership has been used in this organization with an expectation of compliance to improve student results by providing more interventions such as pull-out support to students rather than collectively looking at current practices and determining what works well and what does not (Northouse, 2022; Vera & Crossan, 2004). To change this approach requires district leadership to recognize that instead of a top-down processes, a collaborative and reflective process that involves all participants is necessary (Fullan, 2011; Galloway & Ishimaru, 2015; Northouse, 2022). Shifting this model will be challenging in the current system because collaboration currently only exists in small pockets and is not embedded throughout the system. Although this work is incredibly complex, for the

purpose of this OIP, the focus will be on how district leaders can build the leadership capacity of school principals to guide their staffs away from a teacher-centered model where the teacher provides the knowledge to the students to a more culturally responsive and student-centered model. This can create transformative change by ensuring that historically underserved students experience a school system that provides them with particular supports that gives them the opportunity to experience success. Utilizing a change framework that will support this transformative change will be pivotal for this problem of practice.

There were several change frameworks considered for this OIP, including the spirals of inquiry (Halbert & Kaiser, 2022). This framework is represented by a spiral that “reflects a never-ending process of curiosity, growth, learning, acting, and reflecting” (Halbert & Kaiser, 2022, p. 8). This process fits well within the OVSD and with the leadership theories adopted in this OIP because it allows the change to be continuous and to build momentum. The framework involves six overlapping stages: scanning, focusing, developing a hunch, engaging in new professional learning, taking action, and ensuring beneficial outcomes (Halbert & Kaiser, 2022; Timperley et al. 2014). Although the spirals of inquiry framework would help implement change within a school setting, it does not address the complexity of the problem as it is embedded throughout the school district. Additionally, typically identifying what is going on for students is at the center of this model whereas the change process being proposed here will be focused on school leaders with the intention of improving schools of which students would ultimately benefit (Kaser & Halbert, 2017).

Fullan and Quinn’s (2016) coherence framework for change was one of the two models selected for this OIP. This model is circular in shape with four quadrants requiring concurrent attention as they all support each other (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). The four quadrants are focusing

direction, cultivating collaborative cultures, securing accountability, and deepening learning, with leadership at the center (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

Focusing direction is essential in this change model as it provides a vision of what to pursue and the other elements are refined as the group collectively determines the next steps (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). This fits well with this OIP, which recognizes that each school and leader is different, and that transformative change cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach.

Developing collaborative cultures takes a great deal of work and must be considered carefully to be effective and purposeful (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). This is key to this OIP as collaboration will need to be a big part of the work with principals. Building trust and creating opportunities for school leaders to work collaboratively is essential.

The deepening learning quadrant focuses on the need to change from a traditional model of schooling to one that inspires “communication, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, character, and citizenship” (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 12). As mentioned previously, this is one of the essential problems facing the OVSD and one that all school and district leaders should be continuously striving to find ways to accomplish.

The fourth quadrant represents accountability within the leadership group itself rather than external accountability (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). As with any change process, there need to be ways to measure the impact and determine success as well as to adapt and change as necessary. Having school leaders determine how to measure their impact will be beneficial and more meaningful than gathering standardized data as a compliance activity (Safir et al., 2021).

Finally, the coherence framework places leaders at the center as this is what binds the framework and is core to the process. It fits well with OVSD’s need for transformative change

and recognizes the need for strong leadership at the center to be able to impact change, something this problem of practice and OIP have already identified as a critical need (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

The mandala for systems change, a framework rooted in compassionate system's leadership, was also selected for this OIP (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.; Compassionate System's Leadership, n.d.). This model is circular in recognition of the holistic nature of systems and inspired by the Indigenous medicine wheel and Buddhist sand mandala (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.). The domains of the framework are capacity building, practice, community building, and research (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.; Compassionate System's Leadership, n.d.). The mandala is fluid, and each domain is "crucial for organic, self-sustaining, long-term change" (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.) .

When breaking down the mandala for systems change, the four components are clearly identified and, as with the coherence framework, it is essential that all components are considered simultaneously in the change process (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). To create deep systemic change, each of the domains must be developed (Cook et al., 2021). The capacity building component considers what the shared capabilities are that need to grow as part of the collective. This connects well to the focusing direction component of the coherence model (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Fullan and Quinn (2016) state that it is important to create a shared moral imperative to provide deep learning for all children, but it must be "accompanied by an equally strong learning mode" for adults to continuously improve (p. 17). Challenging "leaders to examine current practices that are oppressive to create change, close gaps, and ensure that all students are successful" should embody this work to help create schools that are culturally responsive (MacKinnon, 2018, p.18). This epitomizes what capacity building

would look like in the mandala for systems change and is a large part of addressing the problem of practice (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.).

The practice domain in the mandala involves identifying the outcomes being sought after (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.). What practices are the group hoping to develop to improve the system for all? The benefit of using this framework is it connects well with compassionate system's leadership and allows practice with a variety of tools this leadership approach supports, which can then be utilized to improve the system as well as individual schools (Cook et al., 2021). This will be key in working with school leaders so they can practice using these tools and then apply them to their own schools (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.; Cook et al., 2021).

The community building domain in the mandala looks at identifying who constitutes the collective and involves careful consideration in terms of ensuring that all voices are considered (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.; Cook et al., 2021). This connects well with the component of cultivating collaborative cultures in the coherence framework (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). This does not involve just creating a space where people feel connected but ensures everyone is focused on the shared goal (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). The shared goal in this problem of practice is for schools to be culturally responsive to all students and allow them to reach their full potential. Again, the tools from compassionate system's leadership will be helpful in building these communities (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.; Cook et al., 2021).

The final component of the mandala schema is research, which identifies what is trying to be learned and encompasses much more than traditional research (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.). This research involves going beyond what Safir et al. (2021) identify as "satellite data" such as standardized assessments. It looks closer at map data, or classroom and

school assessments, as well as street data, which involves listening to the stories of all those who are part of the system (Safir et al., 2021). This blends well with the accountability component of the coherence framework that defines accountability within the group itself and determines whether the change implemented is making an impact (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

A blend of the coherence framework and the mandala for systems change is the change model that fits best with the OIP, the organization, the problem of practice, and the chosen leadership approaches. Both frameworks acknowledge there is no one solution to a problem, and everyone brings something to the conversation about how to impact change. Together, the models fits well with sociocultural theory as it relies heavily on building community and collaborative practices to bring about change. Both models also focus on changing practices to help provide a more student-centered approach that focuses on deepening their learning to ensure they develop the competencies needed to be successful in this rapidly changing world (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). This can be done through culturally relevant pedagogy by emphasizing the importance of examining “our impact on student learning and well-being. To do this, we have to come to know our students” (MacKinnon, 2018, p. 19). This change model creates opportunities to explore these ideas as a collective. It acknowledges the organizational needs such as building trust, gathering feedback from all those involved, and working collaboratively to help the leaders improve their schools to ensure they are a place where all students can thrive (Cook et al., 2021; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Figure 2 illustrates a blended change framework integrating the coherence framework and the mandala for systems change.

Figure 2

Blended Change Framework: coherence framework and the mandala for systems change



Note. This is the blended change model which combines the elements of the coherence framework and the mandala for systems change (Centre for System's Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2015).

The circular nature of these models recognizes this problem is not something that can be fixed quickly but will involve several first, second, and third order changes (Burke, 2018). One first order change is to build relationships between the school leaders and myself. It will also involve demonstrating why there is a need to rethink how we are doing things in the school district. (Burke, 2018) The second order change will involve building capacity, collaboration,

and collective efficacy among school leaders with their focus being meeting the needs of students and building culturally responsive schools (Burke, 2018). The third order change would be school leaders then building a culture of collaboration in their own schools, which translates to students having a school experience that allows them to thrive and gives them the skills, knowledge, understanding, and competencies to thrive and transition successfully to secondary school and beyond (Burke, 2018).

The blending of the coherence framework and the mandala for systems change provides all the domains necessary to address the problem of practice, reflects the theory of sociocultural theory, allows for the deeper work required in culturally relevant pedagogy, and connects well to the leadership approaches utilized in this OIP (see Appendix A). The need to work collaboratively is essential to both frameworks as well as to compassionate system's leadership, authentic leadership, and transformative leadership. Compassionate system's leadership also utilizes the mandala for systems change as one of the tools in its approach (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.). Additionally, compassionate system's leadership acknowledges the need to build capacity with an open and empathetic approach, understanding that everyone brings their own thoughts, feelings, and beliefs to the work, and is embedded throughout both frameworks (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn 2016) The blended framework also connects well with authentic leadership as it requires a self-reflective leader who seeks out knowledge and understanding from others to help collaboratively impact change (Hannah et al., 2011; Duigan, 2014; Duigan 2020). Finally, the blended framework complements transformative leadership as the intent is to create a system that is equitable for all students especially those who have been historically marginalized, the foundation of culturally relevant pedagogy (Shields & Hesbol, 2020).

Organizational Change Readiness

Organizational change is a complex and challenging process. Many change initiatives are unsuccessful, often due to not taking the time to thoughtfully plan out the change process (Burke, 2018; Deszca et al., 2020; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Utilizing an organizational framework offers the opportunity to analyze all aspects of a system to determine effectiveness and to gauge change readiness (Burke, 2018). A variety of organizational frameworks were considered for analyzing the OVSD's readiness, including Nadler and Tushman's congruence model (1977) and Tichy's TPC framework (1983); however, the Burke-Litwin model (1992) was selected because it fit well with the complexity and structure of the organization (Burke, 2018). Although the Burke-Litwin model (1992) does not specifically address equity, inclusion, or social justice, the primary focus in this OIP, its flexibility allows those aspects to be considered within each of its components (Burke, 2018; Martins & Coetzee, 2009).

Burke-Litwin Model of Organizational Performance and Change

The OVSD is an open system, which means that it experiences both internal and external influences. For example, the BC Ministry of Education and Childcare, unions, families, and community are all external influences in the system even though they are not directly part of the school district. School systems are incredibly complex and must consider the influences of the Ministry of Education, school boards, district leaders, principals, teachers, other staff members, parents, students, and the community. This increases the complexity of their organizational problems as there are many internal and external influences that can significantly impact change. For example, the Ministry of Education and Childcare has significant impact on what occurs in districts throughout the province. An example of this would be the Framework for Enhanced Student Learning Report due to the Ministry of Education each year. Although it is important to

report how we are doing towards meeting Ministry initiatives, doing so takes time away from the other work of district leaders that may be more directly impacting change. The Burke-Litwin model of organizational performance and change (1992) recognizes the complexity of navigating external and internal systems and their impact on individual and organizational performance (Burke, 2018).

This model also separates the system into transactional and transformational change, acknowledging that both are necessary in a highly functioning organization (Burke, 2018). The transactional changes are connected to management responsibilities, whereas the leadership is tied to transformational change (Burke 2018). In this model, the different components of both transactional and transformational dimensions are interconnected with arrows crossing between them creating a feedback loop that links the external environment (inputs) with the individual and organizational performance (outputs) (Burke, 2018). Burke and Litwin (1992) suggest that the model is more like a hologram with circular arrows moving throughout the diagram of the system (Burke, 2018). See Appendix B for a diagram of the OVSD using the Burke-Litwin Model of Organizational Performance and Change (1992). The following sections discuss the sub-components of the model.

Individual and Organizational Performance

When considering the OVSD, the individual and organizational performance (outputs) in the system is complex. Many district and school leaders are working in increasingly complex environments and tend to focus on transactional rather than transformational changes due to the demands of their position (Pollack et al., 2014). They may be required to respond to student behavior issues or parent complaints that pulls their focus away from creating collaborative spaces for their school staffs to transform their school into spaces where everyone feels valued,

welcomed, and accepted, which would ultimately cause these behavior issues to decrease. There has been some impact in some of the schools, but it is an area that needs improvement. Although there is some frustration experienced by school leaders over the demands of student behaviors on their time, there is an understanding that practices need to shift and a willingness to explore ways of doing things differently.

External Environment

The OVSD's external environment (inputs) is considerable and has significant influence on what happens within the system. One of the most influential external components is the BC Ministry of Education and Childcare (Province of British Columbia, 2023e) which sets the goals for the school district. Those goals connect well with this problem of practice and indicate that the Ministry of Education and Childcare seeks a similar outcome as this OIP (Province of British Columbia, 2023e).

The local school board is an elected body tasked with carrying out the directives of the Ministry of Education and Childcare, but also answers to their local constituency (Campbell & Fullan, 2019). The board develops a Strategic Plan in consultation with students, parents, staff, and the community (Ocean View School District, 2019). Their current strategic plan aligns with this OIP so there is a readiness for change indicated in their school goals around improving student success.

In addition to the participants listed above, there are unions, the local Indigenous nation, parents, and community members to consider. These participants are incredibly important and will all need to be considered as school leaders work with their staffs.

Mission

The OVSD's mission is to ensure students become lifelong learners and global citizens. Although this mission does not specifically mention equity, the intent is to meet the needs of all students; however, referencing equity in the mission statement to emphasize its importance should be changed in the next strategic planning cycle. Given the ongoing conversations at the BC Ministry of Education and Childcare, the board, and the district level, there is a significant readiness to engage in transforming our schools into spaces that embrace culturally relevant pedagogy. The challenge that all district leaders seem to identify remains how to impact that significant change throughout the district.

Leadership

When analyzing leadership in the OVSD, the district leadership team is striving towards the mission and problem of practice, something that Burke (2018) identifies as essential in the change process. The OVSD has taken the critical steps of creating new district leadership positions, which have provided the opportunity to create a new collaborative team who are all working towards the same mission (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

Elementary school leaders have also indicated they want to improve the success for all their students; however, there is a lack of understanding of how this can be accomplished. There is an awareness that schools are not meeting the needs of all students, but there are currently only small shifts happening. This indicates there is significant readiness for positive change among both school and district leaders but there needs to be more support for school leaders to make those changes. This will be an important area to consider when planning solutions for this OIP.

Organizational Culture

The organizational culture of the OVSD is one of the components of the Burke-Litwin model (1992) that needs improving (Burke, 2018). As stated previously, many school leaders work in silos and do not look to collaborate with their colleagues to improve their practices (Fullan, 2006). School teams do not regularly meet to discuss which students are struggling and identify strategies for how to support them. Additionally, district leaders do not engage in regularly guided conversations with school leaders to determine what needs to be accomplished and what steps need to be taken in their approach. As indicated previously, although there is a readiness to embrace these changes, there is also an entrenched culture that lacks district leadership supporting principals that will be challenging to overcome.

Work Climate

When addressing the work climate component, there are complexities in the organization at both the district and school levels. Too much time is spent on solving immediate problems, leaving leaders minimal time to focus on how to impact systemic change (Novak & Woodlock, 2021). Additionally, there are not enough focused conversations around the students who are not currently experiencing success at school. Some school leaders are beginning to have these conversations, developing collaborative environments, and seeing positive changes while other schools have a culture of closed doors and, at times, animosity (Fullan, 2006; French et al., 2021). Creating the space for school leaders to collaborate and learn from each other is a critical driver that must be implemented before these positive changes for student success can occur (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). This must then be created in each individual school to continue the process. Many school leaders are not succeeding at generating significant change but recognize the need for it and seem to be ready to embrace this process.

Motivation

Motivation is another area in this organization that needs to be considered as many school leaders feel overwhelmed and find it challenging to engage in learning or collaboration (Hargreaves, 2021). Principals can find themselves overloaded as they deal with behavioral issues and challenges of individual students, leaving them less time to engage in collaborating with each other or working to transform their school environment (Hargreaves, 2021). Although there is readiness indicated by some school leaders, others seem more resistant to change and prefer to maintain the status quo.

Task Requirements and Individual Skills and Abilities

Task requirements and individual skills and abilities are other components that stood out in this process (Burke, 2018). Although school leaders are aware of the students who are not experiencing success, they do not know how to shift teaching practices in their school to be more culturally responsive. District staff must focus on building the collective capacity of school leaders to be able to work with their staffs to find ways to create the changes in pedagogy necessary to transform classrooms into equitable spaces, so important for all children to be able to thrive. This will be a priority within this OIP.

Individual Needs and Values

Individual needs and values are the final category analyzed within this organizational framework (Burke, 2018). To work through this problem of practice, school leaders need to feel supported and valued to be willing to take on these additional risks (Novack & Woodlock, 2021). Sociocultural theory recognizes that every leader brings their own skills, understandings, and beliefs in addition to there being a unique culture at each of the schools. The solution identified

needs to recognize that there is no one-size-fits all approach and acknowledge the strengths of each of these school leaders. The individual needs and values indicate a readiness for change.

Through this approach, it is hoped that school leaders will also take this collaborative approach when working with their school staffs to foster culturally relevant pedagogy. As with school leaders, each teacher brings strengths and ideas to their work and only when the work is done collaboratively, will the shift in practices begin to occur.

Organizational Findings

When analyzing the organization with the Burke-Litwin model of organizational performance and change (Burke, 2018), it becomes clear that before the OVSD can move to transformative change, there needs to be some consideration of the transactional areas within the organization (Burke, 2018). By building a culture of collaboration, collective efficacy, and trust among school leaders, there will be an increased shared understanding of how to construct a similar culture within their schools. This multi-tiered approach will slowly build the collective efficacy of school leaders and allow the transformative work to occur (Burke, 2018; Duignan, 2014; Senge et al., 2019b; Shields, 2010). Although there are many challenges within the OVSD, elementary school leaders are open to learning and committed to working collaboratively to improve their schools to ensure all students can succeed. Unfortunately, it will take some time to shift the cultures within all the elementary schools that truly transforms the system to embrace a culturally relevant pedagogy that allows all students to thrive, but focusing on the school leaders is an important place to begin (Burke, 2018).

Strategies/Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

Reflecting on the problem of practice of how to support school leaders to work towards improving their schools to become more culturally responsive and meet the needs of all students, there are three possible solutions that will be considered. These include, (a) building the collective efficacy of principals to be able to transform their schools into spaces that foster a sense of efficacy, mastery, belonging, and identity for students and staff; (b) provide district-wide intensive professional learning for school leaders and teachers that focuses on anti-racism and how to be culturally responsive; and (c) facilitate collaborative groups for all elementary teachers and school leaders to meet and collectively discuss how to create a classroom environment that supports all students in a culturally responsive way, particularly those who have been traditionally underserved. These potential solutions are all being considered with the acknowledgement that everyone is working to the best of their ability. It is critical that any solution will involve a supportive approach to help principals and teachers to collaboratively build capacity from a compassionate leadership lens (Azorin & Fullan, 2022; Banwo et al., 2022; Hattie & Smith, 2021; Senge et al., 2019b). Any solution will also require self-reflection so that leaders can understand their own biases and practices, an important component of authentic leadership. In addition, without authenticity and relational transparency, the solution will be unlikely to impact change (Hannah et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Transformative leadership will be a large component of any solution recognizing there is an urgency to provide a more equitable education system, benefiting all students (Banwo et al., 2021; Shields, 2011; Shields & Hesbol, 2020).

Possible Solution 1: Building the Collective Efficacy of Elementary School Principals

Visible Learning research indicates that other than that of teachers, the greatest impact on student achievement comes from school leaders (Hattie & Smith, 2021). Yet school principals operate within incredibly complex work environments that can interfere with the important tasks of instructional school leadership (Pollack et al., 2014). Even if they were taught extensive leadership skills in their educational programs, they were likely taught from a western philosophy of education, which centers around student achievement, accountability, and operates from a deficit-based model (Lopez, 2021). Additionally, many of the skills required to provide instructional school leadership in a culturally responsive way have not been learned in leadership preparation programs (Khalifa, 2018). By focusing on building each principal's collective leadership capacity, they will be better able to influence the change necessary within their schools (Honig & Rainey, 2018). This approach would also involve providing professional learning to principals about compassionate system's leadership and the many tools that can assist with applying this leadership approach in their schools (Senge et al., 2019b).

This solution would involve working with the team of elementary administrators in a supportive and collaborative way, to facilitate conversations between school leaders in the same way that principals could provide similar supports to their staffs (Honig & Rainey, 2018). This approach would involve three different components: building capacity of school leaders, building collective efficacy of school leaders, and a continuous learning plan for each individual school leader. Some of the professional learning sessions that would be organized might focus around creating collaborative environments, data-informed decision making, and examining current practices to ensure all students are successful. Building the collective efficacy of school leaders would involve creating learning teams with members from each school to share ideas, celebrate

successes, and plan for areas of concern. Finally, a continuous learning plan would be created by the school leader who would meet regularly with the director of instruction so that they could be supported, encouraged, and gently pushed. The idea would be that as they build their instructional leadership practices, they would restore capacity within themselves, recognizing and honoring that they have obtained the knowledge to impact change (Honig & Rainey, 2020; Lopez, 2021).

Benefits and Drawbacks

The benefits of this approach are significant as it would involve building upon the strengths of school principals while taking a coaching approach to support them (Honig & Rainey, 2020; Katz et al., 2018b). Additionally, it would create a learning community among the group of principals and vice principals that allows them to collaborate and build on each other's strengths (Honig & Rainey, 2020; Katz et al., 2018b; Lopez, 2021). They could then take what they learned and apply it to their own schools.

The most significant drawback of this process is it will take time. The process involves building trust, and slowly building the capacity and collective efficacy of school leaders (Hattie & Smith, 2021; Honig & Rainey, 2020). Eventually, this process must be integrated into the classrooms and the practice of classroom teachers where it will be most impactful and effective in making a difference for student success. Additionally, there will be a significant investment of time needed by district staff and school leaders to engage in regular meetings as collaborative teams.

Possible Solution 2: Professional Learning for all School District Staff

The second possible solution is to provide training and professional learning on culturally relevant pedagogy for all school leaders and their staffs (Queen's University, 2017). Although it is important that individual teachers and principals engage in their own learning around anti-racism, it is also pivotal that there is systemic engagement (Welton et al., 2018). Providing mandatory training to the entire school district staff could help bring into focus the importance of awareness of equity, decolonization, and anti-racism, which is necessary to create culturally responsive classrooms and schools (Dei, 2014; Valliantos, 2018; Will, 2020). These are all ongoing topics at the district level and the OVSD will likely include specific wording addressing equity, decolonization, and anti-racism in the next strategic plan. There have been several experts brought into the district in the past few years specifically addressing decolonization and residential schools, which has increased the awareness of many staff members of the ongoing and multi-generational effects of colonization on Canada's Indigenous people. Bringing in professional learning to specifically address anti-racism and microaggressions would be a logical next step in moving the district forward (Valliantos, 2018). Organizing breakout groups following the learning session to begin deeper exploration of some of the topics in a smaller setting would be beneficial and provide the opportunity to discuss further while engaging in self-reflection. Following the training, creating a mandatory module that all new hires need to complete would ensure that everyone in the district has participated in the same learning (Anti-Racism Working Group, 2020).

Benefits and Drawbacks

This approach fits well with the priority of building a school district with a shared knowledge and understanding and can become warm demanders of one another (Safir et al.,

2021). This solution has the benefit of reaching a large number of people at once and providing a shared understanding throughout the district (Valliantos, 2018). To create culturally responsive spaces, so all children feel a true sense of belonging regardless of their identity, involves the work of all staff, including office managers, bus drivers, educational assistants, in addition to teachers and school leaders (Rowe & Stewart, 2009). All staff need to be aware of the impacts of colonization and systemic racism and without tough conversations there is a risk some may remain ignorant of how these conditions can negatively impact students as well as staff.

One of the drawbacks of this solution would be that without ongoing and structured follow up, the impact may not extend beyond the session; understanding the theory does not necessarily translate into practice (Aguilar & Cohen, 2022; Leonard & Woodland, 2022; Welton, et al., 2018). The work on decolonization and anti-racism is complex and needs to be ongoing and involve trust, deep reflection, and understanding (Sergiovanni, 2005; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017). Although this addresses the OIP's priority for building a collective understanding, this solution will be unlikely to contribute to a collaborative culture among school leaders or their staffs and likely would not significantly or directly impact students (Aguilar & Cohen, 2022).

Possible Solution 3: Collaborative Group Opportunity for all Elementary Teachers and School Leaders

The third possible solution would be to organize a series of collaborative sessions for all groups of elementary school leaders and teachers throughout the school year. Creating time during the school day for elementary school leaders and teachers to meet and have a facilitated conversations around how to create learning environments that help all students thrive would have an impact on learning and creating culturally responsive classrooms (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Leonard & Woodland, 2022; Hattie & Smith, 2021). This would be organized within all

elementary grade levels and would follow a similar framework in terms of thinking about the needs of the children in their schools. The approach would be in the form of an inquiry and focused on creating spaces that were culturally responsive and embracing of students' strengths (Halbert & Kaiser, 2022). This would help build the collective capacity of school leaders and teachers by acknowledging their strengths and understandings, supporting their agency and voice, as well learning at the same time as teams to develop a shared knowledge (Hattie & Smith, 2021; Katz et al., 2018a; Lopez, 2021)

Benefits and Drawbacks

One of the benefits of this proposed solution would be to work directly with teachers as well as school leaders who together have the most direct impact on students (Hattie & Smith, 2021). It also acknowledges the benefit of collaborative groups in building collective efficacy (Leonard & Woodland, 2022; Hattie & Smith, 2021). Building collective efficacy through collaboration creates a collective sense of responsibility as well as accomplishment when seeing the benefit in classrooms (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). By facilitating this work, it could build on school leaders' and teachers' collective strengths and has the potential of transformative learning (Aguilar & Cohen, 2022; Katz et al., 2018a; Lopez 2021). Another benefit would be the impact on school leaders' and teachers' well-being by participating in meaningful collaboration and building their collective efficacy (Katz et al., 2018a). All these benefits are priorities in this OIP and would specifically address the problem of practice to ensure that students are able to thrive and transition successfully to secondary school.

However, there are several drawbacks, one of which is finding the time for school leaders and teachers to participate and organize. This would involve a great deal of planning and organizing to create the space for this collaborative process and likely require several sessions.

This raises an additional drawback related to the cost involved. Within the context of the OVSD, to get significant participation, the district would either need to provide release time or lieu time as a motivation to attend, an area that was identified as a need from the organizational analysis (Burke, 2018). It would need to be voluntary and engage the early adopters, which would likely mean the educators who do not rush to engage in new opportunities would likely not attend (Katz et al., 2018a). Finally, this collective efficacy would be built around particular groups of school leaders and teachers but not necessarily connect back to the school itself if not everyone participates. This might undermine the priority of building a collaborative culture at the school level.

Proposed Solution

Although the proposed solution of district-wide professional learning in anti-racism for all school leaders and staff would likely be beneficial, the impact would be unlikely to create a more collaborative school and district culture or to ensure students thrive and gain the skills and knowledge to successfully transition to secondary school. The audience receiving the training would be much larger than the audience that would be impacted by the other solutions; however, one-time professional learning does not usually translate to transformative change (Aguilar & Cohen, 2022; Katz et al., 2018b). The approach is too simplistic to provide systemic transformative change. Likely the district should consider some form of this training over time to create some shared understandings; however, it will not be the solution selected for this problem of practice.

The proposed solution of facilitating collaborative groups among elementary school leaders and teachers is something that can impact change directly into classrooms especially since “if teacher practice doesn’t change in classrooms where students are struggling to achieve,

it's unlikely student learning will improve" (Katz et al., 2018b, p. 3). However, supportive school leaders can have a tremendous impact on changing teacher practice that is sustained over time (Katz et al., 2018b; Khalifa, 2018). The ongoing work of school leaders to build their own school team and focus on their individual school's needs would be more significant. Changing practice requires a shift in mental models, something that requires time and patience to effect (Perrenoud, 2020). It is for these reasons that this solution will not be selected at this time.

The best solution for this OIP is to build the capacity and collective efficacy of the principals. Although teachers have the most impact on student learning, principals are a close second and set the tone in the school (Hattie & Smith, 2021). School leaders are paramount in building school culture and a learning environment that promotes continuous improvement (Hattie & Smith, 2021). School principals are expected to be instructional leaders but have minimal training in areas such as impacting change and creating a continuous learning culture, particularly when it focuses on culturally responsive school leadership (Honig & Rainey, 2020). Building a community of learners among principals to help support each other and build their capacities and collective efficacy to support their schools is essential (Honig & Rainey, 2020). Collective efficacy is most often used when discussing teachers and signifies the shared belief that teachers have the most significant impact on student success (Hattie & Smith, 2021). When speaking of collective efficacy in relation to leadership, Donahoo (2021) "refers to principals' shared beliefs about their collective capability to improve student outcomes within and across schools in a district" (Hattie & Smith, 2021). There is clear research that indicates when the belief is shared among principals, the impact can be significant (Hattie & Smith, 2021). Within each of the OVSD's elementary schools there are currently small pockets of teachers who are successfully cultivating culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms and can navigate the

goals set out by OVSD and BC's Ministry of Education and Childcare; however, without the cohesive and strong leadership of school principals, it will likely never become embedded throughout the schools and district (Gill, 2019). As a director of instruction, it is imperative that I foster an environment that inspires principals to build their collective efficacy as well as support, encourage, and guide them in building schools that foster inclusive learning environments while promoting continuous improvement (Honig & Rainey, 2020).

This solution will involve developing learning sessions, creating a team with all of the elementary principals and vice principals, and providing one-on-one support to provide opportunities to grow and learn together (Honig & Rainey, 2020; Katz et al., 2018b). Additionally, as a director of instruction, I will meet regularly, one-on-one, with each leader to support their own learning and ability to achieve goals for themselves and their schools (Honig et al., 2021; Katz et al., 2018b).

This solution fits within the lens of sociocultural theory and culturally relevant pedagogy. Sociocultural theory recognizes people learn best together, which is what building the collaborative efficacy of the principals accomplishes (Eun, 2021; Honig, 2012; Nasir & Hand, 2006). This shared process will be guided with culturally relevant pedagogy's overarching goal of ensuring all students have equitable opportunities to thrive and gain the skills and understandings necessary (Ladson-Billings, 2021). To do this work, schools must closely examine their current practices, look at individual students, and create change that "close gaps and ensure that all students are successful" (MacKinnon, 2018, p. 18).

Embodying authentic leadership will be necessary in this process, so trust is built between myself and all school leaders (Atwijuka & Caldwell, 2017; Begley, 2006; Duigan, 2014; Srivastaa & Shree, 2019). I will continue to strive to improve my self-awareness, relational

transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing, which will all contribute towards making this solution an effective one (Hannah et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Transformative leadership continues to be important as this process will lead to transformation in schools and classrooms (Grain, 2022; Shields, 2011; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Finally, compassionate system's leadership will be at the center of all this work. Leading from compassion and encouraging everyone to come to the table with open minds and hearts will create the environment to allow for genuine collaboration and systemic change (Chrona, 2022; Senge et al., 2019b).

Finally, this solution will be approached from an ethic of care (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). School leaders are predominantly concerned with the well-being of their students and staff (Ehrich et al., 2015). Leading with the heart and mind requires ensuring the well-being of school leaders must also be considered (Katz et al., 2018a). It is essential to acknowledge adult learners can find changing their leadership practices incredibly challenging and they will need to be treated with the same care that is provided to students (Katz et al., 2018a). However, it is also important to acknowledge that change must occur to allow for equity for all students to be able to thrive (Ehrich et al., 2015). "Educational leaders must ensure that the structures and procedures that support and channel the learning process reflect a concern for justice and fairness for all students, while providing room for creativity and imagination" (Starratt, 2005, p. 127). This solution provides the opportunity for school leaders to create a space where all students can thrive while recognizing it might not look the same in each school.

This solution has the right drivers to impact a significant change for students across the OVSD. Creating spaces of collaborative professionalism will impact the culture of classrooms, schools, and the entire elementary school community (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). Fullan

identifies four new drivers to impact change: well-being and learning, social intelligence, equality investments, and “systemness” (Fullan, 2021). The proposed solution of building school leader’s collective efficacy addresses each of these change drivers. The focus on well-being and learning rather than a sole focus on academics is the idea that spaces need to be created for all students to learn and thrive, something the collaborative work with principals will specifically focus on (Fullan, 2021). The focus on compassionate system’s leadership and frequent, specific collaboration will help develop the ability to work together towards a common goal (Fullan, 2021). The entire problem of practice is focused on equity in terms of ensuring that all students can thrive, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic factors, or any other historically underserved identity (Fullan, 2021). Finally, by working with all school leaders at the elementary level, it has the potential to shift schools as a whole rather than just small pockets of culturally responsive teaching spread throughout the district (Fullan, 2021). By building the collective capacity and tools of school leaders, and providing them with support to do this work, they can begin to bring about change in their own schools. Although this solution will take time, it creates the possibility for a widespread, cohesive change that acknowledges and embraces the collective knowledge of elementary school leaders while urging them to learn and grow and improve the OVSD system together.

Conclusion

Chapter two began by further exploring the leadership approach to change which included a blend of authentic, transformative, and compassionate system’s leadership. A merger of the mandala for system’s change model with the coherence framework was identified as the framework for leading the change process with an emphasis on the need for all of the components to be addressed simultaneously. The OVSD was analyzed in its readiness for change

with the Burke-Litwin model of organizational performance and change and was determined to be ready for implementing changes. Finally, three possible strategies were considered for the problem of practice: building the collective efficacy of elementary school principals, professional development for all school district staff, and a collaborative group opportunity for all elementary teachers and school leaders. The chapter concluded by identifying the proposed solution selected as building the collective efficacy of school principals. Chapter three will outline the implementation, communication, and evaluation of the organizational improvement plan.

Chapter 3: Implementation, Communication & Evaluation

After thoroughly analyzing the problem of practice, the organization, the leadership approach, change model, and possible solutions, this chapter will explore the specifics of the selected solution creating a change implementation plan. This plan will focus on how to implement the collaborative systems and supports principals need to ensure their schools are places in which all students can flourish. Each step of the implementation plan will show its connection to the leadership approach as well as the change model. Upon completion of the implementation plan, the determination of how the change will be communicated to the stakeholders involved will be explored. Finally, the critical process of reviewing, monitoring, and evaluating the changes to measure their successes or identify any potential challenges, which may indicate that the plan needs to be modified.

Change Implementation Plan

There are many considerations when implementing a solution to this problem of practice that build collaborative cultures to support elementary principals aimed at ensuring all their students can thrive. The tenets of sociocultural theory are woven throughout the plan with all the steps being collaborative in nature. Additionally, the focus will be on underserved students who have not typically experienced success and how they can be supported differently at each school by considering culturally relevant pedagogy. One of the first considerations towards improving the collective efficacy of school leaders is determining how doing so connects with the OVSD's overall strategy. The OVSD's strategic plan incorporates several high-level goals, including improving student literacy, numeracy, engagement, mental health literacy, and tolerance and respect (OVSD, 2019). There is also a specific and significant focus on improving the success of Indigenous students as well as other students who have been historically underserved. The BC

Ministry of Education and Childcare has similar goals when framing overall student success (Province of British Columbia, 2023a). The support and skills of each school principal are key to what is needed to achieve the goals of the OVSD and Ministry of Education and Childcare (OVSD, 2019; Province of British Columbia, 2023a; Hattie & Smith, 2021).

The following change implementation plan is multi-tiered and will involve implementing all the elements simultaneously. Although the plan is being laid out in a linear fashion, the reality is that the process will be fluid, not a step-by-step approach, and includes several participants who will bring their own ideas about how best to implement the plan. The chart below provides a snapshot of the plan along with the specifics of each element. Following this brief outline, each element will be considered in light of the blended change model, the epistemological framework, and the leadership approaches. Due to the character of continuous circular change as well as the implementation plan being ongoing rather than step by step, this seems the best approach to presenting this information. Table 1 outlines the elements of the change implementation plan.

Table 1*Elements of the Change Implementation Plan*

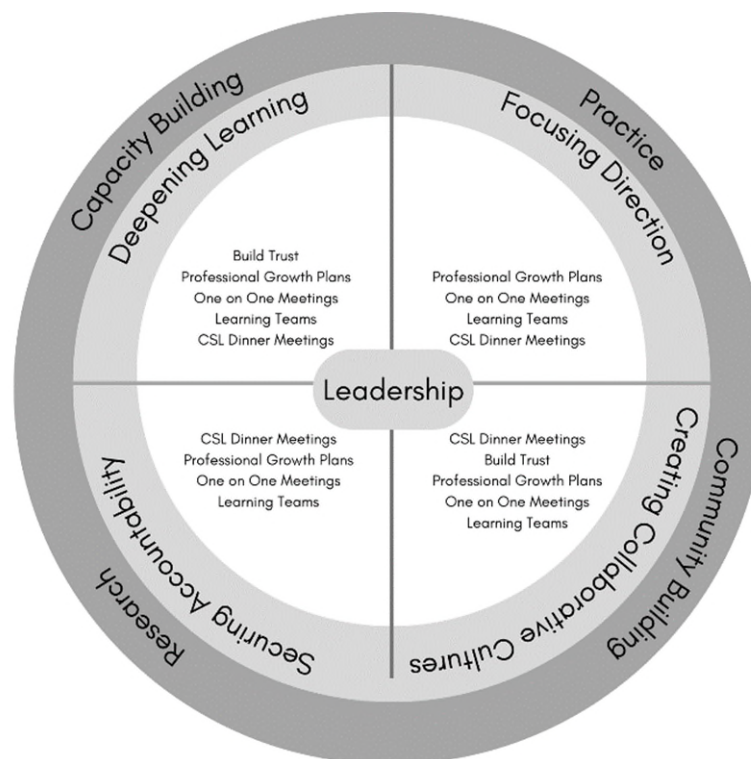
Steps involved	Goals	Stakeholders Involved	Resources	Timing
Building trust	Build Trust	Elementary principals and vice principals Director of instruction	Time	Ongoing
Professional Growth Plans	Build self-efficacy and capacity of school leaders in instructional leadership	Elementary principals and vice principals Director of instruction	Time Books Professional Development Sessions	August and ongoing
One-on-one meetings with elementary principals	Build trust Coach principals and vice principals towards building instructional leadership	Elementary principals and vice principals Director of instruction	Time	August and ongoing
Create learning teams with elementary principals/vice principals for monthly learning sessions	Build capacity and collective efficacy of the school teams	Principals and vice principals Directors of instruction District leadership team	Snacks Time	August and ongoing
Compassionate system's leadership dinner sessions	Build the collective capacity of school and district leaders Build trust Create shared understandings	Principals and vice principals Directors of instruction District leadership team	Facilitator Dinner for the team Time	August-July for one year, potentially two

Note. This table lays out the elements of this implementation plan. The steps in this plan *are not* to be considered linear and sequential.

Building Trust

The first element of this plan is for the director of instruction to build trust with and between each of the individual principals (Honig & Rainey, 2020; Safir, 2017). It imperative to

form relationships before trying to build a collaborative environment, because without trust there will be no collaboration (Hattie & Smith, 2021; Safir, 2017). This process will be ongoing throughout the implementation plan as trust continues to grow. Through relationships and trust, principals and vice principals will strengthen their shared belief that each of them can make a significant impact in their schools and collectively throughout the school district (Hattie & Smith, 2021). As a district leader, sharing my own learning and providing ongoing support with problems school leaders identify can be initial steps for building trust (Honig & Rainey, 2020). These relationships must always be treated with care. Once trust has been broken, it can take a significant amount of time and effort to repair, which can shift the focus away from the important work that needs to be accomplished (Safir, 2017). Building trust will also be deeply embedded in the other elements of this plan. Figure 3 outlines the change implementation plan within the blended change model.

Figure 3*Change Implementation Plan within the Blended Change Model*

Note. This blended change model was adapted from the coherence model (Fullan & Quinn, 2016) and the mandala for systems change (Center for System's Awareness, n.d.)

This implementation plan is best viewed through the lens of the change model utilized in this OIP as depicted in Figure 2. The blend of the mandala for system's change and coherence frameworks, which are both circular models that identify the ongoing nature of continuous improvement, connects well with the plan (see Appendix A) (Centre for System's Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). In the blended change model, community building and creating collaborative cultures centers establishing trust in the process and relies on positive relationships to create true systemic change throughout this change process (Centre for System's Awareness,

n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Without this important step, principals may not feel safe to connect with the director of instruction or to work collaboratively with each other (Safir, 2017). The elements of authentic leadership—self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing—are all necessary in this plan, particularly when considering the essential requirement of building trust among the principals and vice principals (Hannah et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Compassionate system’s leadership also aligns with authentic leadership and understands that people’s thoughts, feelings, and actions can impact how they interact within the system (Senge et al., 2019a). All these points confirm that without trust, the collaboration necessary to impact change is highly unlikely to be achieved.

Professional Growth Plans and One on One Meetings

The next element to be considered is the use of professional growth plans rather than an evaluative process for principals. In this plan, principals in the OVSD will complete professional growth plans annually and meet regularly with their director of instruction, allowing the director to use each principal’s own growth plan for professional improvement to support and guide them (Honig & Rainey, 2020). This also acknowledges that each principal has unique strengths and they themselves are the best people to determine what they need for ongoing improvement. This concept honors the idea that every school is different with its own culture and identity, and that each principal would have the most comprehensive understanding of that culture (Harris & Jones, 2010).

The professional growth plan focuses on the need for continuous improvement and growth to create spaces for all students to be able to meet their true potential and experience success (Harris & Jones, 2010). At each review meeting, the director and school leader will review the goals and progress to assess and possibly adjust the plan. Emphasis on identifying

indicators of success, potential barriers they have faced, and next steps will be documented at each meeting (Honig & Rainey, 2020). The focus will be on improving student success with a close look at data in its many forms to determine if improvements have been achieved. The final meeting of the school year will culminate with the principal providing a reflective document that describes their growth throughout the previous year, which will be shared with the superintendent.

In addition to the professional growth plan meetings, the director of instruction will hold one-on-one meetings at least monthly throughout the year. These meetings are to help principals and vice principals to continue to reflect on their progress as school leaders and to analyze their next steps (Honig & Rainey, 2020). These one-on-one meetings will provide opportunities to listen and ask key questions to help guide their development as instructional leaders (Gill, 2019; Honig & Rainey, 2020).

Initially, the meetings will likely deal with general teaching and learning issues. However, as the meetings continue, there will be a focus on looking deeper at equity and ways to ensure the teaching and learning in classrooms in each of the schools meet the needs of all students in a culturally responsive way (Honig & Rainey, 2020). School leaders will be asked to be reflective in these meetings and consider how their schools and classrooms may be limiting the success of some students and how to start to shift those practices. These meetings will help identify specific areas of concern or need for growth within their school community as well as assisting with determining next steps, planning staff meetings or staff learning sessions, providing resources, and modelling leadership approaches to navigating difficult conversations (Honig & Rainey, 2020).

At the beginning of each meeting, the director will review notes taken at prior meetings and reflect with the school leader. Through these meetings and the director's support, the principals can plan their next steps as instructional leaders (Honig & Rainey, 2020). The approach used in these meetings will be the framing, questioning, and listening process for transformative change (Adams et al., 2022). The process will start by establishing expectations as the director and principal work collaboratively to define the subject and direction of the conversation (Adams et al., 2022). Questions will be asked throughout these meetings to help shift the power dynamic and invite critical thinking (Adams et al., 2022). This provides an opportunity for each of these conversations with school leaders to be individualized and focused on the conditions and requirements of their unique school. Finally, deep listening will be a necessary component of any conversation as it fosters building relationships based on trust (Adams et al., 2022; Safir, 2015): "Deep listening and questioning are inextricable and together keep sensemaking and learning dialogue flowing" (Adams et al., 2022, p. 12).

These steps of the change model connect well with community building and cultivating a collaborative cultures domain plan in the blended change model (Centre for System's Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). This domain involves working on shared goals that are determined collaboratively between the director of instruction and the school leader (Centre for System's Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). These shared goals will need to align with those of the OVSD and Ministry of Education and Childcare; however, it acknowledges that each school and leader is different, and goals could vary from leader to leader and school to school. This step also connects well with focusing the direction and building capacity in the change model (Centre for System's Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

As the relationship and trust builds through these conversations, I can be more of a “warm demander” and focus the direction towards building culturally responsive leadership (Safir, 2019). As the meetings develop consistency, the authenticity of my leadership will be reflected as my focus remains true to what I believe. This step will require me, as the director, to practice the self-reflection of an authentic leader but will also require a balanced process that acknowledges I do not hold all the answers and I need to respect the knowledge and ideas of each school leader (Hannah et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008). The lens of compassionate system’s leadership will be required to ensure everyone feels able to bring their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs to each conversation and that awareness will be crucial in navigating the process of creating a system that strives to continuously improve to benefit everyone within that system (Friedlander, 2019; Senge et al., 2019a).

Finally, with the lens of transformative leadership, the equity, diversity, and inclusion needs of each school are identified and addressed (Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Some of the tenets of transformative leadership that may be considered could involve moving away from schools of compliance towards a place where everyone is encouraged to speak up (Safir et al., 2021). Steps can include smiling more often, using feedback over grades, using circles for learning rather than rows, teaching students’ reflection, encouraging questions over answers (Safir et al., 2021). “Equity work is first and foremost pedagogical,” which requires classrooms and schools to change their practices, something that will need the support of school leaders (Safir et al., 2021, p. 97). Providing school leaders with support to do this important equity work is essential.

Learning Teams in Monthly Meetings

Creating a structure for school leaders to work collaboratively will be another important element in this process. Learning sessions will be embedded in monthly administrator’s meetings

that can provide specific training around topics identified collaboratively with the principal and vice principal group, as well as through topics identified in one-on-one meetings. These sessions will also provide opportunities for principals to discuss topics related to their professional growth plans, their school growth plans, and equity and diversity with their learning teams. These small teams will be built into a professional learning team that regularly discusses issues around teaching and learning within their school (Hattie & Smith, 2021; Honig & Rainey, 2020). There will also be learning sessions discussing how to use data in its many forms to determine what actions need to be taken and whether actions already taken have been successful (Park, 2018). By providing the opportunity to meet in teams, school leaders can brainstorm ideas, encourage each other, and create consistency across the district while still maintaining each school's individual culture and identity (Honig & Rainey, 2020).

When viewed through the lens of the blended change model shown in Figure 1, each of these meetings will reflect the model by working through each of its components. As both the mandala for systems change and the coherence framework clearly conveyed, all the components must be worked on at the same time. These learning meetings will allow different teams to focus their direction, practice next steps collaboratively, and provide a forum for capacity building and deeper learning as they engage with each other. With their focus on determining whether the group is impacting change, the meetings can be guided to address ongoing research into how to improve. Each meeting will also help develop community building and create collaborative cultures as the leaders learn to work together. It will be imperative to keep the change model at the forefront when planning these meetings to ensure each of the quadrants can be explored.

The elements of authentic leadership, self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing, are all crucial when considering how to build these

learning sessions with the principals and vice principals as they will be used to continue to strengthen trust and maintain the focus on equity for all students at the center of its purpose (Hannah et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Using this approach with school leaders reflects compassionate system's leadership by acknowledging everyone's individuality, with everyone bringing their own thoughts, feelings, and actions to the table as well as modelling how this approach can work within their own staffs (Friedlander, 2019). By utilizing transformative leadership with principals and vice principals, their practices should begin to shift in how they engage with their own staff and students (Shields, 2010; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Creating a culture of high expectations for students among principals can also help them shift their staff's beliefs and keep the focus on creating spaces where all children can thrive and are held to a higher standard of learning (Khalifa, 2018). The blending of these three leadership approaches will help shift school leaders' mental models, allowing them to transform their individual school staffs in a similar manner (Senge et al., 2019).

Compassionate System's Leadership Dinner Meetings

In addition to the monthly learning sessions, there will be several dinner sessions throughout the year with a facilitator in compassionate system's leadership (CSL). As previously discussed, school leaders want to improve their school spaces but often do not have the tools and skills needed to make those changes. These learning sessions will help provide principals with specific tools to help them with challenging situations, learn to lead from their heart, and demonstrate how they can facilitate and coach their staff to build a community that focuses on teaching, learning, and being culturally responsive (Friedlaender, 2019; Senge et al., 2019). Additionally, the principals will be provided with tools to have similar learning conversations within their school teams that analyze their existing classroom practices and begin to identify

culturally responsive practices that will provide the best opportunities for all their students, particularly those who have been historically underserved (Harris & Jones, 2010). Finally, utilizing and modelling these tools in these dinner sessions will help build a stronger community of principals and district leaders creating a more collaborative team (Hattie & Smith, 2021). As with the monthly meetings, this approach also utilizes all the change model components and leadership approaches as the process followed is similar.

Potential Issues

The stakeholders who are most directly impacted by this plan are the principals. Each principal is unique so there will likely be some who resist the increased involvement of the director of instruction, or it may take longer to develop a trusting relationship. To facilitate this process, these meetings must begin with the acknowledgment that this is a shared process and not a meeting held with older, preconceived ideas of how things must be done (Honig & Rainey, 2020). Although it is important to ask questions that may challenge ideas, the approach will embrace the principles of an approach that Safir described as a “warm demander” (2019). She defines warm demanders as instructional leaders “who expect a great deal of their colleagues, convince them of their own capacity to improve, and support them with a range of resources and coaching moves” (Safir, 2019, p. 65). These ongoing meetings, both one on one and as a group, will continue to build each stakeholder’s collective efficacy, which may help encourage the participation of some individuals who are more hesitant to change (Katz et al., 2018).

Other stakeholders who may negatively affect the implementation are the superintendent, the other director of instruction, and district leadership team, although in the case of OVSD, I do not anticipate this being the case. Ultimately, the directors of instruction report to the superintendent, so if their vision is not the same, it could hinder the implementation of the plan.

In the case of the OVSD's current superintendent, the direction provided for the directors of instruction has been to ensure consistent focus on ensuring student success. The second director of instruction is aligned with this plan and already works with principals in the same manner as this plan's vision, which has created a united front and ability to collaborate to successfully implement this plan. It will be critical to have ongoing communication with other district leaders to ensure the entire team is working towards the same goals (Honig & Rainey, 2015; Honig & Rainey, 2020). Weekly meetings with the district leadership team will help keep the focus on student learning as well as provide opportunities to continue to work together (Al-Rhawi, 2008; Honig & Rainey, 2015). Additionally, district leadership will be participating in the monthly administrator's meeting as well as the CSL training sessions to provide additional cohesiveness and shared understandings (Honig & Rainey, 2015).

When considering these potential challenges, staying true to my leadership approach will be crucial. Self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing are all integral components of authentic leadership and will be revisited frequently to ensure the conversations and learning sessions continue to match with the values of the school district and its focus on equity, diversity, and anti-racism (Hannah et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008). CSL will be at the center of all this work, including in the dinner meetings with principals. This will provide the opportunity for leading with hearts as well as minds, which is essential in creating spaces that are culturally relevant for all students and staff (Chrona, 2022; Senge et al., 2019). These processes will lead to transformative change in schools and classrooms, which is the purpose of this entire OIP (Grain, 2022; Shields, 2011; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). The blend of these approaches will help me demonstrate to the principals that I

value them as individuals and leaders and will strive to work collaboratively to ensure our school district is a place where all students are welcome and able to experience success.

Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and the Change Process

Communication of the plan will involve dissemination of information formally and informally, soliciting input by involving school leaders in the process, and working collaboratively to help them understand their shifting roles (Lewis, 2019). Building awareness of the need for change in the OVSD will be crucial in the plan to communicate this OIP, involving engagement with multiple key stakeholders. Some of the current research and understandings being utilized in this OIP are already being shared through other channels such as the BC Ministry of Education and Childcare, whose focus has been on student success for many years. Many of the Ministry of Education and Childcare's underlying initiatives support creating culturally responsive schools that meet the needs of all students. When working with school principals it will be critical to ensure they understand the importance of meeting the needs of all students while maintaining a cohesive, collaborative message throughout their schools, which is one of the biggest components of the implementation plan.

The most critical participants required to implement this communication plan are the school leaders, as they have the greatest impact on student learning besides individual classroom teachers (Hattie & Smith, 2021). Creating the understanding of why some practices need to be changed will be a critical first step that will be accomplished through monthly meetings and regular one-on-one discussions with the director of instruction as identified in the implementation plan (Hattie & Smith, 2021; Honig & Rainey, 2020). These meetings will help create a learning plan for each school leader that provides them direction for working with their

individual schools. This allows two-way communication and support between district and school leadership, which helps ensure we are doing our jobs effectively (Honig & Rainey, 2020).

Data in its many forms will be shared regularly in one-on-one meetings to determine if the plans they put into place are making an impact (Honig & Rainey, 2020; Stoll & Temperley, 2009). Simultaneously, the dinner meetings that include CSL training as well as the learning sessions identified in the implementation plan will build each school leader's capacity and provide them with the knowledge they need to bring about change.

Finally, the learning teams will develop the collective efficacy of each team by learning with and from each other. Throughout this process, I will be working to build trust with school leaders so that they in turn see the need to develop trust with their school staffs. Additionally, I will strive to be a warm demander of each of them, modelling how such an approach could also work with their own staff (Safir, 2015). Collectively these sessions discussed in the implementation plan will provide them with the tools necessary to support a similar process within their own schools (Friedlaender, 2019).

To facilitate knowledge mobilization, school leaders need to extend and continue to build on this knowledge and shared understandings into their schools (see Appendix C) (Malik, 2020). Knowledge mobilization is the “process of connecting research to policy and practice” to continue to improve outcomes for students (Malik, 2020, p 2). This is why it is essential to work with principals to build their own knowledge and communication capacities to ensure that the message is consistent, and that each school is working on ways to support teachers to better meet the needs of all students, particularly those who have been historically underserved (Honig & Rainey, 2020). Some key questions to consider in communicating for knowledge mobilization are who can act on the knowledge and who will be responsible for transferring the knowledge

(Lavis et al., 2003)? Within this problem of practice, there will need to be a flexible approach to knowledge mobilization as much of this plan will be co-created between the director of instruction and the principals and as the plan evolves it may need to shift to allow for other stakeholder inputs (Campbell et al., 2017; Powell et al., 2017).

Potential Questions

Principals and vice principals will likely have many questions. Their primary concern will most likely have to do with finding the time to be instructional leaders in their schools (Honig & Rainey, 2020). The work of the school leaders has become increasingly demanding so, as a director of instruction, I must be aware of the number of requests I make to them, ensuring they have the time to make these important changes (Pollock et al., 2014). To be seen as authentic, I will need to always be consistent in my messaging (Hannah et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008). I will also need to ensure I am an active listener to hear all questions and concerns, then work collaboratively to help come up with solutions (Honig & Rainey, 2020). Finally, it will be critical to regularly maintain connections with the principals to keep this focus at the center of their attention (Honig & Rainey, 2020).

Additionally, I anticipate that there will be questions about how to implement change in the face of challenging student behavior from teachers directed at school leaders as they begin to make changes in their schools. There is a prevalent belief that students and classrooms are becoming increasingly difficult, and teachers typically tend to want additional support, mainly in pull-out models, which involves challenging or struggling students leaving the regular classroom (Katz et al., 2018). Often the blame for why the student is struggling is placed on families or students themselves (Hammond & Jackson, 2015). Shifting the culture away from a deficit model to one where strengths and diversity are acknowledged, recognized, and supported will

help gradually shift the system (Khalifa, 2018; Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Safir et al., 2021). Using an array of data to inform conversations will be helpful for school leaders when answering these questions (Safir et al., 2021). Although the OVSD has made some progress in terms of increasing student success as defined by the Ministry of Education and Childcare, there are still unacceptable gaps experienced by many students, in particular Indigenous students (2023d). This is also evident for our students with diverse needs and likely other students who have been historically underserved (British Columbia Ministry of Education and Childcare, 2023d). The director of instruction will likely need to support leaders as they address these questions and the one-on-one meetings as well as the learning sessions will provide opportunities for discussion.

Sharing Milestones and Small Wins

Sharing the many milestones and small successes in this plan for change will be an essential driver in keeping the momentum moving in a positive direction (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). One important milestone will be the increased collaboration between the principals and vice principals and a facilitator utilizing the CSL approach as well as the regular learning meetings that are listed in the implementation plan. This process is a natural opportunity to learn strategies, share insights, celebrate successes, and mobilize knowledge with one another (Friedlaender, 2019). Continuing these conversations in the monthly administrators meeting will provide additional opportunities for school leaders to share what is working with their staffs and celebrate each other's accomplishments, either in small teams or as a whole group celebration (Honig & Rainey, 2020). This will continue to support knowledge mobilization as the school leaders learn from each other.

Working collaboratively one on one with principals and vice principals is another part of the implementation plan that will be a milestone to be achieved and celebrated (Honig & Rainey,

2020). As the relationship between the director and each of the school leaders develops, the conversations will become deeper and provide the opportunity to recognize individual successes (Safir, 2017). Awareness of the need to continue to celebrate those successes will be essential in the work that the director embarks on (Whelan Berry & Somerville, 2010). Although it is important for the director to be honest about ongoing areas of improvement and continue to encourage the principal to develop their skills, it is equally important to acknowledge their successes (Honig & Rainey, 2020).

Finally, one of the biggest milestones will be when principals start to see their school culture and student success shift in a positive way. The focus could be on assessment data improvement, classroom visits, reduced behavior incidents, or positive feedback from students, staff, or families, all of which should be celebrated (Safir et al., 2021). Any of these improvements would be cause for celebration.

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

When considering how to monitor the progress of the change process and evaluate the success of the strategies, there are some similarities and differences between the two (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Monitoring is an ongoing process to determine what is working and what needs to be adjusted (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Monitoring of the process will be performed throughout via ongoing collaboration with school leaders.

The evaluation plan involves assessing the plan to see if it is meeting its intended targets. There is some overlap with the monitoring process as evaluation can be both formative and summative (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). As this OIP focuses on continuous improvement and involvement of the system, the evaluation of these strategies will be mainly formative. Ultimately, it can only truly become summative when there is positive impact on the students within the

OVSD as reflected in their successes. However, this will be a continuously evolving process. Additionally, the evaluations will be participatory in that they will involve school leaders in determining successes (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Ultimately, some of the evaluative questions to be considered would be:

- Are there increasing collaborative processes within schools?
- Is the principal and vice principal group becoming more collaborative?
- Are school leaders becoming aware of the importance of being culturally responsive?
- Are students who have been historically marginalized beginning to experience more success?
- What is the principal's impact on teacher practices?

One of the first things to consider is whether the change process works toward creating a learning organization. Organizational learning is the “dynamic process of creation, acquisition and integration of knowledge aimed at the development of resources and capabilities” (Lopez et al., 2005, p. 228). Building an elementary leadership team that embodies inclusive and collaborative structures, effective communication channels, integrated and inclusive professional learning, and learning-focused leadership are all necessary components that have been attributed to creating systems considered to be learning organization (Johnston & Caldwell, 2001). These components blend well with the selected change model as well as the leadership approach within this organizational improvement plan. These components are also key to the strategies selected to address this problem of practice.

In terms of the change model, the entire process of evaluation and monitoring is part of the research and accountability component (Centre for System's Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). As with any change, it is important to determine what the benchmarks of success are, how to know when you have reached them, and when to adjust the process when missing the mark (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Without these opportunities for determining success, there can be a risk of spinning in circles implementing new strategies without ever determining their impact.

However, one of the challenges in evaluating each step of this OIP is that much of it involves assessing the impact of conversations and learning sessions, which can be difficult to measure. The approach for all these steps in the plan is one of ongoing and collective learning for district and school leaders. It requires recognizing that learning approaches should be differentiated, fostering each participant's own agency, and that tasks are accomplished jointly between myself and each of the school leaders, all characteristics of compassionate and authentic leadership (Duigan, 2014; Senge et al., 2019b). This can be difficult to measure but an effective tool from a similar socio-cultural theory approach of learning is Honig & Rainey's (2020) Degree of Appropriation Tool adapted from Grossman et al. (1999). The first degree of five on the continuum is "not adopting," such as when school leaders are not engaging or talking about their practices within the new learning identified (Honig & Rainey, 2020). The next is "adopting the talk," when school leaders discuss what it means but are not able to translate it into their practice (Honig & Rainey, 2020). The third degree is "engaging at a surface level," where school leaders begin to reflect but not necessarily on a deeper level (Honig & Rainey, 2020). The fourth is "engaging with understanding," when school leader's work begins to demonstrate deeper understanding that shows they have incorporated it into their regular practice (Honig & Rainey, 2020). Finally, the fifth degree refers to mastery, which is achieved after several years and across

multiple settings and is exemplified by progress with more powerful results (Honig & Rainey, 2020). This rubric will provide an ability to analyze the work with school leaders and determine if they are progressing across the continuum through each of the stages of the plan.

Reflection following each meeting and conversation between the director and each of the school principals will be considered through the lens of this continuum (Honig & Rainey, 2020; Reardon et al., 2019). These meetings are important in planning for next steps in the process and adapting and changing to meet each principal's needs as well as to see how they are progressing (Honig & Rainey, 2020). Listening, adapting, and working collaboratively are all critical to authentic leadership as well as CSL (Begley, 2006; Hannah et al., 2011; Senge et al., 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

The need to work individually with principals towards their specific goals requires that the director is flexible when engaging in this type of planning (Honig & Rainey, 2020). The process will not be linear but will continue to ebb and flow as the work unfolds. Much of the success or lack of success will be determined in the individual conversations about what is happening in each of the schools and the conversations will need to be adapted accordingly, which is part of the practice and focusing direction of the change model (Centre for System's Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Additionally, the plan utilizes the capacity building and deeper learning components of the change model as the meetings are intended to support the growth and learning of principals while requiring them to engage in ongoing reflection of their impact on their school and the learning environment for each of their students (Centre for System's Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Honig & Rainey, 2020).

This process will be formalized within their professional growth plan, so they are able to self-assess their own growth (Honig & Rainey, 2020). This process will rely heavily on authentic

leadership and CSL to navigate these complex conversations with principals throughout the implementation plan. Again, both leadership approaches rely on self-reflection, listening, and working collaboratively towards next steps.

Additionally, school leaders will be supported in collecting data to indicate what is working in their schools, what needs to be shifted, and their plans for next steps. Gathering data in its many forms will be part of the learning at the monthly learning sessions and will be discussed and shared in the one-on-one meetings. School leaders will be encouraged to think about satellite data (quantitative data such as attendance and standardized assessments), map data (“providing a GPS of social-emotional, cultural, and learning trends within a school community”), and street data (collecting the experiences of stakeholders) (Safir et al., 2021, p. 55). Working with school leaders to determine what data to use provides them with some influence in the process rather than it being mainly a top-down approach. Student voice and agency will be encouraged throughout the process.

The monthly meetings will be a perfect opportunity to review evaluation from the learning community, which involves building and creating collaborative culture components of the change model (Centre for System’s Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Honig & Rainey, 2020). To provide an evaluation of the monthly meetings and their impact, the structure of the principals’ monthly learning sessions will need to be reorganized with input from each of the participants in the group (Honig & Rainey, 2020). At the conclusion of each meeting, time can be built in to check in with reflection and sharing opportunities to guide this process, as well as to provide indicators of success based on the Degree of Appropriation Tool explained above (Honig & Rainey, 2020).

As school leaders become more engaged and build trust within these meetings, they can begin to identify areas where they see success in their schools and areas of need, which would indicate they were moving on the scale (Honig & Rainey, 2020). This can help guide some of the group's future learnings as well as provide the opportunity for them to learn what is working from each other. Through this communication in the meetings, the process will encourage evaluation of how each meeting served its purpose and all participants will be encouraged to select and guide the topics for future meetings (Honig & Rainey, 2020). Through the collaborative nature of these meetings, the process will also provide some evaluation of how progress is unfolding at each of their schools (Honig & Rainey, 2020). It also provides the opportunity to model some of the tools utilized in CSL within their schools (Centre for System's Awareness, n.d.).

Reflecting on several areas of the change model, the CSL dinner meetings will provide regular opportunities for evaluation in terms of this OIP (Centre for System's Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Each meeting will also begin by checking in with each of leader about their intention and to identify what actions they have taken and their results since the previous session. Again, this arrangement allows for immediate feedback as well as providing a way to determine if the sessions are making an impact. Each session will culminate with everyone sharing something that they learned and providing their intention of how they will implement that idea. Notes from the meetings will be taken to document the school leaders' next steps. Follow up by the director at one-on-one meetings around this topic will also be important to not only ensure that the intentions remain in the forefront, but also to provide monitoring of how the process is proceeding and determine if there is movement on The Degree of Appropriation Tool (Honig & Rainey, 2020).

As the momentum grows, there would likely be an increase in teacher engagement and perhaps increased teacher-led initiatives connected to this work (Anderson & Sice, 2015). With the increase in trust and collaborative processes, this provides more opportunities for others to engage in the learning and for useful knowledge to be spread throughout the school district (Lopez et al., 2005). This is when the evidence of organizational learning is on display “where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured... where people are continually learning how to learn together” (Senge, 1990, p. 3). Johnston and Caldwell (2001) believe that to create organizational learning, it must begin with knowledge management, which requires “deep capacity among all of its staff to be at the forefront of knowledge and skill in learning and teaching” (p. 101). This is a continuous approach to learning that goes beyond professional learning (Johnston & Caldwell, 2001). School principals are the key to this process, and they must be strategic and empowering in their approach which supports the strategies being implemented in this OIP (Johnston & Caldwell, 2001).

Although this will take time, ultimately, the greatest indicator of success would be an increase in the number of students who have been historically underserved now flourishing in schools and leaving elementary school with the skills, knowledge, and understandings needed to be successful in secondary school and beyond (Halbert & Kaser, 2022). They would develop a sense of their own identity and be able to understand the importance of that identity to themselves and others (Halbert & Kaser, 2022). They would also be “more curious than when they arrived” and begin to consider how they can make an impact on making our world a better place (Halbert & Kaser, 2022, p. 17; Senge et al., 2019).

Refining the Implementation Plan

As this process will continuously be adapting and changing, there will consistently be refinement of the implementation plan. Authentic and compassionate system's leadership both require continuous ongoing self-reflection (Centre for System's Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Through this self-reflection, adjustments will need to be made throughout the process. For example, if the monthly principal learning sessions do not seem to be meeting everyone's needs or impacting any change within the school setting, their structure or content will need to be revisited. At each of the individual meetings with principals and vice principals, refinement will be ongoing as the process moves forward. Through the feedback at the conclusion of each of the CSL dinner meetings, there will be refinement of what the next session will look like. Within all these solutions, it will require ongoing adaptations and alterations as the learning community evolves and grows.

The same considerations will need to be made when analyzing whether these processes are removing barriers or, instead, putting barriers in place (Safir et al., 2021). In each of these approaches, careful consideration must be made to ensure these solutions are not perpetuating the inequities of the different stakeholders in the school district, especially those of students (Safir et al., 2021). One of the challenges of this collaborative approach is that sometimes ideas can be shared that may in fact put up barriers. This is why systemic racism and microaggressions are equally if not more important to continue exploring during this time (Safir et al., 2021). As a leader, it will be imperative to be a warm demander and ask the difficult questions that require people to reflect and consider their implications before acting (Safir, 2015). In terms of transformative leadership, difficult conversations will be as important as the celebrations (Aguilar, 2020). Although it is important to recognize success, there is a great deal of work to do

to move elementary school leaders in the OVSD to a place where they are focused on building culturally responsive schools and classrooms throughout the system.

Conclusion

The final chapter provided a detailed change implementation plan that includes building trust, having elementary principals create professional growth plans, holding one on one meetings between the principal and the director, creating learning teams for monthly learning sessions, and organizing compassionate system's leadership dinner meetings. Each of these components of the plan contributes towards building the collective efficacy of the group and will be adjusted and changed as needed. This was followed by the plan for communicating the need for change and the change process which will primarily take place through the school leaders themselves. Finally, a plan to evaluate the process was created which requires frequent monitoring through collaboration with the school principals via meetings, planning, and collecting data.

Next Steps, Future Considerations of the Organizational Improvement Plan

When planning for this OIP, it was challenging to narrow the process to something manageable, connected to research, and within my agency. Although I have a district role, I am not in a place to do the work directly in schools but can encourage school leaders in realizing the importance of their own work as well as the value of equitable learning options for all students, particularly those who have been historically marginalized. School leaders work incredibly hard and want to impact change and the director of instruction's primary role should be to help build school leaders' collective efficacy.

The two next steps needed for continuing this journey are ensuring that knowledge mobilization continues beyond the school leaders and into the schools as well as an ongoing

focus on data throughout the school district to determine what is working and next steps. Future considerations must be given to creating the structures with OVSD for ongoing collaboration to be a part of the culture of the school district, as well as keeping culturally responsive pedagogy at the forefront of other education initiatives.

One of the critical next steps following this process is ensuring that the knowledge mobilization must pass from school leaders to their teachers (Malik, 2020). Schools are the places where change needs to occur to impact students in a positive way. School leaders building the collective capacity of classroom teachers to create classrooms that are culturally relevant would contribute to a welcoming school environment where all students can flourish (Hattie & Smith, 2021; Honig & Rainey, 2020; Khalifa, 2018). Creating opportunities to engage teachers in research so they can see the impact of improving their practice will help with this process (Malik, 2020).

Along with building teacher's collective efficacy, there must be an increasing reliance on data in all of its forms to determine whether the steps being taken are having the impact necessary (Hattie & Smith, 2021; Safir et al., 2021). Although data collection at a district and school level is important, it must also be collected daily in classrooms through formative assessment as well as conversations with children and families (Hattie & Smith, 2021; Safir et al., 2021). Without evidence that what we are doing is having an impact, we are just making educated guesses, something that has not worked well in the past (Hattie & Smith, 2021).

A future consideration is ensuring that there is ongoing collaboration to facilitate knowledge mobilization and a culture of continuous improvement throughout the organization (Malik, 2020; Powell et al., 2017). Finding ways for OVSD to create structures to ensure that these processes are embedded within the system itself will be critical in shifting the school

district culture (Honig & Rainey, 2020). This will involve rethinking what “success” looks like for students, analyzing how meetings and conversations are structured, redesigning how strategic planning occurs, and ensuring input is gathered by all stakeholders in the system (Safir et al., 2021). Ensuring that these processes are embedded and are ongoing will be essential.

Finally, consideration must be given to ensuring that the focus continues to remain on creating culturally responsive schools and classrooms, so all students have what they need to flourish. In education, there are many initiatives that come and go and can easily take the attention away from this essential work. Keeping these ideas at the forefront is critical for the benefit of all students.

My hope would be that this process of knowledge mobilization and continuous improvement at the district, school, and classroom levels would be ongoing until the school district reaches a point where every student flourishes, particularly those who have been historically underserved; when everyone is provided with everything they need in their classrooms and schools to graduate with dignity, purpose, and options, and the tools and skills to become global citizens who can help make this increasingly complex world a better place (Halbert & Kaser, 2022; Senge et al., 2019).

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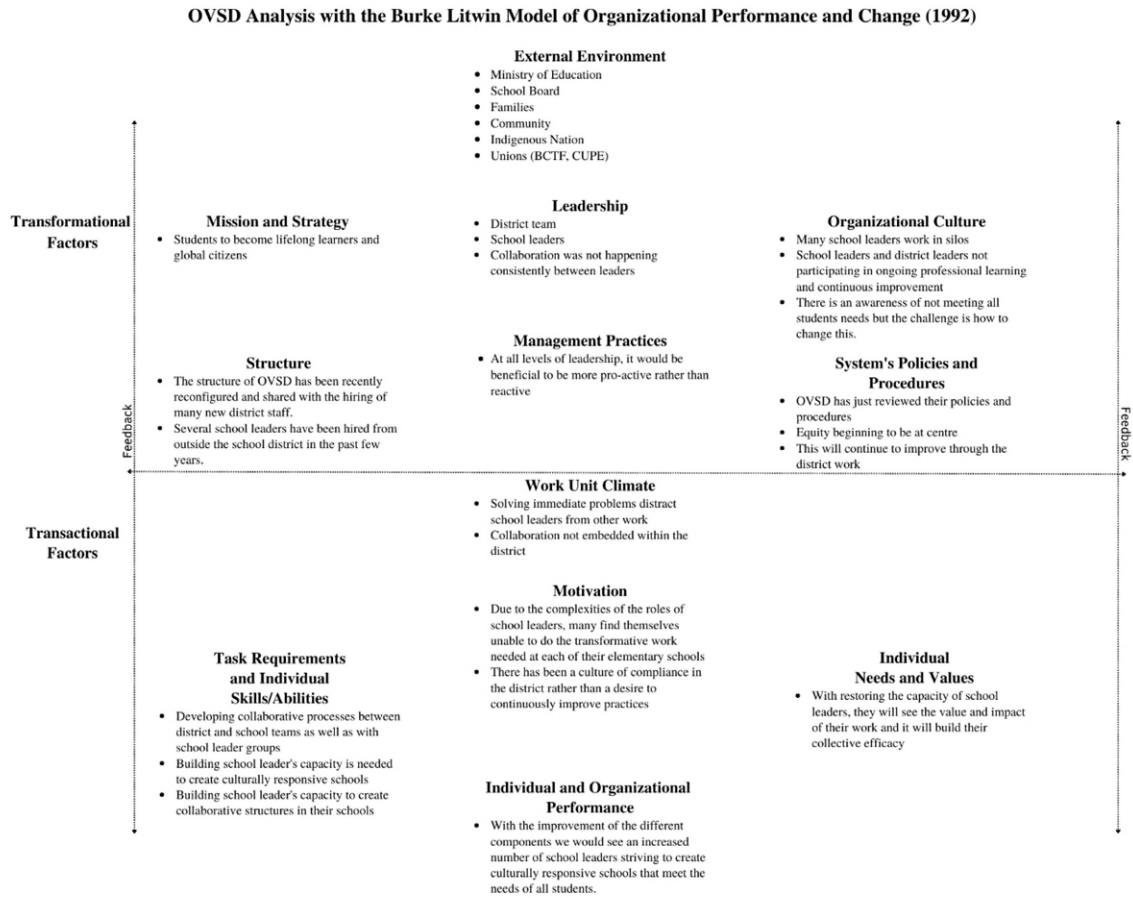
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Appendix A: Blended Change Model



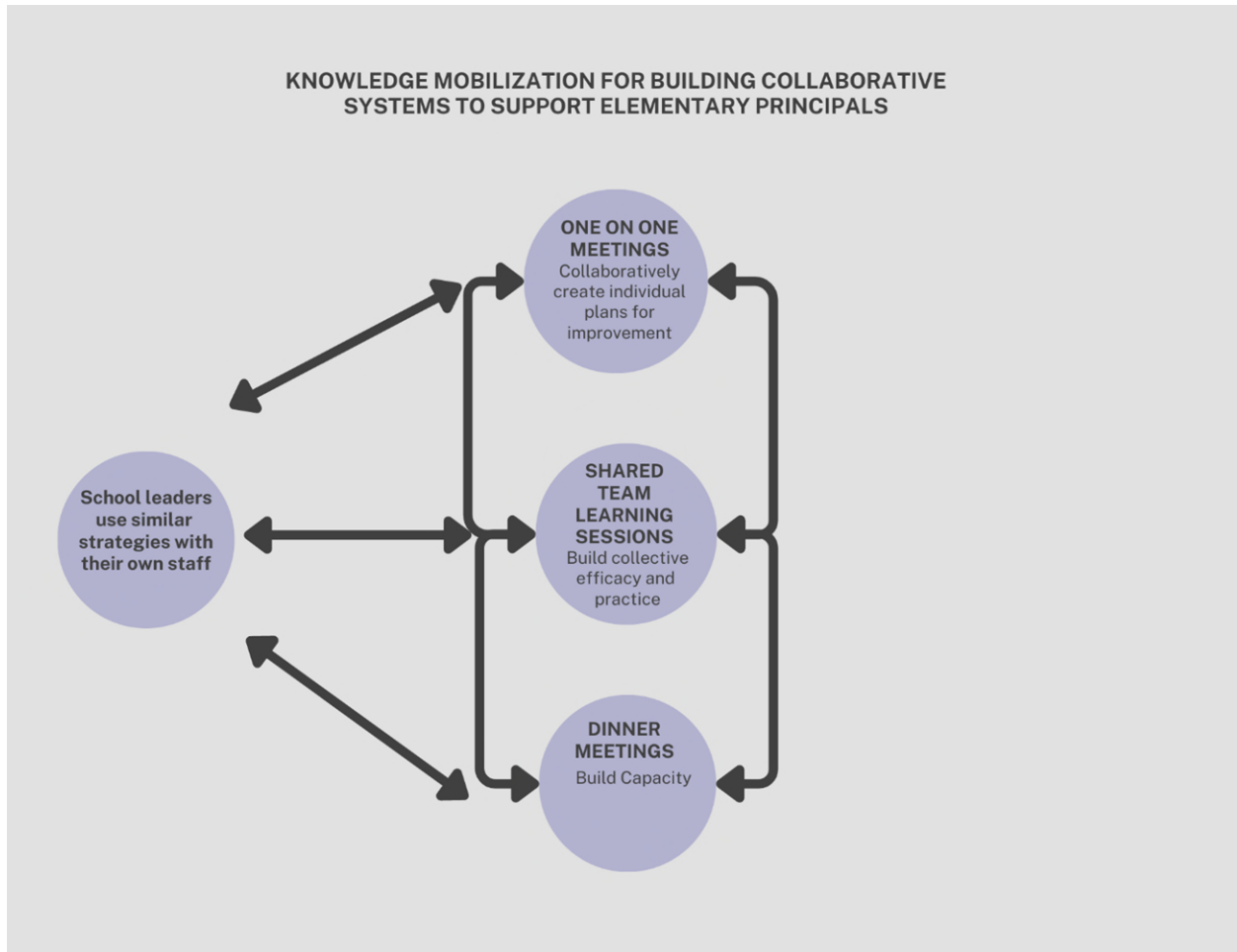
Note. This change model is adapted from the coherence change model and the mandala for system's change model (Centre for System's Awareness, n.d.; Fullan & Quinn, 2016)

Appendix B: OVSD Analysis with the Burke-Litwin Model of Organizational Performance and Change (1992)



Note. This model has been used to briefly analyze the Ocean View School District and only utilizes what is relevant to this OIP.

Appendix C: Knowledge Mobilization Plan



Note. This diagram looks at how the system can mobilize knowledge.