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Counter-narratives and Revisionism: A Transformative Journey to Closing the Achievement Gap for Indigenous Learners through Culturally Responsive School Leadership, Equity Transformation, and Nurturing Collective Teacher Efficacy

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Abstract

Professional learning in the areas of Indigenous education, reconciliation, and antiracism is as much a personal journey as a professional one for educators today. At New Beginnings Middle School (NBMS, a pseudonym), Indigenous learners experience a significant academic achievement gap. This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) explores how to cultivate teaching practices that create a more inclusive school environment and improve academic achievement for all Indigenous students. It proposes to guide educators through bias mitigation with integrated professional learning to develop culturally responsive pedagogy. Given the compelling correlation between inclusiveness and academic success, NBMS educators must work collectively to build confidence in Indigenous learners, reduce racial barriers, mitigate ignorance, and develop programming that reflects student culture. Implementation of the proposed solution is interpreted through a critical social justice leadership lens, and it relies on transformative leadership and culturally responsive and adaptive practices. A proposed blended change implementation plan encourages teachers to listen and awaken, uncover and mobilize, reimagine and accelerate, and move and institutionalize. Measuring and monitoring the plan includes a 10-month timeline, a teacher's cultural proficiency receptivity scale, various student agency measurement surveys, and a classroom data dashboard tool. The NBMS administration will set conditions for educators to centre Indigenous students by implementing processes to build student voice and agency as cocreators of their learning. This OIP builds collective teacher efficacy for an envisioned state of continual reflexive pedagogy in teachers specific to Indigenous students, with an end goal to close the achievement gap for these learners at NBMS.

Keywords: critical social justice leadership, culturally responsive practices, Indigenous learners, collective teacher efficacy, transformative leadership, reflexive pedagogy

Executive Summary

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) concerns New Beginnings Middle School (NBMS, a pseudonym), a large, publicly funded middle school within the province of British Columbia, Canada. The Problem of Practice is the challenge to cultivate reflexive practices in teachers around personal bias and privilege in relation to Indigenous students. This marginalized group of students, whose graduation rates are nearly 40% lower than the national average (Assembly of First Nations, 2021), continues to suffer from the multigenerational trauma of Indian Residential Schools and a current educational system that perpetuates racist and oppressive practices through its structures. The overall academic average of Indigenous students at NBMS indicates an achievement gap that is lower by more than 20% compared to non-Indigenous students at each grade level. Interviews with some of these students reveal that they feel judged, misunderstood, and ostracized at school by some staff and students.

Chapter 1 of this OIP delves into the organizational context, beginning with the provincial Ministry of Education and Child Care in British Columbia, how its mandates frame School District Evolve's (a pseudonym) strategic plan, accountability, and goals at a system level, and how these translate to pedagogical practices within schools. The concept of collective teacher efficacy (CTE) is introduced and positioned as a goal to be achieved in the face of the existing dichotomy of traditional versus more adaptive and equitable educator pedagogy at the intersection of the classroom. Research into Indigenous resilience and resurgence is introduced through Indigenous ways of knowing and being that become interwoven practices of pedagogy within every classroom regardless of subject content matter. Specifically, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (2015) call to action #65 surfaces in this OIP for its imperative of change to occur through focused efforts on supporting research partnerships

between educational institutions, Indigenous communities, and government organizations. This OIP addresses the need to develop a pathway for non-Indigenous educators as leaders to develop skills and decolonizing approaches in practice. The impetus for ongoing reflexive practice of educators, supports a critical self-examination of social practices towards a sense of belonging, and psychological and physical safety for Indigenous learners. The leadership-focused vision for change applies both transformative leadership and culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL), with emergent adaptive practices, towards improved equity and inclusion for Indigenous learners while fostering greater CTE to close the achievement gap. Three central guiding questions lead to an analysis of change drivers and the leadership vision for change.

Chapter 2 connects the guiding questions as an integral part of the framework leading the change process. Deszca et al.'s (2020) change path model (CPM) is used and aligned with Safir and Dugan's (2021) equity transformation cycle (ETC) to anchor a plan that applies CRSL as part of process and prescription for this OIP. An explanation of each part of the cycle reinforces the need for administrators to foster an environment towards CTE with critical colleagueship for a learning focus forward. Nadler and Tushman's (1999) congruence model guides a critical organizational analysis for NBMS, focusing on the school's inputs and outputs to determine the necessary changes. Three potential solutions are proposed and explored. The first is to create a professional development series for NBMS educators focused on understanding Indigenous worldviews to explicitly address pedagogical practices that are culturally responsive. The second is to establish a collaborative equity framework for teacher curricular leaders to navigate critical social justice work to decolonize classroom teaching and assessment practices through critical colleagueship. The third is to establish a collaborative framework by adopting teacher–student practices supported and guided by the ETC. Based on the evaluation of these solutions in

consideration of the theoretical model of critical social justice, the chosen solution is a hybrid of Solutions 1 and 2 as the optimal choice to address the Problem of Practice.

Chapter 3 focuses on how critical social justice and the applied integrated leadership lens determine the suggested blended solution to design a professional development series that will support teachers to develop meaningful self-awareness to support decolonization of classroom practices. This is broached through a blended process guided by principles of the CPM and the ETC as part of the change plan. The change implementation plan is structured over 10 months (one school year), allowing NBMS's leadership team time to develop a school-wide focused inquiry to lead educators through an integrative process that includes research, data analysis, and the piloting of new pedagogical and assessment practices in the classroom. A monitoring and evaluation plan is provided, with the iterative CPM and ETC method serving as a framework to guide the professional development work and assist in determining whether the goals of the change implementation plan are moving in a positive direction at NBMS. A detailed communication plan is shared that incorporates the principles of critical social justice pedagogy, transformative leadership, CRSL, emerging adaptive practices, internal and external contexts, and formal and informal methods that reflect the leadership lens.

The OIP concludes with next steps and considerations around the continuing work for NBMS to remain consistent with centring Indigenous students with an awareness of both qualitative and humanizing data to inform the learning experiences for Indigenous students. NBMS is in a strong position to address the academic achievement gap and institutionalize the change process as the leaders persist in focusing on the implementation of meaningful school success plans to uphold the school vision and goal for success and equity of Indigenous learners.

Acknowledgements

I am blessed to have had the opportunity to spend much of my adult career working in buildings filled with young adolescents who bring me daily reminders of the necessity to constantly evolve, adapt, and remain attuned to one another as we shape and grow humanity together. To the students at my current school, the experiences you have given me have resulted in exponential growth in my ongoing evolution as an educator—*way' limləmt*.

Choosing to do doctoral work has been as much an honour as it is a tremendous privilege. I am motivated and inspired to continue to persevere and to expand upon the positive impact of social justice educational leaders, especially those with a focus for Canadian Indigenous youth.

To my mom—your unwavering confidence in me has always helped me through life's many challenges, reassuring me with loving guidance along the way. I admire you for your intuitive ability to invite people in and lift people up to feel accepted and encouraged as they are. I have taken on equity work in education because I was raised by a resilient mother who consistently demonstrates compassion and grace.

To Julius and Byron, I think you might like to see your names in something published, but beyond that, I will share that you both have helped to drive every word written on these pages. Each day you remind me in your own special way that every child is unique, and every child needs to be cared for uniquely.

And to Tony, thank you for your love, support, partnership, and faith in me. You have lent me strength when I am uncertain that I can continue upon the path that I have chosen. I am thankful for your patience on this journey, for the endless freshly brewed pots of coffee, for feeding our children (something other than hot dogs and Kraft Dinner), and for always keeping me grounded, and miraculously managing to put a smile on my face.

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List of Acronyms

BC	British Columbia
CIP	Change Implementation Plan
CL	Curricular Lead
CPM	Change Path Model
CRSL	Culturally Responsive School Leadership
CTE	Collective Teacher Efficacy
ETC	Equity Transformation Cycle
FSS	Focused Student Support
MoE	Ministry of Education and Child Care
NBMS	New Beginnings Middle School (a pseudonym)
OIP	Organizational Improvement Plan
PD	Professional Development
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PoP	Problem of Practice
SBT	School-Based Team
SD-Evolve	School District-Evolve (a pseudonym)
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

Definitions in an Educational Context

These definitions will provide the reader with a clearer understanding of how these terms are used throughout this Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP).

Aboriginal versus Indigenous: The term Aboriginal is defined in the Constitution Act of 1983 that refers to all Indigenous people in Canada, including "Indians" (Status and non-Status), First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. More than 1.5 million people in Canada identified themselves as Aboriginal on the 2016 Census, the fastest growing population in Canada. While still appropriate, the term "Aboriginal" is being replaced by "Indigenous" and the term "Indigenous" will be used throughout this document to refer to Aboriginal peoples (BC Ministry of Education and Child Care, 2019).

Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE): A shared belief among teachers that through collaboration their efforts can have meaningful and measurable impacts on student achievement over and above the educational impact of home and community (Donohoo, 2017a).

Curricular Lead (CL): A teacher leader in the school who is perceived as having gained insight or knowledge into a novel teaching practice either through research or inspired practice. The teacher leader can work and speak with teachers in an informal and nonevaluative way that prompts critical reflection.

Deprivatized Classrooms: Teachers within professional communities practice their craft in public ways. Teachers can share and trade-off the roles of mentor, advisor, or specialist when providing aid and assistance to peers. It is within these relationships that teachers work to define and develop their own practice and control their own work in public, deprivatized ways. Teachers grow in their teaching practice by developing skills and routines for describing, analyzing, and executing the instructional act, and they develop a shared common language with

which to discuss these tasks. Thus, teachers deepen the levels of trust, respect, and openness to improvement withing the school community, thereby reinforcing the value base and assumptions the school community is built upon (Kruse & Louis, 1993).

Educators: The term chosen in this writing to identify persons facilitating and/or teaching the provincial curriculum, and/or Indigenous Knowledge in classrooms and schools. Educators are teachers, principals, vice-principals, counsellors, psychologists, social workers, youth care workers, student Indigenous advocates, certified educational assistants, or any other school staff who are working with students on improving their personal and academic achievement results. Educators can also be community members such as Elders, traditional knowledge keepers, parents, and guardians. Educators of Traditional Knowledge and social emotional learning have the common purpose of building holistic competence in students (KASIS, 2016).

First Nations: The self-determined political and organizational unit of the Indigenous community that has the power to negotiate on a government-to-government basis, with BC and Canada. Currently there are 65 First Nations in Canada, which represent more than 50 nations or cultural groups and about 60 Indigenous languages. This term does not have a legal definition but should be used instead of the term "Indian," which is inaccurate and offensive to many (BC Ministry of Education and Child Care, 2019).

Focused Student Support: During assigned focused student support times, teachers will select students who they feel are at the margins. During this time, they can practice one-to-one listening sessions with their student for the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of the learner's perspectives, struggles, and lived experience. It should be an opportunity to gain insight into one or more students' experiences. Therefore, if one-to-one is not appropriate, then a small group of

students with a sense of patterns of similar experiences is also appropriate. (Ortiz Guzman, 2017).

Psychological Safety: A belief that a person asking for help or admitting a failure within a workplace setting will not face formal or informal negative interpersonal consequences. Candour is encouraged and employees are encouraged to "speak up, offer ideas, and ask questions without fear of being punished or embarrassed" (Edmondson, 2008, p. 15).

Reconciliation: Defined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) as an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining new and respectful relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians (TRC, 2015).

Transformative Leadership: A style of leadership that aims to change thoughts and behaviours, working to create an educational system that is a place of connectedness and caring, and that honours the heritage, knowledge, and spirit of every First Nations student (Battiste, 2013).

Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem of Practice

The school staff of 100 educators, mostly teachers, circled around the Indigenous Elder. He is a master carver in Canada renowned for his artistry creating totem poles. The staff were excited to learn carving skills as a start-up and team-building opportunity. The task at hand was to carve unique walking sticks. Many were proud to show the selected stick they were asked to bring in preparation for the session. The Elder said few words, but gained the group's attention as he burned a bundle of sage to open the gathering with a smudge, thanking the Creator. The adults became quiet and still. Glances passed from one colleague to another. As the Elder continued, he directed staff to form a line. A slow, quiet shuffle ensued. The first to form the line were the Indigenous student advocates, followed by support staff and then the teachers. Some held back from the line, observing what to do as their colleagues arrived at the front. With quiet care, the Elder modelled the actions for the smudge as he wafted smoke over his head, eyes, ears, mouth, heart, and limbs, and lastly fanning smoke over each piece of wood staff members brought to carve their walking stick from. I noticed a few teachers at the back of the line retreating down the corridor. One teacher approached me and asked permission to sit the activity out. A few things became certain: The air in the room was thick with the scent of smoking sage, there was a sense of curiosity, there was a sense of apprehension, and for some, there was an undeniable sense of discomfort.

Reconciliation is not an Indigenous problem; it is a Canadian one. Getting to the truth has been hard, but getting to reconciliation will be harder. It requires that the paternalistic and racist foundations of the residential school system be rejected (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015). Reconciliation requires that a new vision, based on a commitment to

mutual respect, be developed. Canada's history offers a key lesson that must be conveyed to educators: that reducing the effects of racism on students requires deep change in how educators view themselves and their work. Chapter 1 acquaints the reader with the organizational context of New Beginnings Middle School (NBMS, a pseudonym) while illuminating the problem of practice (PoP) and the broader contextual factors that impact the school's climate and culture. The current state of School District-Evolve (SD-Evolve, a pseudonym), and its future organizational goals are identified and detailed through its vision and strategic plan. The reader will come to learn my positioning and worldview as the principal of NBMS. A leadership-focused vision for change and the evaluation of NBMS's organizational change readiness is rendered, in addition to uncovering the guiding questions that steer this organizational improvement plan (OIP).

A challenge for principals within the province of British Columbia (BC) is to inspire necessary reflexive practices in teachers around personal bias and privilege in relation to Indigenous People. Indigenous students, whose graduation rates are nearly 40% lower than the national average (Assembly of First Nations, 2021), continue to suffer from the multigenerational trauma of Indian Residential Schools and a current educational system that perpetuates racism and oppressive structures. At New Beginnings Middle School, Indigenous students have an absentee rate 34% higher than non-Indigenous students with a trend over time showing increasing rates of absenteeism (see Appendix A). Interviews with some Indigenous students at NBMS reveal that they feel judged, misunderstood, and ostracized at school by some of the staff and some non-Indigenous peers. Various studies and data disclose a correlation that Indigenous students often experience feelings of negative self-image, cultural unsafety, and lack of motivation (Ball, 2009; Milne & Wotherspoon, 2020). Research on the success of BC

Indigenous students within public education suggests that academic achievement is inextricably linked to whether students experience positive relationships supporting an authentic sense of belonging and safety within their school community (Aboriginal Education Department, 2016).

Principals are tasked with the responsibility of cultivating collective teacher efficacy (CTE) towards sustainable and culturally responsive pedagogy that challenge and attempt to dismantle existing systemic barriers caused by racism, a Eurocentric colonial curriculum, and deficit mindsets towards Indigenous learners. According to Donohoo (2017a), CTE describes types of thoughts that affect action, related to people's perceived judgments of the capability of a group to effectively attain a goal. Studies indicate that CTE has the greatest impact on student achievement relative to other social influences such as socioeconomic status, prior achievement, home environment, and parental involvement (Donohoo, 2017a; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004). Therefore, fostering CTE should be at the forefront of a planned strategic effort in all schools and districts as it deserves the attention of every educator.

The problem of practice (PoP) explored throughout this OIP focuses on closing the academic achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students at NBMS (see Appendix B). This OIP works to develop conditions to foster conditions for CTE to begin to focus on culturally responsive pedagogy and to improve the educational experiences of Indigenous students. For non-Indigenous teachers to be able to integrate First Peoples Practices of Learning (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2015) as part of regular pedagogy, requires a willingness to remain adaptive around "learning how to learn" (Cajete, 2016, p. 368). Beyond this, CTE is context specific because beliefs are formed based on an analysis of teachers' perceptions about their individual teaching competence, the competence of the greater school

staff, the difficulties inherent in the educational past facing the school, as well as the supports available in the setting (Goddard, 2001).

Positionality Lens and Statement

I have arrived at this PoP at the intersection of my beliefs about the world and my position in it. As the school principal of NBMS, a publicly funded middle school in BC, I feel I have been thrust into an introspective exploration of my positionality as leader. As I consider my Canadian citizenship as a colonial settler, and my role as a principal leading a school populace that serves a proportionally high number of Indigenous students, I am keenly aware that my agency to foster an authentic, safe, and caring environment is multilayered, dynamic, and complex. What follows is a reflexive insight into my leadership position, driven by curiosity and a sense of personal urgency to reimagine and recreate improved school practices for Indigenous learners. I acknowledge that as I continue to explore and question both my lived experience and the scholarship, my inquiry will continue to evolve.

I have been privileged to work as an educational leader for much of my career in various roles in the public school system, from multiple lenses, in three of Canada's provinces. I was educated as a student in the province of Alberta within a publicly funded Roman Catholic school district. I am a mother of two children, both who have navigated the same education system I did as a student, until recently, when a family decision resulted in uprooting from Alberta to move to the neighboring province of BC. My husband is a teacher.

Throughout my personal professional career, I have engaged in different educational leadership opportunities through roles as a teacher, teacher-leader, English language learner consultant, assistant principal, vice-principal, and principal supporting a breadth of students as diverse as Canada's population (Bauer, 2021; Canadian Council for Refugees, n.d.; Vice-

President Finance & Operations Portfolio, 2021). Although I have served students and families of varying degrees of marginalization and privilege, the smaller city and district where I currently work feels less diverse in comparison to the metropolitan city and district where I spent much of my career thus far. Related to this emerging PoP is my personal observation that school-based staff and system leaders of SD-Evolve have limited diversity in representation of Indigenous persons or persons of colour in existing leadership roles.

Framing a philosophical approach to educational leadership requires one to reconcile the foundational beliefs that guide one's leadership practice. I see students as people first—always. This means that learning must centre on who they are as human beings, including their identities, stories, gifts, challenges, and learning habits. As a leader, one of my core beliefs goes beyond ensuring that students have access to resources; rather, I want to ensure that students arrive at school having a sense of belonging, hope, and safety and are met with meaningful and engaging opportunities that excite learning. Every student should feel that learning is attainable regardless of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, culture, or ethnicity. The philosophical underpinning of my leadership position and lens aligns with critical social justice theory, focusing on power in relationships and realizing how this dynamic has potential to further marginalize specific groups of students (Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Theoharis, 2007). Riehl (2000) acknowledged that to support diverse populations, school leaders need to better understand diversity, promote inclusive practices, and continue to build relationships with the community. Critical social justice theory plays an integral part in building a more just society as it empowers individuals and creates a sense of understanding to address social injustices (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010).

My understanding of transformative leadership has been furthered by Shields's (2010) work as she stresses how transformative leaders begin with questions of social justice and democracy. She explained, "Transformative leadership . . . links education and educational leadership with the wider social context within which it is embedded" (Shields, 2010, pp. 558–559). Throughout this OIP, I assert that transformative leadership combined with culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) are essential to enact a theory of action that fosters equity and inclusion for Indigenous learners. I have contemplated the question: How can we reform education without understanding the realities of the people we serve? Therefore, critical social justice theory and transformative leadership models are not enough for culturally responsive pedagogy to take hold in classrooms across this country. I contend that it is not enough to want to fight for equity; school leaders must establish structures that will infuse all forms of leadership with unique community cultural knowledge, epistemology, and perceptions.

As a transformative leader, I am committed to critiquing long-standing inequities through collaborative and, at times, courageous action to build better educational experiences for Indigenous students at NBMS. However, as a non-Indigenous school principal looking to impact positive change for Indigenous students and families, I must ensure these changes involve the Indigenous community and student voices, and not just my own. I have become increasingly attentive to how my privileged position as a non-Indigenous educator entails a certain responsibility and awareness. I feel the need to clarify my moral compass and guiding disposition, my values, my attitudes, and beliefs through a recursive practice of reflexivity and leadership that is both transformative and culturally responsive. I conscientiously pay attention to my ongoing leadership practice, which is embedded in complex relationships with the staff, students and their families, and the greater community of NBMS. Gaining a greater

understanding of Indigenous knowledge and culture is important to me both personally and professionally, and I am willing to place myself in a position of vulnerability to be an effective change leader for the NBMS school community.

According to McCready and Soloway (2011), the ability to identify one's own unique, personal bias and stereotypes as potential barriers to engaging in CRSL, and therefore student success, is critical and needs to be examined and checked to reduce or close the existing achievement gap for Indigenous learners. Although I am aware of my positioning as a first-generation Canadian settler of Italian-European descent, I do not presume to tell the stories of others—those of the Indigenous students and families who attend NBMS. I do not own this knowledge; I am one of the caretakers of it, and therefore it is my responsibility to bring this knowledge forward in a good struggle to create a more inclusive environment and to welcome Indigenous students holistically at NBMS. My enthusiasm for this work is embedded in what I have come to know, and what I realize I do not yet know, in my role as a middle school principal. My intent is twofold: first, to become better informed as I journey towards improving my efficacy as an educational leader; and second, to share this new understanding with the practicing community of educators and local Indigenous partners to foster an abundance mindset within teachers so they may succeed to meet the diverse needs of Indigenous learners at NBMS and beyond.

Organizational Context

Throughout the 2020–2021 school year, 68,247 Indigenous students were registered in regular program schools throughout BC, the highest enrollment of any province nationwide (Statistics Canada, 2022). In May 2021, Canadians learned about the discovery of 215 unmarked children's graves at the former Indian Residential School on Tk'emlups te Secwépemc First

Nation in Kamloops, BC (Dickson & Watson, 2021). Only 8 months thereafter, in January 2022, an additional 93 unmarked graves from the Williams Lake First Nation were found (Lindsay & Watson, 2022). The shocking and undeniable realization of Canada's historical mistreatment of First Nations people has fueled an urgency for action on the part of educational organizations nationally, provincially, and at district, school, and classroom levels.

The BC Ministry of Education and Child Care (MoE) is the provincial regulatory body that mandates that all funded schools are safe, caring, and welcoming environments (BC MoE, 2022c). The MoE oversees the operation of provincially funded school authorities while ensuring they adhere to the School Act Ministerial Order, the legislation directing school authorities and principals (BC MoE, 2022b). Regarding Indigenous education, one of the MoE's foci is on the need to close the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students through its guiding principles, statutory requirements, strategic planning and reporting, capacity building, and equity work (BC MoE, 2022a, 2022b). Furthermore, BC is about to become the first jurisdiction in Canada to take a ground-breaking step forward for truth, reconciliation, and antiracism. Beginning in September of the 2023–2024 school year, all secondary students will be required to complete four credits of Indigenous-focused coursework to graduate (BC MoE, 2022b). This change to BC's graduation program is part of the Action Plan for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and builds on the K–12 sector's efforts to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into the provincial curriculum, educator professional development (PD), and professional standards for BC teachers.

In 2017, the MoE embarked on the cocreation of an equity scanning tool to support districts in identifying barriers that are impacting Indigenous student achievement. SD-Evolve was one of six districts invited to pilot the tool: an action research practice for educators

illustrated by a spiral to signify the never-ending process of curiosity, growth, learning, acting, and reflecting (Halbert & Kaser, 2022). The collaborative phase, which included extensive school and community consultations, was completed from 2017–2019. A framework was developed to guide the vision for equity and collaborative work towards a permeating use of the scanning tool (Kaser & Halbert, 2017). Equity scans are aimed at providing direction at the district, school, and classroom levels by examining four pillars that positively impact student achievement: policy and governance, learning profiles, the learning environment, and the pedagogical core (SD-Evolve, 2021a).

By August 2019, a ninth standard was added for BC educators that requires teachers to embed Indigeneity within their pedagogy (BC MoE, 2019). It requires that educators critically examine their own biases, attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices so that they can begin to value and respect the languages, heritages, cultures, and ways of knowing and being of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (BC MoE, 2019).

SD-Evolve is a publicly funded system located in an urban centre in BC, Canada. SD-Evolve offers programming from early learning through grade twelve to more than 24,500 students in 47 schools: 32 elementary, 8 middle, 5 secondary, 1 alternate education, and 1 K–12 online learning program (SD-Evolve, 2023). Seven childcare buildings are currently being constructed throughout the district, fully funded by BC's MoE to provide 602 childcare spaces. The division has seen considerable and consistent growth each year as it reflects the younger demographic of people living in the area. SD-Evolve offers various programming to target the community's needs and interests including dual-credit courses, apprenticeship training, second language immersion programming, international education opportunities, Indigenous land-based learning programming, and Indigenous academy programming at the secondary level. Although

SD-Evolve works hard to provide diverse options for students to pursue personal interests and achieve their educational goals, including many language offerings throughout the division, there are currently no classes devoted to Indigenous languages. SD-Evolve serves an area with a robust Indigenous population and has schools located upon unceded traditional grounds of the Syilx People.

SD-Evolve follows a traditional hierarchical model of education like many other districts in BC. The division is overseen by a board of elected trustees that represent the local population. The board has one employee, the superintendent, who oversees all day-to-day operations. Below the superintendent are a host of associate superintendents, directors, and coordinators who support all the K–12 schools of SD-Evolve. Principals lead the schools with a generous level of autonomy with added support from divisional staff. Teachers, with the support of educational assistants and other educational professionals, work together to provide frontline instruction to students. Although change can be implemented at the school level with minimal oversight from the division, large scale reform within the division still requires approval from senior administration and potentially the board. Because there are administrative procedures specific to the education of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students, it is expected that senior leadership approve initiatives that support this population. The procedures provide direction to the schools regarding Indigenous education with much responsibility placed on the principal. These procedures address the importance of celebrating Indigenous culture, supporting academics, and engaging and providing a voice to the Indigenous community regarding education (SD-Evolve, 2021a).

SD-Evolve's drive to support students and staff is articulated in its 2020–2025 Equity in Action plan to enact truth and reconciliation—a document that is an agreement between the

district, the local First Nation band, and various First Nation societies, councils, and supporting associations (SD-Evolve, 2020). Accountability toward these goals transcends senior leadership with goals meant to bridge every school site. It is the school principal's administrative responsibility to report growth and success in their annual school learning priority plan related to the Equity in Action Agreement about the academic and holistic success of Indigenous learners. Supporting these goals are various practices, procedures, documents, and policies, which include the BC First Peoples' Principles of Learning (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2015).

NBMS, which is the focus of this OIP, is a middle school situated on unceded First Nation land adjacent to the local reservation where many students reside. NBMS provides programming for students in Grades 6 through 8. The school's catchment area is expansive, with a current enrollment of more than 850 students making NBMS one of the largest middle schools within SD-Evolve. NBMS serves the largest population of Indigenous students among other middle schools within the division. Most educators at NBMS and in SD-Evolve are predominantly white, female, and from middle- and upper middle-class backgrounds of a colonial-settler descent. Many teachers have arrived from various parts of Canada because of the availability of teaching opportunities in the region. Indigenous educators are one of the least represented populations employed as educators in schools or at the-system level. The lack of local Indigenous teachers limits the possibility of adequately representing the students we serve. Indigenous student advocates work within each school, and are of First Nations, Métis, or Inuit descent, and are categorically considered as support staff. Their role helps to guide and assist Indigenous students and families as liaison workers between community, school, and district, supporting various cultural and educational needs as they arise.

SD-Evolve's five-year strategic plan (2021–2026) provides a vision, purpose, overarching goal and value statement for equity and excellence in learning as an ideal state for organizational members to strive towards within their occupational role. Its vision for the district involves learning together. The overarching purpose is for learners to develop foundational skills and core curricular competencies so that they can be empowered to follow their passions and strengths and thrive holistically as resilient and engaged global citizens. The mission of equity and excellence in learning empowers each learner to thrive holistically through inclusive learning cultures, intentional design of learning, and collaborative professionalism.

Various provincial and district foundational skills assessment results provide each school with a detailed report identifying student achievement based on a standardized assessment at Grades 4, 7, 10, and 12, focused specifically on literacy and numeracy outcomes. Because Indigenous student success is a focus for the BC MoE and SD-Evolve, academic results are specifically disaggregated to identify this population of students in an annual report (SD-Evolve, 2022). The most recent assessment results suggest that NBMS Indigenous students have lower academic achievement results than the general district population in literacy and numeracy at the Grade 7 level (see Appendix B). Similar results for Indigenous students are consistent throughout the province and across SD-Evolve, demonstrating that the academic achievement gap for Indigenous students is not a localized issue and continues to be an area of concern. Utilizing the information disclosed in these results, four main goals emerge. SD-Evolve strives to (a) provide equity and excellence in education, (b) inspire transformative leadership, (c) increase family and community engagement, and (d) support system well-being.

Leadership Problem of Practice

The concept of collective teacher efficacy (CTE), grounded in Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory, depicts people as active agents who both influence and are influenced by their social contexts. Bandura (1997) defined collective efficacy as a group's collective belief in their capabilities to organize and accomplish identified actions required to produce a given level of achievement (Bandura, 1997). Researchers have consequently presented social cognitive theory as a key factor impacting student achievement. For one, Hattie (2008), in his meta-analysis of effect sizes of strategies influencing student performance, identified collective efficacy as one of the most impactful strategies for student success (see also Donohoo, 2017b; Donohoo & Katz, 2020; Goddard et al., 2000; Hattie, 2016). Therefore, the CTE framework, applicable at the microlevel of interactions between teachers and students within their classrooms, is essential in affecting the achievement of Indigenous students. As Donohoo (2017b) pointed out, "Collective teacher efficacy, as an influence on students' achievement, is a contribution that comes from the school—not the home and not the students themselves" (p. 5). In other words, Donohoo (2017b) suggested that if educators believe they can make an educational difference to their students over and above the educational impact of students' homes and communities, this mindset on the part of the educator has the potential to outrank every other factor regarding positive impact to student achievement including socioeconomic status, prior achievement, home environment, and parental involvement (Donohoo, 2017b; Hattie, 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Barr, 2004).

The evolving diversity of student enrollment at NBMS has seemingly led to a problem of staff collaboration: some teachers have insisted on maintaining an insular classroom autonomy, others operate in a self-declared "old-school" fashion using compliance, power, and control within their classrooms, while more adaptive teachers have sought to develop relationships with

their students as people first, then considering how best to meet their personal learning needs while collaborating with like-minded colleagues to support this endeavor. This fractured view of pedagogy compounds teacher disengagement and resistance to change. According to Bondy et al. (2017), these context specific dispositions in people, whether mental or physical, of one's beliefs and actions, are capable of change over time.

The central focus of this OIP is the notion that learning involves the increased participation of individuals in a critical justice praxis within a social community that engages four sources of CTE:

Mastery experiences: According to Donohoo (2017a), mastery experiences is the most powerful of these four sources. Donohoo (2017a) explained that when teams experience success (mastery) and attribute that success to causes within their control, collective efficacy increases and teams come to expect that these effective performances can be repeated.

Vicarious experiences: According to Huber (1991), "organizations commonly attempt to learn about the strategies, administrative practices, and especially technologies of other organizations" (p. 96). Therefore, CTE may also be strengthened by learning from successful schools, particularly the ones sharing similar organizational goals and/or facing similar opportunities and challenges.

Social persuasion: This has the potential to influence CTE when groups are encouraged by credible and trustworthy persuaders to innovate and overcome challenges. The more believable the source of the information, the more likely are efficacy expectations to change. Adams and Forsyth (2006) noted that social persuasion "depends on establishing norms of openness, collaboration, and cooperation" (p. 631). Social persuasion at the collective level

consists of members of the school staff persuading other teachers that they constitute an effective team.

Affective states: These states include feelings of excitement or anxiety associated with an individual's perceptions of his or her capability to incompetence. Tschannen-Moran and Barr (2004) referred to this as "the emotional tone of the organization" (p. 190).

Many NBMS educators are keen and willing to seek understanding in their students as they engage with a mindset of curiosity and humility towards the necessary work ahead. The agency to address this PoP rests in the leadership of the school administration, in partnership through a select group of curricular teacher leads (CLs), to optimize opportunities developed by the school administration team to foster CTE by (a) establishing opportunities for meaningful collaboration, (b) empowering teachers, (c) establishing high expectations and goals, and (d) helping one another to interpret results of various forms of data aimed at improving equity and inclusion for NBMS Indigenous learners (see Figure 1).

This OIP will apply adaptive practices that will allow teachers to listen with humility and curiosity to learn from and with Indigenous students, acknowledging that everyone brings their own understanding, experience, and positioning to the learning environment (Villegas, 2008). As the principal of NBMS, it is both my personal goal and part of my contribution towards fostering a shared vision that I adapt my own practice to help others grow with me. The vision is not to attain a static understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing and being, but rather to honour one of the teaching profession's foundations through collaboration with others and a new lived reality that enhances student learning, especially for Indigenous learners.

Figure 1

Leveraging Collective Efficacy Towards Adaptive Actions for Equity and Inclusion
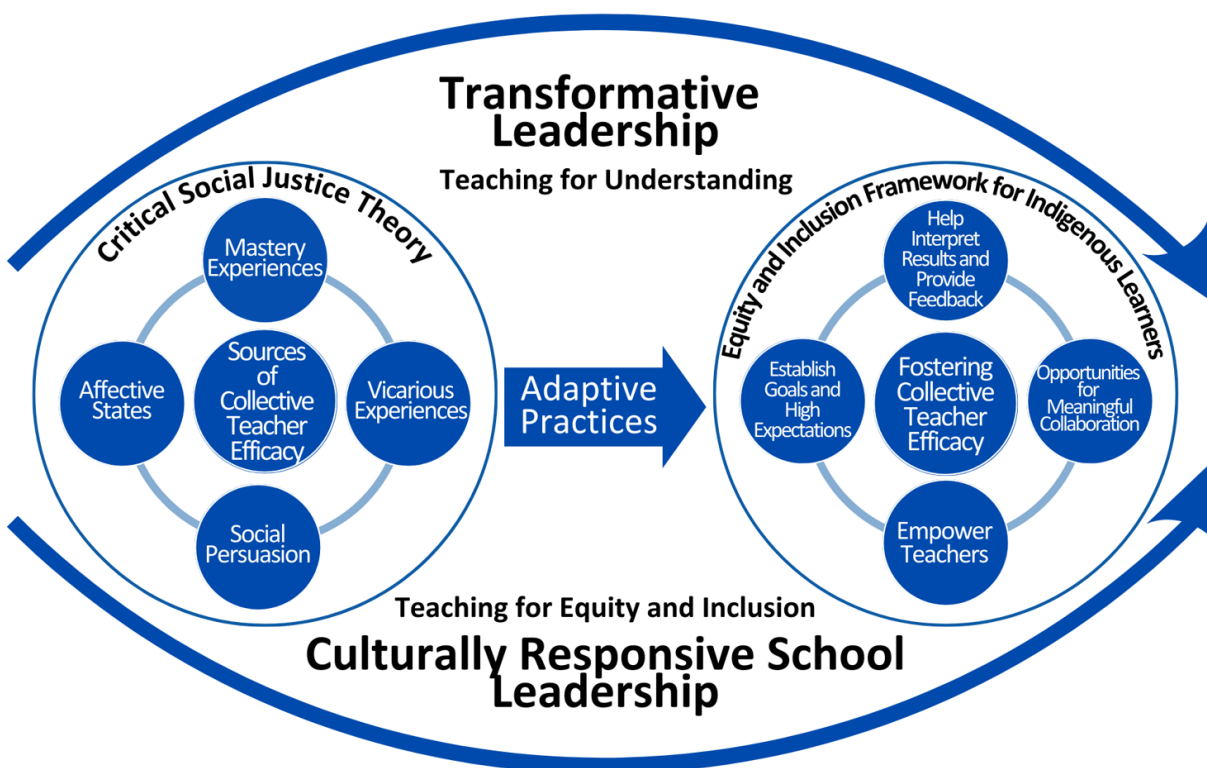
Note. Adapted from *Quality Implementation: Leveraging Collective Efficacy to Make "What Works" Actually Work*," by J. Donohoo and S. Katz, 2020, p. 27. Copyright 2020 by Corwin.

Mehta and Fine (2019) have also introduced the notion of symmetry in educational change. Educators in many systems want young people to be curious, inquiry-minded thinkers, thoughtful problem-solvers, and wise decision-makers. This idea seems straightforward; however, educators need to strengthen their own competencies in these areas before they can develop these outcomes in students. For young people to be curious, they need to be supported and surrounded by adults who are themselves equally curious. According to Halbert and Kaser (2022), educators need to place inquiry-based approaches at the centre of their collective professional learning. This requires a shift in focus toward developing collaborative capacity

among teachers. The PoP is the academic achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students at NBMS, fuelled by a lack of engagement and integration of Indigenous ways of knowing and being and through the counter-narratives offered by Indigenous students at the school.

Framing the Problem of Practice

The breadth of the socioeconomic status of the student body at NBMS highlights a visible disparity, impacting students' school experiences in negative ways. Compounding this problem is baseline data that suggests many of these students are Indigenous. For some of the Indigenous students, NBMS is the first public, off-reservation school they have attended. The primary provincial standardized foundational skills assessment results for literacy and numeracy show a data trend across 5 years indicating a declining average of academic achievement for Indigenous students at NBMS by 20% each year as students move throughout the middle school grades (see Appendix B).

According to Battiste (2002), human connection is of critical importance to the long-term success of students in school, especially for those who struggle. Some NBMS staff members continue to associate achievement gaps with external factors. For example, they consider parents' low education, the students' family construct, and socioeconomic status as external challenges affecting student success, and these factors are beyond the teachers' control (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Donohoo, 2017a; Donohoo & Katz, 2020; Parker & Flessa, 2011). Hence, there is a need to address teachers' deficit mindset towards these students. The impact of developing CTE towards an abundance mindset will play a critical role in providing equitable results that highlight and qualify the students' strengths and potential using data that is humanizing, and addresses authentic measures related to Indigenous students. This OIP outlines

a change plan to improve and reconcile these struggles, based on research and perspectives that highlight equity and human connection that centres marginalized student voices and purposeful change impacting improved CTE (Donohoo, 2017b; Safir & Dugan, 2021).

Research into Indigenous resilience and resurgence has shown that the amount of connection to the land and community that Indigenous peoples maintain through cultural activities and traditional land-based activities helps mitigate the adverse impacts of colonization (Baskin, 2005; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Gone, 2011; Gone & Kirmayer, 2010; Kelley et al., 2012; Kirmayer et al., 2011, 2012; Kovach, 2005, 2009; Kral, 2012; Lawson-Te Aho & Liu, 2010; Million, 2013; Mundel & Chapman, 2010; K. Wilson & Rosenberg, 2002). Noted by Peters and Anderson (2013), access to and interaction with Indigenous lands, cultural activities, communities, language, and Elders—the keepers of traditional knowledge—can be challenging. Issues of marginalization due to systemic racism and ethnocentrism is ever-present for those living a diasporic life. Furthermore, Bang et al. (2014) stated that opportunities to live one's identity as an Indigenous person in Canadian school systems can be difficult and may at times seem impossible because many Indigenous cultural practices run counter to the dominant Western worldviews schools continue to operate within.

The TRC's (2015) call to action #65 focuses on supporting research partnerships between educational institutions, Indigenous communities, and government organizations as a "necessary structure to document, analyze, and report research finding on reconciliation to a broader audience" (p. 242). The TRC outlines the importance that research will have in the reconciliation process specific to call to action #65. It stated:

> Research is vital to reconciliation. It provides insights and practical examples of why and
> how educating non-Indigenous people about the concepts and practices of reconciliation

will contribute to healing and transformative social change. The benefits of research

extend beyond addressing the legacy of residential schools because research on the

reconciliation process can inform how Canadian society can mitigate intercultural

conflicts, strengthen civic trust, and build social capacity and practical skills for long-

term reconciliation. (TRC, 2015, p. 242)

The approach of this OIP is to provide a pathway for non-Indigenous educational leaders,

like me, to apply a decolonization approach through a participatory action research lens. This

work is not based in Indigenous methodologies or ceremonies per se; rather, it critically

examines common social practices from an insider perspective to nurture a sense of belonging

and safety for Indigenous students.

Guiding Questions

Through the intentional implementation of a plan aimed at improving the cultural

responsivity of staff (Khalifa, 2020), the generative development of CTE (Donohoo, 2017a,

2017b), and a greater meaningful integration of the First Peoples Principles of Learning (First

Nations Education Steering Committee, 2015), the future envisioned state is to develop a deep

sense of belonging, student success, and community involvement at NBMS to help reduce the

achievement gap of Indigenous learners. This OIP attempts to improve and reconcile student

struggles by centring student voices from the margins (Safir & Dugan, 2021).

There are three fundamental questions driving this PoP. First, how might educational

leaders begin to engage various school community members to deconstruct systemic barriers and

to develop and earn the trust and credibility of the families and students they serve? Second, how

can teachers begin to courageously honour what is working for the students, and what is not

working for the students? Third, how can teachers begin to validate the identities and aspirations

of their students at the margins to understand the necessary changes in pedagogy required to towards effective practices of equity and inclusion for student achievement?

This OIP invites educational administrators to apply transformative leadership through adaptive practices to create conditions for CTE to take shape, but it also moves towards informed teaching practices of equity transformation in schools. NBMS teachers may, for the first time, come to appreciate the need to establish a developmental approach to exploring race, racism, and unconscious bias in schools (Benson & Fiarman, 2020) to broaden their understanding and to implement culturally responsive practices in their classrooms. Without courageous conversations about race, educators will not be able to offer authentic, strength-based expectations of Indigenous students while upholding the cultural safety of their learners. All educators need to work in relation with their students, one to one, to establish and build upon learning about their students as people first. Such straightforward practices have the potential to begin to bring history and theory into focus for teachers if they are willing to listen without advice or judgement. According to Khalifa (2020), it is necessary to recognize that building trust is necessary to effectively lead minoritized communities. Therefore, school educators, including administrators and teachers alike, must invite parents and communities into their work to push back on an education system that is a school-centric, colonial enterprise.

Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

Propelling this vision for change is NBMS teachers' lack of collective efficacy around establishing a sense of belonging for Indigenous students that has perpetuated the academic learning gap. A combination of transformative and CRSL goals through adaptive actions will be implemented; the theoretical underpinnings of these leadership models will be realized through a critical social justice lens. Teachers whose pedagogy is informed by critical social justice beliefs

know that no straightforward recipe for teaching practice is possible. As Bettencourt (1993) pointed out, "Practice is never a simple application of general rules to concrete situations. . . . Practice and theory, like knowledge and experience, stand in a relation of mutual adaptation, of mutual questioning, and of mutual illumination" (pp. 47–48). Critical social justice work recognizes the ethical necessity to consider the knowledge developed by students in the context of their local culture as viable and genuine to develop equity in systems (Bentley, 2003).

For the process of social justice to be effective, leaders must critically reflect on themselves, mindfully consider others, and then take corresponding action; this is praxis in leadership (Furman, 2012). DeMatthews (2018) explained that praxis emphasizes "learning through reflection, being hopeful, and acknowledging and working toward the new possibilities that lay ahead [and goes beyond the idea of practice, which involves] wrestling with the daily realities and complexities of the principalship" (p. 147). Reflection and action take place within five dimensions of Furman's (2012) social justice leadership praxis framework: personal, interpersonal, communal, systemic, and ecological. Through praxis, the dimensions build on each other beginning with the personal dimension and expanding outward to the ecological dimension (see Figure 2).

Discussion of the guiding questions is intended to lead teachers towards the development of a shared reality, to understand their students as contributors in the process as they co-construct meaningful learning opportunities. Simultaneously, given the increased time for student–teacher engagement through the development of focused student-support time built into the teacher's weekly schedule, both parties have an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the other (Halbert & Kaser, 2022). This process will draw from real-world examples and innovative concepts to improve CTE, substantiated by student artifacts and as dialectic occurrences.

Figure 2

The Dimensions of Social Justice Leadership
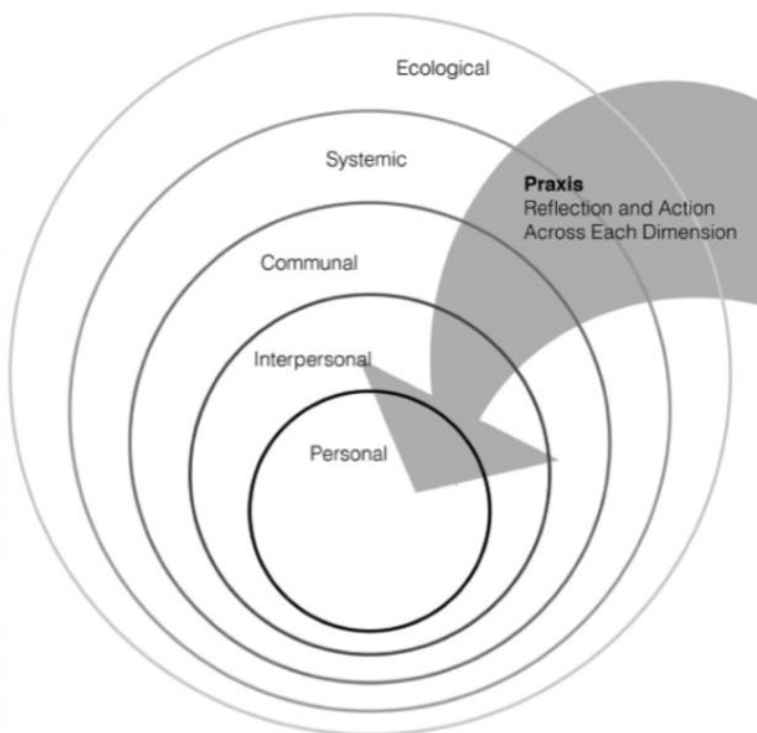
Note. Adapted from *Social Justice Leadership as Praxis: Developing Capacities through preparation programs* by G. Furman, 2012, *Educational Administration Quarterly, 48*(2), 147.

According to Safir and Dugan (2021), although school transformation requires coherence, coherence alone will not transform a pedagogy of compliance into a pedagogy of voice or an oppressive culture into an antiracist one. In a measured and strategic approach, educational leaders need to be able to shift core mindsets and ways of working, to be constantly, relentlessly, and purposefully gathering data at the margins. Less-heard voices must be prioritized as teachers learn to listen deeply to their students and convey, in culturally affirming ways, that they are willing to learn alongside their students (Safir & Dugan, 2021). The shift of mindset requires teachers to see themselves as partners in learning with students, not as experts (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Six Key Aspects of Social Justice Pedagogy

The Art of Social Justice Pedagogy (AOSJP)

- Warm Demander → Develop your students as human beings first
- Social Justice Curriculum → Teach a curriculum that helps students understand the real world
- Safe Classroom Community → Protect your students in a potentially dangerous world
- Knowledge of Students → Start where your students are, not where you want or imagine them to be
- Students as Intellectuals → Develop your students as community of warrior scholars
- Teacher as Coach → Let your students do the work

Note. Adapted from *Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation*, by S. Safir and J. Dugan, 2021, p. 139. Copyright 2021 by Corwin.

More specifically, NBMS teachers need to see Indigenous students as the singular individuals they are to fully understand their unique stories. According to Safir and Dugan (2021), "Gathering [data] is a practice of humanization and liberation, not a technical act done by data-driven educators" (p. 170). Effective change can be realized through these intentional practices, as teachers continue to reflect upon their own epistemological lens. Through these experiences, teachers may then be able to look outward on the poor academic achievement of

NBMS Indigenous students who have expressed feelings of marginalization. Setting safe environmental conditions to invite teachers to take risks in practicing a new form of pedagogy will also help the growth of CTE for the school faculty. This OIP is a journey of one school's efforts towards permeating Indigenous ways of knowing and being throughout the community, while developing CTE rooted in meaningful shifts for culturally responsive pedagogy.

Reducing further effects of racism on Indigenous students while simultaneously aiming to develop a stronger sense of belonging in school requires many considerations. First, cultivating an environment where teachers and administrators can talk openly and courageously about race is essential (Singleton, 2015). Next, there exists a need to highlight one's reflexive ability to consider and identify where racial bias interferes with school goals. Finally, a plan to take decisive action to uncover, address, and eliminate the impact of Canada's residential schools and its history of systemic racism, policies, and practices must be generated.

Despite the plans disseminated from provincial, district, and school-based levels, the journey towards equity for Indigenous learners has a long way to go. Engagement at the school level is dependent on multiple factors; at the core, however, are the administration's priorities and the teachers' individual willingness to actualize equitable practices in the classroom. Given that a gap in Indigenous student achievement and attendance has consistently been observed year after year accentuates the urgency for change. The most crucial step in the process is developing relationships and collaborating with all groups moving forward through a culturally responsive lens. According to Khalifa (2020), CRSL is one of the most important levers for positive change and reform in schools and can be expressed in four ways: critical self-reflection, curriculum and instruction, school context and climate, and community engagement.

This OIP calls for a major reconsideration in service offerings by the way educators respond to achievement gaps and student learning—especially of NBMS Indigenous students. The district's strategic plan aims to promote equity and inclusion at all levels, but it fails to provide strategies for teachers to take account of their personal inherent biases, with the intention to maintain a growth mindset about the reality for improved Indigenous student achievement in school (Benson & Fiarman, 2020). According to Safir and Dugan (2021), the need to support teachers in identifying implicit biases and fostering a deepened cultural awareness and responsiveness is the important equity work that represents a fluid yet structured practice grounded in core values—radical inclusion, curiosity, creativity, and courage. These values are centred on street-level data as educators learn to listen deeply to their students, uncover the root causes of inequities, reimagine current approaches in partnership with the greater community, and actively move a change agenda with a mindset of courage.

Conclusion

Chapter 1 offers an overview of the organizational context of SD-Evolve as well as an in-depth consideration of the PoP and accompanying questions to consider in this OIP. The problem seems not to be in the willingness to change, but more so in applying a vision and framework that allows school community members to feel confident to effect change themselves. I hope that by reviewing the current educational leadership research, I can better outline and influence teachers' collaborative instructional efforts while developing professional discourse. Strong teacher networks strengthen the overall achievement of all students through CTE. The contextual material outlined in this chapter is further developed in Chapter 2 through the study of leadership approaches and frameworks for leading the change process.

Chapter 2: Planning and Development

This OIP looks at how educational practitioners can improve the Indigenous student experience at NMBS by addressing the academic achievement. The school, divisional, and provincial goals to support Indigenous populations requires that Indigenous students be given equitable opportunities to have a sense of belonging and experience similar academic achievements as non-Indigenous students. This chapter provides the vision for change at NBMS with implications for SD-Evolve moving forward.

Leadership Approaches to Change

To propel change, I have selected specific responsive leadership models that are most suitable for leading change within the NBMS context. The theoretical underpinnings of these models have been selected and considered through a critical social justice lens as shared in the previous chapter. This can be achieved through elements of transformative leadership, CRSL, and adaptive practices to develop capacities with the classroom as the intersection of change, and through building confidence in teachers to anchor pedagogy through equity and inclusive practices of Indigenous learners. Further investigation of how transformative leadership, CRSL, and adaptive practices is examined in this section.

Transformative Leadership

For transformation to happen, leadership and experiences need to inspire change and cause a shift in viewpoint. Transformative leadership begins by identifying a specific set of beliefs and values focused on equity, excellence, inclusion, and social justice as the basis for creating conscientious learning on the part of the educators and students alike about global injustice, democracy, and the dialectic between individual accountability and social responsibility (Shields et al., 2018). This leadership approach is essential to this OIP as a model

that finds its roots in social justice theory. Transformative leadership explains the ways in which the inequalities of the outside world impact the outcomes of what happens internally, but it also acknowledges external barriers to student achievement. Transformative leadership includes practices that critique inequities, demonstrate high expectations, engage others in explicit dialogue, and seek remedies that address pedagogy, culture, and inequitable policies (Shields, 2010). For example, by drawing from humanizing NBMS student-focused data, such as a student interview versus a standardized provincial assessment, transformative leadership will allow staff to examine explicit realities of students, their outside world, and lived experiences to figure out how best to propel change to the desired future state of the school.

Sun and Leithwood (2012) indicated that "efforts to reform and improve schools by making them more effective are embodied in the concept of transformative leadership" (p. 389). Therefore, a transformative leadership approach is essential for NBMS educational leaders to "act courageously and continuously to ensure more equitable learning environments and pedagogical practices for all children" (Shields, 2010, p. 584). The use of this leadership model will awaken a persistent, critical social justice lens for teachers instead of the occasional and self-determined individualized PD experiences that remain private and less collaborative (see Figure 4). Transformative leadership theory (Shields, 2011, 2016) comprises two basic and parallel theoretical propositions and eight supporting tenets (see Figure 4). The first proposition pertains to individual, private good (Labaree, 1997) and posits that when the learning environment is inclusive, respectful, and equitable (Capper & Young, 2014), students are more able to focus on the academics, thus improving the distal outcomes of academic achievement. The second public good proposition is that when educational institutions address such public good issues as

democracy, civic life, and citizenship, then democratic society will be strengthened through the participation of knowledgeable and caring citizens.

The eight tenets represented in Figure 4 indicate that one begins with a mandate for deep and equitable change that requires knowing oneself, one's organization, and one's community. Once the mandate has been accepted, it is important to include several equitable approaches to both policy and practice. These include changing knowledge frameworks to ensure equity (e.g., becoming culturally and linguistically responsive; eliminating deficit thinking; and addressing racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and other prejudices).

Figure 4

Two Parallel Theoretical Propositions and Eight Supporting Tenets of Transformative

Leadership Theory
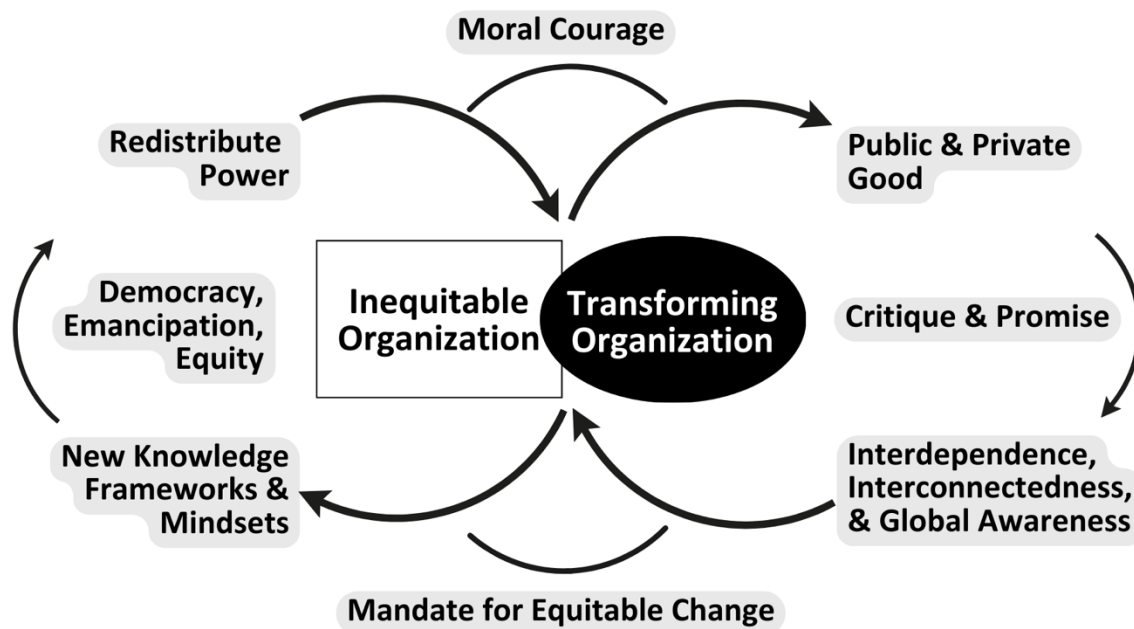
Note. Adapted from "Transformative Leadership Approaches to Inclusion, Equity and Social Justice," by C. M. Shields and K. A. Hesbol, 2020, *Journal of School Leadership*, *30*(1), p. 2 (https://doi.org/10.1177/1052684619873343). Copyright 2020 by SAGE.

Redistributing inequitable instances of power and balancing public and private good are also necessary. Pedagogical changes include an emphasis on democracy, emancipation, equity, and justice as well as ensuring that students learn about the global community through understanding interrelationships, interdependence, and global awareness. Finally, transformative leaders ensure both critique and promise, and, recognizing that transformation always involves some pushback, they must also summon considerable moral courage. Transformative leadership theory is normative; its benefits are intended for both individuals and the collective good, with special attention paid to those who are from nondominant groups, including those who are the most recent arrivals, regardless of language, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, academic achievement, or immigrant status (Theoharis, 2007).

Transformative leaders look inward as well as outward (Theoharis, 2007). The transformative leadership approach takes a considerable outward gaze when examining problems and considers the broader impacts of the organization on society and in the local community's invested and interested members. To this end, transformative leadership interrogates the vision and purpose of the organization, developing a commitment (Theoharis, 2007) to the vision and how Indigenous students attending NBMS and their families are attended to in that context. Historically, SD-Evolve and NBMS staff have grappled to better understand their role in relation to broader systems and Indigenous student experiences. Integrating transformative leadership into this element of the change emphasizes the need for Indigenous learners to receive equitable opportunities in education that consider the impacts that historical, colonial systems of oppression have had on their lives. In addition, transformative leadership offers a contextually grounded, equity-driven approach to addressing the PoP.

Transformative leadership prioritizes the ethical obligations of the leader (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). It is through this ethical commitment and integrity that transformative leaders begin to develop effective, meaningful, and trusting relationships within their community (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). Subsequently, the trusting relationships that evolve through the transformative approach can then be leveraged to interrogate an organizational vision and student priority plan to identify inherent inequities within the school and its culture. The question becomes, what kind of leadership will make an impact in righting wrongs that are linked to long-standing systemic structures such as school timetables and contracts, political realities, and how decisions are made about resources, as examples of inherent complexities?

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

CRSL is derived from culturally responsive pedagogy, which involves philosophies, practices, and policies that create inclusive schooling environments for students and families from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds (Khalifa, 2020). Common practices include emphasizing high expectations for student achievement; working to develop a critical consciousness among both students and faculty to challenge inequities in the larger society; incorporating the history, values, and cultural knowledge of students' home communities into the school curriculum; and creating school and district organizational structures that empower students and parents from diverse, racial, and ethnic communities (Johnson & Fuller, 2014).

CRSL finds its origins from an earlier iteration of a term that was coined by Ladson-Billings (1994) as culturally relevant teaching. This term describes how teaching practice that is culturally relevant incorporates three core principles within the curriculum and teaching practice: holding high expectations for all students; assisting students in the development of cultural competence; and guiding students on how to develop a critical and cultural consciousness, where

the uniqueness of each student is not just acknowledged, but also nurtured (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Looking to ourselves for context enables educators to see our students as products of their lived experiences, revealing the ways in which they, like us, sometimes feel included as well as excluded (Ladson-Billings, 2011). Once educators can learn to examine themselves in the mirror and reflect and realize their own identities, beliefs, and practices, they can become more adept at examining students' unique positionalities in learning and personal well-being. Although culturally responsive teaching suggests that educators work to understand their individual biases, CRSL expands beyond the personal to larger oppressive structures that need to be addressed broadly in public schooling systems related to structural and institutional concerns; these align directly to the necessary lens of transformative change.

Now reconsider CRSL: it requires fostering a movement away from oppressive structures within the education system to instead focus on the inequities of power, privilege, and the culture of low expectations of marginalized students (Sleeter, 2011). Johnson (2014) explained that CRSL ensures elevated expectations, empowers individuals, integrates cultural and historical practices into the curriculum, and develops a critical thinking culture that aids in identifying systemic inequities. These tenets align closely with the critical social justice lens as the necessary focal points needed to address the PoP. Khalifa et al. (2016) explained that CRSL addresses hegemonic practices while validating and accepting culture.

Adaptive Practices

Heifetz et al. (2009) positioned adaptive leadership as dynamic and responsive to the constantly changing environment facing organizations. In this adaptive approach, aligned with constant change, the leader is asked to get away from the "dance floor, [which represents managerial tasks, and get] on the balcony" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 7) to gain a broader view of

the challenges facing the organization. This perspective is meant to help the leader observe both external and internal conditions to diagnose the problems facing the organization as well as develop a solution to meet the organizational vision. However, the actual work of solving crises or preparing the organization for change is not to be done solely by the leader (Beerel, 2021; Whitaker, 2014). Instead, the leader mobilizes resources and fosters an environment where the employees become empowered to produce solutions that align with and support the vision (Heifetz et al., 2009). This work is hard as it challenges the status quo, employee egos, and sense of self (Beerel, 2021) and can lead to resistance. Thus, the leader must regulate conflicts and maintain pressure within the organization (Heifetz et al., 2009, pp. 155–164) to ensure employee learning and growth is occurring towards the tasks of meeting the goals of the organization.

Heffernan (2012) explained that conflict can be productive and lead to better solutions when accomplished within a collaborative team. Heifetz et al. (2009) also advocated for the leader orchestrating conflict within the organization to develop an adaptive culture. The hallmarks of adaptive culture parallel the scientific mindset (Shewhart & Deming, 1939), where challenges do not have clear definition and require new learning, and employees are encouraged to question, take risks, and work in collaboration to seek answers. Such a culture requires a high degree of trust and vulnerability (B. Brown, 2018) as well as psychological safety to create a learning culture (Edmondson, 2008) where past solutions are discarded as the context changes.

Applying adaptive practices to engage educators to resolve perceived problems has the potential to create feelings of dislocation and lack of equilibrium for employees, ergo trust and psychological safe zones are necessary to foster positive change within the school. Therefore, transformative and CRSL practices are necessary to anchor the successful implementation and sustainability of the ongoing change initiatives directly impacting Indigenous learners at NBMS.

Framework for Leading the Change Process

Reflecting upon the guiding questions of the previous chapter, a collaborative learning environment among educators is key to building a school community that is culturally responsive (Heifetz et al., 2009). Edmondson (2008) described how developing psychological safety can be combined with accountability to help employees responsively adapt their pedagogy. High levels of psychological safety and high accountability can create a "warm demander" (Safir & Dugan, 2021, pp. 199) culture that maintains high expectations for performance and also high levels of support for inquiry and failure. This OIP seeks to place teacher leaders where "the focus is on collaboration and learning in the service of high-performance outcomes" (Edmondson, 2008, p. 64) especially for Indigenous students at NBMS, while creating safe spaces for critical discussion on positionality and possible biases, both individual and institutional, that impact teachers' work at school.

Edmondson's (2008, 2019) work aligns with fixing the maladaptive culture of teacher accountability that Fullan (2011) described as necessary to create the conditions where teachers feel ready to deprivatize their classrooms (Hembree, 2010), challenging themselves and their colleagues about practice and barriers to instruction focused on Indigenous students. Administrators are challenged to model these collaborative and critical conversations (Heffernan, 2012) to help teachers buy into new accountability structures that foster open dialogue and critique focused on the inequities of power, privilege, and a culture of schooling that was developed during times of colonial domination (Fullan, 2011).

Critical dialogue can begin to change teacher beliefs around collective efficacy (Donohoo, 2017a, 2017b) and shift existing conversations from deficit thinking to collaboratively talking about teaching and learning in the classroom (Hembree, 2010). This is

challenging work. The use of multiple yet well-aligned designs to support collaborative conversations can consolidate a culture of collaborative inquiry (Donohoo, 2013) where teachers and administrators work together to improve student achievement using differentiated instruction. Donohoo (2017a, 2017b) noted that developing collective efficacy has the greatest impact on student learning outcomes as evidenced by Hattie's effect-size studies. To support such empowered collaboration, in addition to flattening power hierarchies, educators will need support in leading and listening to critical conversations (Heffernan, 2012). NBMS, like many other schools, prioritizes being nice in teacher talk over giving critical, constructive feedback (Burnside, 2021; MacDonald, 2011). Developing a culture where teachers talk openly about their practice and receive feedback is not easy (Fullan, 2021), but the benefits of deprivatization (Hembree, 2010) are key to the success of this OIP.

Collaborative and action-oriented practices at the school level build towards fostering collective efficacy and ongoing learning. Through various trial and error efforts and opportunities of professional dialogue, teachers can help to create and sustain an adaptive school culture (Heifetz et al., 2009) that must remain responsive to a constantly changing world (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017; Soini et al., 2016).

Considering the Framework Within an Organizational Analysis

I have selected two frameworks in a combined approach for leading this change process because both examine change through people's mental models and actions: Deszca et al.'s (2020) CPM is complemented through the alignment of Safir and Dugan's (2021) ETC. The ETC provides the necessary framework to cultivate cultural responsivity and centre student voices while still moving through the stages of the CPM. Table 1 offers a juxtaposition of the cycles of each model.

Table 1

Cycles of the Change Path Model and the Equity Transformation Cycle

	CPM		ETC: Protocol	
Cycle	Phase	Description	Action	Description
First	Awakening	Prepare; create awareness	Listen	With a mindset of radical inclusion
Second	Mobilization	Organize action plan and resources	Uncover	With a mindset of curiosity
Third	Acceleration	Drive change actions	Reimagine	With a mindset of creativity
Fourth	Institutionalization	Evaluate change, celebrate milestones, modify, plan for future considerations and next steps	Move	With a mindset of courage

Note. CPM = change path model; ETC = equity transformation cycle. The CPM is adapted from *Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit*, by G. Deszca, C. Ingols, and T. Cawsey, 2020, p. 54. Copyright 2020 by Sage. The ETC is adapted from *Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation*, by S. Safir and J. Dugan, 2021, p. 74. Copyright 2021 by Corwin.

The Change Path Model

The CPM combines process and prescription that are essential to this OIP, while offering a practical structure that will help in the implementation, measuring, and monitoring of sustainable change actions to propel the plan forward to the desired outcomes. Deszca et al.'s (2020) awakening stage calls for change leaders to first identify the need for change through an analysis of data that will help highlight the gap between the present and future state. Deszca et al. also stressed the need to develop a strong vision for change and communicate why it is needed.

Although the CPM is not specifically designed for the transformative change envisioned in this OIP, it can be complemented with Safir and Dugan's (2021) ETC as teachers and school leaders engage in conversations with students to develop a shared understanding and a beginning towards greater collective efficacy. The ETC keeps the plan on path to be equitable and responsive to diversity, acknowledging personal and collective barriers and awareness through the voices and agency of marginalized students, particularly Indigenous students in schools.

The mobilization stage will focus on examining the power and cultural dynamics at play leveraging systems, structures, and change agents within NBMS towards the vision. The acceleration stage highlights the importance of engaging stakeholders in planning and the implementation of change actions using appropriate tools to manage the process while providing support, empowering staff, and building capacity. The institutionalization stage addresses evaluating and monitoring the progress of change actions and making modifications as needed to attain the envisioned future state for the school (Cawsey et al., 2016).

Equity Transformation Cycle

This OIP calls for educators to reconsider why and how to respond to the achievement gaps of Indigenous learners at NBMS (Safir & Dugan, 2021). Therefore, the type of organizational change plan required must be anticipatory and strategic. The district's strategic plan aims at promoting equity and inclusion at all levels (SD-Evolve, 2021b). The ETC protocol was selected because it supports teachers to identify ways to close the achievement gaps for students, through a variety of cogenerative dialogue options (Cogens). The important equity work developed though the ETC protocol represents a fluid yet grounded process in core values of radical inclusion, curiosity, creativity, and courage centred on humanizing student data as educators learn to listen deeply to their students, uncover the root causes of inequities, reimagine

current approaches in partnership with the greater community, and actively move a change

agenda with a mindset of courage (Safir & Dugan, 2021).

This work also requires a mindset for CTE, as it rests in mirroring critical colleagueship;

an ideal model for NBMS. It fosters teachers' realization of the advantages of collaborative

processes; growth can occur even in initial contrived collegiality and in comfortable

collaboration (Datnow, 2011; Glazier et al., 2017; Owen, 2014). According to Katz and Dack

(2012), collaborative inquiry is the "methodology for moving learning focus forward" (p. 39). As

shown in Table 1, the CPM and ETC protocol will be used to (a) identify what the coalition of

NBMS teachers need to know (deep listening), (b) apply a mindset of curiosity as they uncover

what students say, (c) imagine new ways to address the student needs they have learned about

with a mindset of creativity, and (d) apply these creative solutions supporting student

achievement (with a mindset of courage) through regular teaching practice.

Organizational Change Readiness

Change is complex. To propel the desired change in any organization, leaders must

identify areas that need to be shifted or overhauled in the transformative process. This section

examines how NBMS may begin to engage in the process cycle for improvement through a

framework to proceed with internal decision-making and transformation that will support the

long-term development of CTE towards closing the achievement gap of Indigenous students.

This section also contextualizes the importance and need for change while examining the impact

of internal and external factors that make the process complex.

It is important that, as a member of the dominant settler-colonial majority, I be keenly

aware of my privilege as a non-Indigenous person, realizing this factor alone may hinder my

ability to identify biases as being colonized or potentially discriminatory. Therefore, having an

analysis performed by the local Indigenous communities would yield additional critical insights that I may not recognize. This reaffirms the need for Indigenous collaboration in every stage of the process. Figure 5 outlines the organizational congruence model that was used to help determine a framework of action to address the PoP.

A gap analysis is the process of "defining and describing a desired future state in contrast to an organization's present reality" (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 52). In defining the path needed for change, it is important for a change leader to engage in critical organizational analysis that will identify potential key areas to focus change. This OIP is informed by acknowledging the considerable achievement gap that persists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (SD-Evolve, 2022). Resulting from this data, SD-Evolve has committed to a goal within the strategic plan that focuses on Indigenous education as research continues to tell us "closing the racialized achievement [opportunity] gap has been one of the central issues in education research for over a decade" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 40). As Dantley (2005) suggested, transformative school leaders are essential—those who have reflected on the major issues of marginalization and undemocratic practice in schools and have courageously decided that change can take place with hope, faith, and transformative optimism. These leaders are embracing the struggle toward a transformed existence in schools, the communities they serve, and in society as a whole.

NBMS must begin to navigate away from its current culture of complacency using a strategic planning process (internal context) to develop organizational change readiness. At the same time, realizing the mandate of the BC Teachers Act, 2011, Standard 9 (external context), requires

> educators respect and value the history of First Nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada and
> the impact of the past on the present and future. Educators contribute towards truth,

Figure 5

Organizational Congruence Model Applied to the Problem of Practice
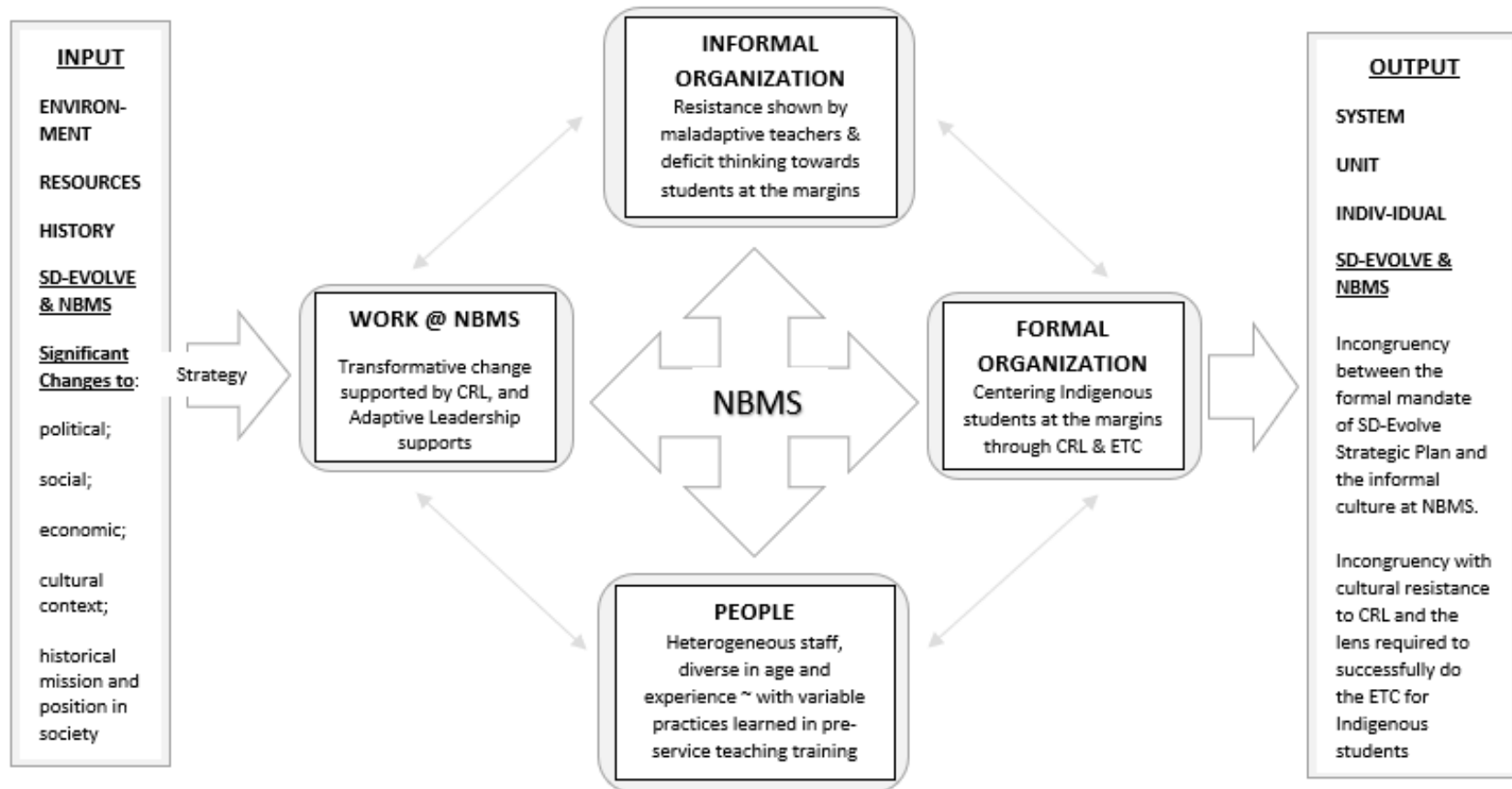
Note. Adapted from "Organizational Frame Bending: Principles for Managing Reorientation" by D. Nadler and M. Tushman 1999, in *The Academy of Management Executive*, *3*(3), p. 194. (https://doi.org/10.5465/AME.1989.4274738). Copyright 1999 by the Academy of Management.

> reconciliation, and healing. Educators foster a deeper understanding of ways of knowing
>
> and being, histories, and cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis. (BC Teachers'
>
> Council, 2019, p. 5)

This teaching standard demands high accountability, but with limited supports to achieve the

necessary goals for teachers and, consequently, for Indigenous learners. However, these external

and internal contexts (Armenakis & Harris, 2001) if leveraged appropriately, can help create

urgency for change towards the envisioned state.

NBMS is challenged by the consistent achievement gap of its Indigenous students. A

prominent compounding factor, particularly of the culture of some NBMS teachers, perpetuate a

deficit mindset related to the underperformance of Indigenous learners. For example, some

educators dismiss their efforts to support learners by placing blame on parents for lack of

involvement, or upon the students by suggesting they are simply unmotivated or lack valuing

education altogether. Furthermore, some staff maintain a deficit mindset towards their site-based

administration and SD-Evolve for misdirected priorities (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Donohoo,

2017a, 2017b; Hill, 2017; Yeh, 2017). This (internal) organization pressure exacerbates a highly

contentious environment reinforcing low efficacy and disbelief in the collective capability to

address a sense of student connectedness, well-being, and strategic efficacy towards the

Indigenous student achievement gap within the school itself. This lack of collective teacher

efficacy may be a key contributing factor to the gap of achievement for NBMS Indigenous

learners that this OIP aims to address.

Rather than envisioning change as a linear process, this OIP relies on Nadler and

Tushman's (1999) model to interpret change as iterative and ongoing. Bentley (2003)

commented that critical theorists recognize the ethical necessity of applying the principle of

epistemological symmetry, such that they consider the knowledge developed by students in the context of their local culture as viable and genuine (Bentley, 2003). Although opportunity may seem abundant through SD-Evolve's strategic plan, the lack of support for school-based leaders to engage with teachers to address maladaptive practices can become too obscure and unclear for some administrators to effectively address.

Desired Future State and Present Realities

According to Cawsey et al. (2016), "an organization's readiness for change will influence its ability to both attend to environmental signals for change and listen to internal voices saying that change is needed" (p. 106). As indicated in Chapter 1, SD-Evolve's 2022 strategic plan shows that the district is no longer comfortable with maintaining status quo as it is beginning to work toward combatting and eliminating barriers to student success through staff self-reflection on biases, stereotypes, and the issue of privilege. One of NBMS's foci in alignment with the board is improving student learning by providing equity of access to all students while allocating resources strategically to meet student needs. As CRSL informs CTE, the outcome is to empower Indigenous learners to believe they can reach higher levels of achievement irrespective of their age, family, socioeconomic status, or cultural background. The cohesion of transformative leadership, CRSL, and application of adaptive practices enables an environment where students can acquire knowledge and skills needed to become responsible and productive members of the global community.

NBMS is considered a priority school as approximately 40% of the parents earn below a low-income measure (SD-Evolve, 2021b). Unfortunately, the current reality is that preexisting beliefs continue to be apparent as teachers feel powerless to address the gap challenge and view it as an external factor beyond their control (Donohoo, 2017a, 2017b; Hill, 2017). Bandura

(1997) asserted that "pre-existing efficacy beliefs create attentional, interpretive, and memory biases in the processing of somatic information" (p. 109). Therefore, a shift is needed from the current state of low expectations and efficacy to the desired future state of CTE that focuses on closing achievement gaps irrespective of students' backgrounds.

Possible Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

Determining possible solutions to address this PoP requires careful consideration of the core dimensions of SD-Evolve and the further contextual information of NBMS. More importantly, taking time to identify limitations of the selected change models is essential when the work is focused on equity towards complex challenges with deeply contextualized levels of student agency data. As demonstrated in Figure 5, the components of the organization include the people, culture, formal structures and processes, and overall work involved in closing the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in terms of academic achievement at school.

Three solutions are proposed:

1. PD for NBMS educators: "Understanding Indigenous Worldviews and Workshops to Explicitly Address Pedagogical Practices That Are Culturally Responsive" (see Archibald & Hare, 2017; Child & Benwell, 2015, as cited in BC MoE, 2020; Khalifa, 2020; Steeves, 2019).

2. Indigenous voice and agency: Indigenous students need a voice to guide their teachers about their ideas of how to decolonize classroom teaching and assessment practices.

3. Site-based collaborative inquiry framework: NBMS teachers will adopt a student–teacher practice that is supported and guided by the ETC (Safir & Dugan, 2021) to challenge the consistent achievement gap of Indigenous students.

These solutions align with the provincial goals and aspirations of embedding well-being and Indigenous knowledge and perspectives throughout all learning environments as part of the mental health in schools strategy (BC MoE, 2019, p. 10). This OIP strives to address deep-seated equity challenges that have persisted for decades, emerging from systemic racism, implicit bias, and existing colonial culture in Canadian schools still impacting the success of Indigenous learners. Considering key factors, I have determined a framework used to evaluate the three solutions presented, considering resources required and criteria for each solution, as outlined in Table 2. Structures and pedagogies privilege some learners while disenfranchising others. Consequently, the change plan must decolonize school and district structures, through transformative and culturally responsive leadership, while nurturing opportunities for voice and agency of the students, parents, Knowledge-Keepers, Elders, and the Indigenous community at large (Archibald & Hare, 2017; Hare, 2012; Lopez, 2020).

Solution 1: PD Series for NBMS Educators

According to Theoharis (2007), raising student achievement is the core of needed improvements for marginalized students. All other derivations of solutions are a means to this end. This solution is predicated on decolonizing learning practices in NBMS classrooms, the school, and the district in its entirety. Considering the ways student and adult learning can be symmetrical, changing how teachers learn, transforms how they design innovative learning environments, resulting in how students learn. Therefore, system improvement rests on adults engaged in CTE towards meaningful learning environments for Indigenous learners (Fullan, 2011, 2021).

Table 2

Solution Comparison: Evaluative Resources and Criteria

Solution	Resources required			Criteria		
	Time	Human	Fiscal	Raise Indigenous learner achievement	Improve structures and systems [a]	Strengthen school community and culture
Create a professional development series for NBMS educators	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Decolonize classroom teaching and assessment practices	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium
Establish a collaborative inquiry framework guided by ETC	High	High	High	High	High	High

Note. Measurements are on a 3-point scale from *high* to *low*.

[a] Improvements to come by enhancing staff capacity (empowering staff) and recentring Indigenous students.

Developing adult learner capacity through collective professionalism fosters a shared vision of why and how to change pedagogy and assessment practices (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Rincón-Gallardo, 2019). Although Solution 1 focuses on decolonizing NBMS learning practices, simultaneously, this solution shifts adult and student learning experiences, while fostering shared leadership. This is referenced by Lopez (2020) as collaborative synergy and learning leadership networks of *catalytic affiliation*: the effect of district leaders and teachers

collaborating and learning together (McGregor et al., 2019). Dismantling colonial teaching and learning leadership is fundamental to Solution 1. Similarly, making strides in decolonial practices at NBMS builds momentum towards new pedagogy with anticolonial roots intrinsic in this remedy. Educators practice approaches to engage all learners as they experience how to un-learn, recentre, and re-story how power and privilege exists in schools (Battiste, 2013; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; L. T. Smith et al., 2019).

Solution 1 aligns well with transformative and culturally responsive leadership approaches for change, the PoP, and NBMS's focus on centring Indigenous learners. Collectively seeking to understand the current reality and the historical context leading towards this needed change requires educators to listen, uncover, and awaken the learning community. The collective inquiry for change calls upon all representative members of the school community to co-lead and support the change at the intersection of school ecosystems at the classroom level (Safir & Dugan, 2021).

Benefits

The key advantage of Solution 1 is that it directly improves success for learners. It cultivates quality teaching and learning through collaborative expertise (C. Brown et al., 2016; Bryk et al., 2017; Hattie, 2015) and embeds equity-based learning leadership essential for student and adult well-being (Cherkowski &Walker, 2016; Harris & Jones, 2020). Teacher professional learning opportunities are core to the NBMS learning culture: More than 86% of teachers voluntarily engage in inquiry through one or more collaborative networks over the course of a school year. Voluntary and invitational professional learning gives educators autonomy to match the needs of their learners with their professional learning needs (Harris et al., 2017; Timperley et al., 2017), resulting in enhanced well-being and control over their work (Cherkowski et al.,

2020). Timelines and scope of the solution can also be managed. The long-term goal is that all learning environments are founded on decolonial, culturally responsive and culturally sustainable pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 2019; Paris, 2021; Snow et al., 2021). Students learning in classrooms where educators embrace such practices will see impact. Based on past experiences of the school, when a core team changes practice, in subsequent years more NBMS educators join to continue to transform pedagogy. Learning is held collaboratively as the benefits for learners widens over time as more teachers and school leaders grow equity, well-being, and decolonial practices.

Drawbacks

Transforming practice for all NBMS educators is a long-term plan, suggesting that for this solution to be successful it needs to be scaffolded over time. In this way, decolonized practices will gain momentum as more Indigenous learners benefit while the teaching pedagogy continues to transform. Although there is a strong existing culture of learning networks at NBMS, refinements to practice in collaborative professionalism need to occur by strengthening the focus on student work and matching practice to what is going on for the learners (Halbert & Kaser, 2016; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). Another potential area of concern is that decolonizing approaches to pedagogy and assessment face the danger of replicating colonial structures (Barlo et al., 2021; L. T. Smith et al., 2019; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012). Therefore, core to this solution is ensuring the voice and agency of Indigenous students and parents, Knowledge Keepers, and Elders to inform change. Relational accountability demands being true partners, learning and transforming together.

Solution 2: Indigenous Voice and Agency

Solution 2 enacts critical social justice by addressing and changing structures and systems of the school. Whereas not every principal restructures their school in the same manner, administration at NBMS has the agency to revise the school's schedule and framework to provide opportunity to embed regular time for focused student support between teachers and students and collaborative activities and learning between colleagues, structured within the school day. The impetus in revisioning the school schedule is to foster greater equity for marginalized students by developing a predictability of ear-marked time and space purposed to build deep relations within the school day with Indigenous learners and then to adapt learning goals towards individualized success.

The second layer involves enriching the Indigenous student experience through land-based learning and use of an Indigenous gathering space on site. These practices are not designed with a simple field experience in mind, but rather, to develop core competencies of learners connected to curricular outcomes while students engage on the land. The expectation to uphold a high expectation (Safir & Dugan, 2021) for land-based learning to honour criteria to have Indigenous students share and teach about their culture is a factor towards deepened rigour and access to educational opportunities (Theoharis, 2007). Decolonizing key structures gets to the heart of equity. School and districts are built on colonial paradigms and (in)equity is also evidenced structurally. Without considering the disruption of structural sources of inequity (such as the school schedule), new pedagogical practices may not change equity outcomes, and may unintentionally exacerbate inequity. Interrogation of structural foundations needs to be considered through school scheduling, staffing allocations, hiring practices, course choice options, and funding allocations (Watkins et al., 2018). At NBMS, I examine decision-making

and direction-making structures for inequity and coloniality. Student voice and empowerment are often lacking in many school structures as the traditional grammar of schooling is top-down and hierarchical (Hubband & Datnow, 2020; Tyack & Tobin, 1994). As a result, altering structural dimensions, which remains within my agency as principal, offers hope that learners and partners will experience greater well-being, belonging, and respect.

Benefits

As in Solution 1, this solution not only improves upon student achievement, it also systemically and relationally supports the improvement to create a more just school environment. Additionally, according to Theoharis (2007), strengthening a school's staff requires the leaders to resist the assumptions that typical teacher education and staff development programs are adequate preparation in substantiating a social justice orientation and practice. The orientation of Solution 2, as explained, suggests leaders increase staff capacity by addressing issues of race, providing ongoing staff development focused on building equity, while developing staff investment in social justice, supervising for justice, and empowering staff (Theoharis, 2007).

I pull from the works of Gooden and Dantley (2012), Capper et al. (2006), and Khalifa (2020); this collective research makes it clear that administrators will either resist or reproduce and reify oppression that is already present in schools. However, school leaders who choose to remain neutral about marginalized student populations cannot become culturally responsive. Solution 2 exemplifies how, through my agency as the principal, I can enact critical school frameworks once I have been reflective both personally and through the iterative processes observed at the school. Both factors are in a constant state of change, combating the ever-morphing systems of oppression that Indigenous students continue to face (M. E. Brown & Trevino, 2006).

Drawbacks

Despite the potential gains, Solution 2 also poses challenges. This level of disruption as a change focus is messy and complex requiring adaptiveness (Mason, 2008; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2017). Decolonizing structure amidst potential backlash is not a short-term change plan. Indeed, school and district leaders and all partners will need high capacity to hold space for deep listening, dissensus, and diverse perspectives, recasting their own power and privilege. A long-range and worthwhile vision may entail first building a strong culture of collaboration, trust, and relational accountability (Barlo et al., 2021; Daly, 2010; Schnellert et al., 2022), then identifying and making transparent structures which are already decolonized, all while slowly and steadily working towards decolonization of more school and district structures.

Solution 3: Site-Based Collaborative Inquiry Framework Guided by ETC

A third solution towards enacting critical social justice involves strengthening the school culture and community. This requires a human connection as administrators and school staff work together to create a warm and welcoming sense of belonging for learners while considering how, when, and why to reach out to the Indigenous community and family members. In some instances, relationship building with students has had direct results, with reports that staff and student felt safer and fewer physical fights occurring at school (Theoharis, 2007). By resisting the historical disconnect between Indigenous families and schools, a social-justice oriented principal has agency to model and create a warm and welcoming school climate by reaching out to the Indigenous community and directly to Indigenous families. According to Theoharis (2007) not only does this help to improve school climate and connections to the community, but also these kinds of invitational connections have potential to result in a positive effect in student achievement.

Benefits

The strength of Solution 3 will require a gentle and time-sensitive engagement modelled by collective groups for greater involvement. The NBMS school administration will help staff to engage more readily to avoid alienation and overcome resistance from those staff members not yet willing to engage. The agency for NBMS staff to engage authentically when ready is a strength of Solution 3. Staff agency is essential to co-construct a comfortable, and positive experience with the Indigenous students and community we serve; one that offers a sense of cohesive efficacy and a comfortable sense of respect among team members supported by school administration. The intention of this strategy is not to cure school practices of racism, but rather, to engage staff in an intermediary, cultural relationality that will prime each member to move through the ETC protocol with various students in their classes. In fact, instead of prioritizing the comfort of the employees at the expense of the students, Solution 3 centres Indigenous families by prioritizing what should be a welcoming and positive sense of belonging as teachers move to multiple opportunities of invitation of fair, equitable and positive support.

Drawbacks

Although the ETC process outlines engagement with diverse educational community partners, actual solutions and potential structures for building community relations is not necessarily intuitive for leaders. Acknowledging the historic disconnect between Indigenous families and schools, this form of resistance serves to challenge and begin to transform the White, middle-class assumptions regarding students, families, and communities that permeate public schools across the country. Opposition to the solution will likely surface from those whose power and privilege are most threatened (Held, 2019; Heifetz & Linsky, 2017). This work sets-out to displace the traditional norms informing public school leadership (Fine, 2017). These

norms have maintained power and privilege for certain groups of people and inherently continue to marginalize Indigenous students. The school administration should expect to face resistance from within the school and even the immediate community, separately from resistance from the district and beyond (Theoharis, 2007). These realities make Solution 3 a more time-sensitive and cautious solution as the leader's agency can become quickly reduced when the resistance by staff or the Indigenous community, or its district is not willing or ready to move forward.

Recommended Solution: A Hybrid of Solution 1 and Solution 2

To meet the goals of my problem of practice, Solutions 1 and 2 are the most promising. Although debiasing efforts seldom work to correct individual behavior (C. M. Gonzalez et al., 2021) the need to close the learning gap of Indigenous learners and furthermore to improve school structures and systems by enhancing staff capacity to centre Indigenous students from the margins naturally exist together. With the application of transformative and adaptive leadership practices, the opportunity to promote psychological safety while focusing on the ethical and moral stewardship of the organization, can remain solution focused.

Solution 2 requires a culturally responsive adeptness yet blends nicely with the idea of collective conversations among staff towards focused student support and collaborative collegial time. This solution requires that not only the staff, but also families and community resources develop solutions to meet the needs of the students. Additionally, ensuring that Indigenous community Knowledge Keepers and Elders are part of decisions, particularly for student land-based learning experiences, is centred on meeting the needs of the students and the local community (Blickem et al., 2018; Bouwmans et al., 2019; Canterino et al., 2020; Sergiovanni, 2005). Additionally, ensuring that stakeholder knowledge is incorporated in decisions optimizes chances of achieving culturally responsive and sustainable practices at NBMS. Having parents

and community agencies present at staff meetings and supporting students and staff in culturally appropriate ways within the building will build cultural capital, paving the way for a culturally responsive school that adheres to the tenets of community mindedness.

Finally, while integrating culturally responsive leadership as an ideal outcome, lessons will not be authentic and relevant to Indigenous students until the staff are able to identify their biases toward other cultures. Schools cannot become culturally responsive until staff confront and mitigate their biases toward different cultures (Futureready, 2022; Hammond, 2015; Rucker, 2019). Given the deeply entrenched Eurocentric values that guide practice and organizational programming at NBMS, there is little reason to believe that staff will embrace culturally responsive curricula before confronting their biases. I have seen only a limited group of teachers who are determined to incorporate the culture of the community into lessons, despite this requirement being Ministry mandated. Nor has the school, despite the district inclusivity framework and curricular expectations, attempted to reflect Indigenous identity in programming.

Conclusion

There is a strong ethical and moral obligation associated with this PoP given the historical context of the education of Indigenous students across Canada. By collaborating with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals, an ethical path forward can develop to address the achievement gap. This chapter is rooted in creating a framework to provide a sustainable possibility of cultural responsiveness at NBMS, leading staff through bias-mitigation strategies in tandem with the development of social capital through professional seminars grounded in CRSL and ETC practices. The framework considers how to build confidence, reduce racial barriers, mitigate ignorance of others, and develop programming that better reflects today's student culture (Blickem et al., 2018; Bryk et al., 2017). I address these strategies in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Implementation, Communication, and Evaluation Plan

In this chapter, I explore an essential question: How does one bring an entire school toward a pedagogy of centring Indigenous students' needs while cultivating culturally responsive practices in staff for all? Put differently, how do I get teachers past the outlier syndrome, where a few exceptional teachers work their magic in a handful of classrooms, whereas others struggle to address the diverse needs of students? Showcasing pockets of excellence is not a sustainable change strategy to deepen learning across the school. It does not increase equity for NBMS Indigenous students, nor does it improve practices to transform instruction across the school. What is needed is what Fullan and Quinn (2015) have called a "focusing direction" (p. 17), detailed through the CIP. The steps and actions detailed in this chapter outline how NBMS will implement, evaluate, and communicate the change to all involved. Deszca et al.'s (2020) CPM will guide the process, integrated with transformative practices of CRSL. Safir and Dugan's (2021) ETC will be used to transition NBMS from its current state to one in which an inclusive school environment is driven to address the achievement gap in academic outcomes for Indigenous students compared to non-Indigenous students.

Change Implementation Plan

This OIP employs Deszca et al.'s (2020) four-step CPM, which consists of awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization stages for structuring a CIP. Although the CPM stages combine both process and prescription for guidance to support implementation—measuring and monitoring of sustainable change action to propel the plan forward—they do not specifically model transformative change. Envisioning the CIP through a critical social justice lens is achieved with integrating the ETC (Safir & Dugan, 2021), introduced in Chapter 2. The ETC is aligned with a critical social justice leadership approach, as it helps to cultivate students'

voices and ideas that have been marginalized (Safir & Dugan, 2021). The ETC also aligns with a culturally responsive approach that supports the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of instruction and calls for deep cognitive engagement with learners whose culture and experiences have been relegated to the margins (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Both the CPM and the ETC change plans are nonlinear, synonymous with the idea that complex change is nonlinear. This process goes beyond a simple cause-and-effect relationship, as shown in Figure 6 by the arrows between the ETC cycle phases; they move in both directions to signify that this process remains nimble and is built for the unpredictable rhythm of complex change.

Figure 6

A Blended Change Process of the CPM and the ETC
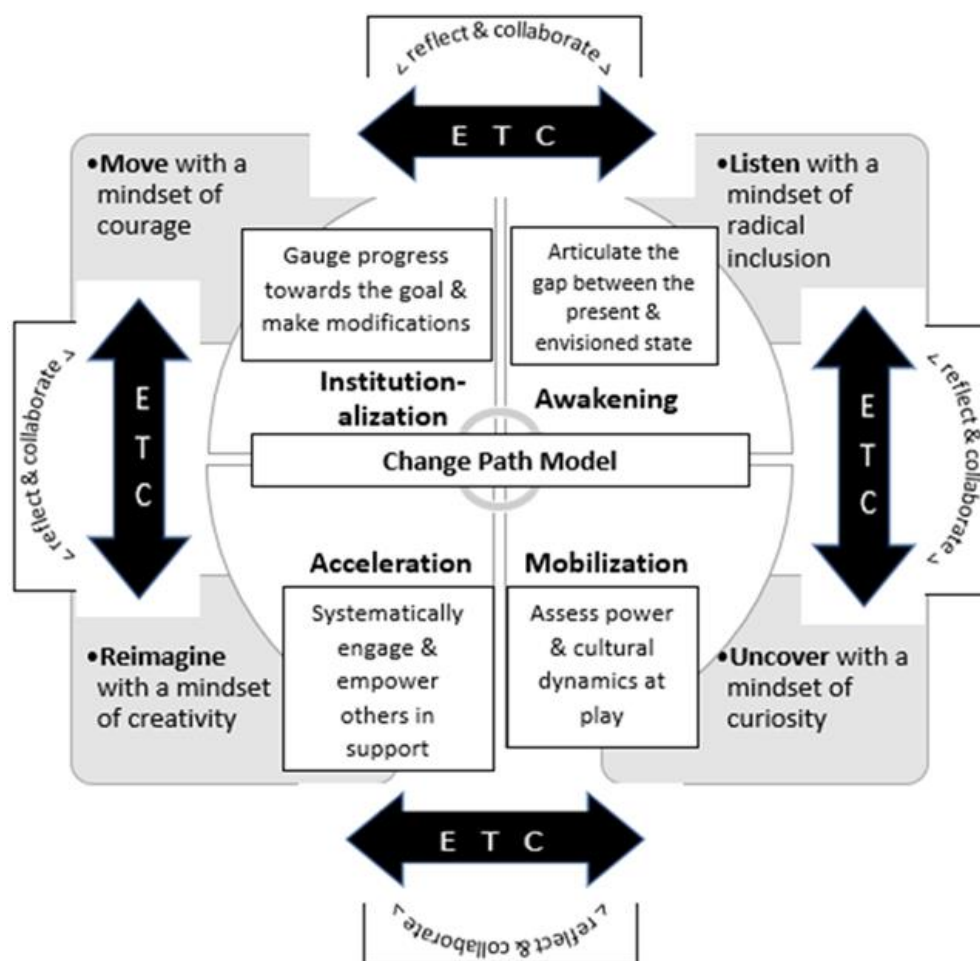
The change at NBMS is focused on improvements for Indigenous learners, but it is worth noting that this approach can universally, fundamentally, and radically transform the experiences for all students through its two-eyed lens and its culturally responsive practices. This outcome requires a leader who is willing to challenge traditional patterns of colonial language and teaching practice to overcome the usual objections expressed by the dominant, privileged group members. Introduced in Chapter 1, the aspects of social justice pedagogy are demonstrated through a framework that NBMS staff can use to anchor a shared language around key concepts that are both systemic and internalized (Safir & Dugan, 2021). Throughout the organizational strategy for change, aspects of social justice pedagogy language will permeate to reinforce both the process and the product to support stronger coherence across the school (see Figure 6).

In January 2023, BC announced a new provincial K–12 Anti-Racism Action Plan (BC MoE, 2023b). The parliamentary secretary for antiracism initiatives stated in a press release that "for generations, Indigenous, Black and people of colour have worked to fit into a system that wasn't necessarily built for them" (as cited in BC Gov News, 2023, para. 4). According to the ministry, the action plan will foster change throughout provincial schools by mandated processes to raise awareness and create resources "to improve the school experience for racialized students, staff and families so that everyone feels a strong sense of belonging (BC Gov News, 2023, para. 3). To facilitate this work, the ministry will provide new training opportunities for all school staff to help them better understand their role in fostering antiracist school environments.

Alignment With Organizational Context and Direction

This CIP centres students who have traditionally been at the margins and adheres to one of the BC MoE's (2022a, 2022b) foci on the need to close the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students through its guiding principles, statutory requirements,

strategic planning and reporting, capacity building, and focus on equity. SD-Evolve has intentionally positioned itself as a champion for diversity, inclusion, equity, system well-being, family and community engagement, and transformative leadership as indicated through specific language in its strategic plan (SD-Evolve, 2021b). Identifying and dismantling existing barriers to equitable participation supports the SD-Evolve organizational direction. The proposed solution from Chapter 2 identifies processes within NBMS that could be implemented with proactive strategies to create time, emotional space, and a necessary framework to build greater capacity in staff and in the greater community as the change to deepen the sense of belonging for Indigenous students takes shape.

Selected Strategy for Change: The Four Phases of the Implementation Plan

Research on the academic achievement of Indigenous students frequently acknowledges the need to provide greater cultural connections to the curriculum (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Kanu, 2002; Whitley, 2013) and a more welcoming environment (Gunn et al., 2011; Preston & Claypool, 2013; Whitley, 2013) to improve academics. Therefore, the focus of this CIP is to create an environment that is more welcoming to Indigenous students and is responsive to integrating traditional Indigenous knowledge, working towards cultivating an ever-growing culturally relevant learning community at NBMS to address the PoP. This CIP will be guided by CRSL framework that will uphold the phases outlined in both the CPM (Deszca et al., 2020) and the ETC (Safir & Dugan, 2021) across a 10-month cycle (for an overview, see Appendix C).

Phase 1: Awaken and Listen

In the awaken (Deszca et al., 2020) and listen (Safir & Dugan, 2021) stages of Phase 1, professional conversations will be prompted by provincial, district, and NBMS site data to generate an awareness about the gap in student achievement for Indigenous learners. In these

conversations, which will occur during teacher collaborative time (Colab), focused student-support time, and staff meetings, staff will synthesize various forms of student achievement data on NBMS Indigenous students in comparison to non-Indigenous students. Focused inquiry questions set by the school administrators to identify intersectionality and an envisioned future state will begin to generate a possible rationale as to why and how the gap persists. Simultaneously, teachers will follow the ETC protocol (Safir & Dugan, 2021) as they work to gather artifacts from students through stories, classroom observations, student interviews, and student focus group dialogues. These student–teacher interactions require teachers' keen observation and deep listening with a mindset of radical inclusion centring students who have been at the margins (Safir & Dugan, 2021). Teachers will aim to work with one student, or a small focus group of students (for fishbowl dialogues), each week during the initial 6- to 8-week phase (see Appendix C).

Phase 2: Mobilization and Uncover

Throughout Phase 2, the mobilization (Deszca et al., 2020) and uncover (Safir & Dugan, 2021) practices will involve analyzing and leveraging formal systems and structures to power the change vision; this work will include assessing organizational dynamics and building momentum with careful analysis of the underlying issues that need to be considered (Deszca et al., 2020). Teachers will engage in the process of gathering of student artifacts and information to assist with addressing cocreated inquiry questions. This process will also help teachers to "refine their thinking" (Donohoo, 2017a, 2017b, p. 61), especially in relation to shifting mindset about closing achievement gaps through internal effort powered by collective efficacy. As the principal, my role will be to facilitate discussions in meaningful ways. I will coach new teachers through the process, and I will be a critical friend to more experienced teachers as needed.

Examining NBMS as a unique organization, I will strategically develop site system supports to enhance these processes. Most important, I will continually work with the local Indigenous community to bring Elders and Knowledge Keepers to the school for shared opportunities of learning and to bridge relations to encourage a symbiotic relationship with the school. Teachers will focus on understanding and developing relationships with their students through dialogue and one-to-one conversations in empathy interviews (see Appendix C).

Phase 3: Acceleration and Reimagine

The acceleration phase of Deszca et al.'s (2020) CPM is a critical stage as change leaders begin to use a variety of tools to monitor, measure, and track the change actions implemented to determine progress and challenges. The data will help to inform teachers about potential specific pedagogical modifications and adjustments to implement the change at the intersection of the classroom. In Phase 3 of the ETC (Safir & Dugan, 2021), teachers return to the students they worked with in Phase 2 to codesign and cocreate resolutions about the latters' schooling experience from suggestions made from the humanizing data gained in various empathy interviews. At the end of Phase 3, teachers will test and apply adaptive teaching practices in the classroom suggested, in part, by the students. As the principal, my role during Phase 3 is to work as a collaborative colleague to analyze, measure, track, and anticipate progress and challenges I may help teachers avoid. Specifically, the administrative team of NBMS will collaborate alongside teachers to examine and analyze findings from the generated site data.

Phase 4: Institutionalization and Move

Phase 4 of this implementation plan focuses on gauging the effects of the change process. Elements from Deszca et al.'s (2020) CPM institutionalization stage will require (a) periodically tracking progress, measuring, and modifying as needed; and (b) continual development and

deployment of new structures, systems, knowledge, and skills as needed to stabilize change actions. Within this stage, specific measuring tools (as described later in this chapter) will be used to assess overall progress. Finally, the findings will inform changed instructional approaches to explore a new belief system based on emergent knowledge acquired from and with students as teachers' experiences with the action plans accrue. Deszca et al.'s institutionalization stage aligns with Safir and Dugan's (2021) ETC move stage, which focuses on acting now, even if the plan is not entirely perfect and the outcomes are likely uncertain. Expecting resistance, recalcitrance, and defensiveness will build the continued mindset of courage for the change leader as the idea to move forward will generate information on successes and failures that will inform future ideas and practice to address the PoP.

Understanding Stakeholders' Reactions to Change

Beyond the responses of the change team, it will become important to monitor and respond to respective stakeholders. Some teachers and staff at NBMS do not believe it is their responsibility to centre Indigenous students, particularly given the competing demands of their jobs and their greater belief that other students also need to learn. Some teachers who rely on traditional practices of drill and skill may feel scrutinized when the student data are analyzed across all subject areas taught. As a principal and leader, I need to reassure all involved, so they feel supported in their work and during professional learning community times (DuFour et al., 2008; Schaap & Bruijn, 2018). Therefore, when addressing the change team, primarily teachers, I will emphasize the importance of collegiality, understanding that the need for change is for professional improvement and ultimately to improve the lives and educational experience of Indigenous students at NBMS (Useem et al., 1997).

Supports and Resources

According to S. Wilson (2008), researchers must engage in "deep listening, and hearing with more than ears, [to develop a] . . . reflective, nonjudgmental consideration of what is being seen and heard" (p. 89) as well as "an awareness and connection between logic of mind, and the feelings of the heart" (pp. 89–90). Ultimately, researchers bear the "responsibility to act with fidelity in the relationship to what has been heard, observed, and learnt" (S. Wilson, 2008, p. 90).

The most important and central resources for the success of this change plan are the guidance and input from Indigenous students, their family members, and the Indigenous community NBMS serves, to help build a community with an improved sense of belonging at school and collaborative trust towards one another. Without Indigenous students, the school will not have the first-hand experiences or cultural knowledge that will be foundational to the process. I have suggested timelines for the development of this group, but it is important to note that the process cannot proceed without their input. The success or impact of this OIP will hinge on the ability to develop strong collaboration with the local Indigenous community. Their experiences will help to identify hegemonic practices that may otherwise go unnoticed given the limited Indigenous representation of staff within the school. Indigenous students' knowledge and lived experiences at NBMS will also provide meaningful insight as to how staff can implement effective changes to offer an engaging learning experience at school. Indigenous voices need to be the driver for change to decolonize educational perspectives (Battiste, 2013; Battiste & Henderson, 2009; T. Smith, 2016).

Limitations and Challenges

This organizational change plan does not come without limitations and perceived challenges. Perhaps the most obvious limitation is the fact that I am not Indigenous. However,

Osmond-Johnson and Turner (2020) have noted that non-Indigenous educators are needed to push toward reconciliation because of the limited number of Indigenous educators. Nonetheless, I will proceed with careful consideration as the change leader and principal of NBMS, as I cannot speak to the challenges faced by Indigenous students. I will endeavour to provide a more equitable education for Indigenous students while being conscientious not to interject my personal perspectives into the change (Battiste, 2013; Osmond-Johnson & Turner, 2020; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Another challenge is the potential difficulties associated with coordinating a group of Indigenous community members willing and able to be a part of the change process. This CIP will rely on SD-Evolve's Indigenous Education Department and NBMS's site-based Indigenous student advocates to engage the Indigenous community more consistently within the school while acting as supportive allies and guiding members for families, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers.

Finally, while acknowledging that power relationships do exist, it is equally important to recognize that resistance to change is likely to occur. A common cultural norm at NBMS is that the organization itself is slow to change. Lewis (1999) noted that individuals who are used to how things have been over prolonged time periods will see the historic stagnation as reason enough not to change.

Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and the Change Process

Developing a communication plan to improve academic success for Indigenous learners requires a thorough understanding of the unique needs and cultural context of the students if educators intend to positively impact their success at school. The plan should incorporate effective communication strategies that are consistent with the principles of critical social justice

and CRSL. Drawing on the works of Lavis et al. (2003) and Armenakis and Harris (2001), this section outlines the steps for a school-based communication plan to achieve the desired goal for NBMS Indigenous learners and for the greater learning of culturally responsive and relevant practices for staff.

This communication plan is structured to inform interested and impacted parties as opposed to the colonial term *stakeholders*. The use of the term *interested and impacted parties* acknowledges that there are those who are interested and want to know, as well as those who may not be interested but who still need to know because the change impacts them either directly or indirectly. Candid, frequent, and accurate communication will help this change process succeed (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2010). To establish equity-centred transformative change, "transformation always, *always,* begins with deep listening. Not with planning an intervention" (Safir & Dugan, 2021, p. 77).

Although it is imperative that the change leader and change team initiate and develop a plan, that plan cannot simply explain how and why a particular change is occurring—it must also provide guidance and reassurance to the members of the organization, especially those who are most affected by the implementation (Armenakis & Harris, 2001; Deszca et al., 2020; Safir & Dugan, 2021). Within the plan, the change leader and change team must focus on the two central goals that are embedded within organizational communication. The first of these goals is to inform the individuals about their roles and tasks within the organizational change process, and the second is to leverage communication to develop a sense of community both during the process and afterwards (Elving, 2005). This approach will help NBMS achieve its goal to close the academic achievement gap for Indigenous learners as an effective learning community.

This communication plan engages two distinct groups who will require different approaches and considerations. The first group will be composed of educators in NBMS responsible for teaching and student learning. These educators include teachers, educational assistants, student Indigenous advocates, administration, and any division consultants who work with students. Most of these individuals do not identify as Indigenous. A CRSL approach will be essential in promoting appropriate responses to all interested and impacted parties. Marshall and Khalifa (2018) indicated that culturally responsive leaders can strongly influence an awareness and promotion of culturally relevant practices. As the principal within the school, and an interested party responsible for communicating the vision forward for NBMS, it is imperative I model the language and behaviours I expect staff to follow. By demonstrating the importance of understanding Indigenous ways of knowing and being, I echo the need for all staff to address personal gaps in cultural knowledge that may be present.

The second group of individuals that the communication plan will engage are the Indigenous students, parents, guardians, and community members, including Elders and Knowledge Keepers. It is important to consider that engagement with the Indigenous community goes well beyond basic communication for this OIP. For lasting impact and authentic change to take place, the Indigenous community must be consistently engaged to collaborate with the school and provide ideas, input, guidance, and context for what needs to be changed. At the same time, their value as cultural experts necessary and integral to support change must be realized and respected. Although I am non-Indigenous, I hope to leverage my leadership role as the school principal to centre Indigenous students, facilitate and encourage agency, and amplify their voices, as well as foster greater Indigenous family engagement within the NBMS community, as all parties work to be allies and learners through the improvement process. By having

consistently anchored and navigated relations with the local First Nation as the school principal, many of the Indigenous community members are beginning to engage and support the plans for NBMS to work through the CRSL practices needed to build lasting and trusting relationships, respectful of diverse realities and perspectives.

Much of the headway gained thus far has come from gentle yet persistent communication of content, a consistent use of established and new communication protocols at the school, and an authentic way to engage the interested and impacted audiences (Siccone, 2012). This groundwork occurred through consultation with parents, students, and teachers using achievement data and trends, as well as through formal and informal conversations with students (referred to as empathy interviews; Safir & Dugan, 2021). A pathway for NBMS administration has developed to begin to develop a coalition (Dudar et al., 2017) to support change in alignment with the blended model of the CPM cycle (Deszca et al., 2020) and the ETC approach (Safir & Dugan, 2021).

The sequence of events at NBMS also lends itself to Leithwood and Strauss's (2008) description of turnaround change, where the declining performance of students is often easily identified by standardized data by provincial or district assessments and from school attendance records. The leader can awaken and cause audiences, especially educators, to expend time and energy to mobilize and develop a deeper capacity during a time of declining evidence to uncover the underlying cause. The administration and a coalition of the school-based team (SBT) consisting of learning assistance teachers, social emotional learning teachers, student Indigenous advocates, and school counsellors, as well as members of the NBMS teacher council made up of department and CL teachers, will expend time to build skills by systematically engaging and empowering staff to reimagine a new way forward. The final phase of sustaining and improving

performance is difficult to achieve given the pervasive nature of change facing schools (Soini et al., 2016). However, a measured and consistent school plan involving extensive consultations with interested and impacted audiences both in person and by using a variety of existing school communication protocols has the potential to institutionalize the change and move NBMS into turnaround phases, progressing towards greater student success. Deep learning and a sense of belonging for Indigenous learners are necessary pillars that can be achieved when culturally responsive practices consistently centre students throughout the process.

Teachers at NBMS have already begun to realize that cocreating assignments with their students fosters student voice and agency to support individualized needs, as project-based assessments promote authentic engagement for learning and authentic evaluation of learning (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020). The declining achievement results of NBMS Indigenous learners' trends over time have initiated a strategic school plan to support the necessary change (Deming, 2018). These data drove the awakening and mobilization needed to ensure the acceleration of change to include students as collaborators in learning, instilling a generative buy-in among teaching staff.

Current Communication Protocols

The NBMS administration has developed a variety of formal and informal communications targeting specific interested and impacted groups (see Appendix C). Examples include an annual school report that is shared with SD-Evolve and the parent community, a weekly email that aggregates celebratory and informative stories and upcoming events, a weekly SD-Evolve superintendent's message sent to all parents, and daily updates from district- and school-level social media feeds.

NBMS has emailed various feedback surveys to interested and impacted parent and community members during the annual SD-Evolve and the school strategic planning process, which is designed to set direction and generate momentum and excitement for the next school year (Beatty, 2015). In addition, NBMS administrators set time for staff members to engage in collaborative opportunities during scheduled teacher Colab to put forward ideas for further goalsetting benchmarks and next-year PD suggestions. In addition to the NBMS staff communications, the teachers and administration can reinforce school planning goals through a variety of established communication protocols (see Appendix C). A monthly staff meeting is a venue for two-way communication between staff and school leaders (including administrators and the SBT and CL teachers). Furthermore, each NBMS homeroom has a weekly scheduled block for students and their teachers to engage in community-building activities focusing on NBMS values of deeper and more personalized student learning engagement.

According to Dempster and Robbins (2017), parents, students, and employees are inundated with messaging from the school. Thus, careful selection of content, process, and context (Beatty, 2015; Siccone, 2012) is essential for communication to be received by the appropriate audience at the most appropriate time to generate buy-in.

Communicating for Change Readiness

This OIP is at a stage where the administration and the CL council teachers are constituted and in place for the 2023–2024 school year. District coordinators and consultants have been engaged as additional supports for PD sessions with strategic alignment to underscore coherence and solidify a shared understanding of the role of assessment towards improving student achievement for Indigenous learners (Cooper, 2011). Furthermore, district learning leaders and Indigenous community members are collaborating to develop unique site-based

supports for NBMS of locally relevant initiatives and innovative ways that excellence in teaching

and learning can occur. This is a visioning exercise (Dudar et al., 2017) for all interested and

impacted audiences to begin to operationalize a sense of community, deep learning, and a greater

sense of belonging for Indigenous students through the school's new strategic plan.

During school start-up and PD days, teachers will have opportunities to collaborate and

learn from Indigenous community members and alongside one another as a Cogen opportunity to

develop cultural competencies and diversity of assessment practices for shared understanding of

what teaching and learning excellence means for NBMS students. Simultaneously, district

learning leaders are collaborating with NBMS teachers to develop and identify locally relevant

definitions for excellence in teaching and learning experiences for NBMS. Supports from SD-

Evolve will guide the vision of the school plan, as development of practice in gathering authentic

student feedback will generate and operationalize the learning pillars of the NBMS school plan

in a model for equity, pedagogy, and school transformation (Safir & Dugan, 2021). This action

research in pedagogy is the evidence that teacher engagement to centre Indigenous students

demonstrates "a willingness to be held responsible for what students learn" (Leithwood &

Strauss, 2008, p. 23).

During the start-up of the 2023–2024 school year, prior to the students' first day, two PD

days will be offered to staff, with structured time and opportunities to learn directly from

Indigenous community members and to collaborate with one another on the necessary diversity

of assessment practices to build a shared understanding of what defines community, belonging,

and student success for Indigenous learners at NBMS. The SBT and CL council teachers will be

strategically embedded within teaching teams to listen deeply to conversations and to clarify

questions linked to the 2023–2024 school plan. Through this focused PD time, this coalition of

lead teachers will be consistently communicating that reflection and critical conversations about their practice as educators are essential.

To enact the CPM (Deszca et al., 2020) and the ETC (Safir & Dugan, 2021) as an essential framework to develop greater equity at NBMS, the lead coalition of SBT and CL teachers will coach colleagues and teaching teams on protocols for deep listening and how to uncover findings from student empathy interviews (Safir & Dugan, 2021) linked to the greater school plan. This same guiding coalition will become the PD committee of the school, harnessing feedback from these sessions to monitor change readiness and to seek support from administration for propelling the change forward (see Figure 6). In these critical conversations, resistance to change will also be measured and used to assess the pace and extent of the change throughout the school year (Thomas & Hardy, 2011). By investing time and effort, this relational approach will demonstrate that the change readiness plan is about growing beyond student achievement to include cultural responsivity of the greater staff and teacher classroom practices. As Safir and Dugan (2021) explained, the intersection for this change work happens in the classroom and with students.

Framing Change Process for Audiences

The combined method and cycle of the CPM (Deszca et al., 2020) and the ETC (Safir & Dugan, 2021) is an equity-centred approach that draws from the importance of qualitative and action research as methods of school improvement, but it is also a process that provides a model of school transformation, stitching together four often siloed elements: (a) equity as the fundamental purpose, (b) pedagogy as the fundamental pathway, (c) adult culture as the vehicle, and (d) student voice and agency as the navigation system that keeps everyone on the path of equity-centred transformation for NBMS Indigenous learners. The proposed model for change of

this OIP is a practitioner-driven, layperson's framework for conducting qualitative research in service of school transformation that drives toward equity and deep learning for the interested and impacted audiences involved (Safir & Dugan, 2021).

In my ongoing experience as a doctoral candidate, I have journeyed through a degree program to explore many branches on the tree of qualitative research, all of which emerge from a common process: Identify a research PoP, craft a question (or set of questions), gather relevant data, analyze and interpret the data, and then synthesize findings. Although doctoral candidates engage in this type of rigorous inquiry, educators—as life-changing and essential as their work is—typically do not. Instead of building their instructional leadership capacity in this way, they are asked to improve their practice through high-level standardized provincial and district data, sit-and-get PD, sporadic evaluation, or working on complex problems in painful isolation. The CPM (Deszca et al., 2020) and the ETC (Safir & Dugan, 2021) offer a way for teachers to become ethnographers and researchers within their own classrooms, schools, and districts in collaboration with colleagues and students at no cost.

In the context of NBMS and the communication plan, the school administration will use frequent two-way communication with the SBT and CL coalition to ensure stakeholder engagement with the change plan. CLs will work in their departments and communicate the successes and challenges with school leaders (Beatty, 2015). The local Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, SD-Evolve board members, and SD-Evolve senior administrative leaders are key interested and impacted audiences and must be kept engaged.

Teachers who are change resisters are also a key audience to consider. The coalition of school leaders, by building relationships, understanding teacher concerns, and motivating these members through conversations (Dudar et al., 2017) can leverage and engage their participation.

Such a reframing of resistance (Thomas & Hardy, 2011) aligns with critical social justice theory ideas of empowerment and tempers the forward momentum advocated by Heifetz et al. (2009). The SBT and CL coalition members should engage with teachers who are change champions to ensure that their high interest also gives them greater agency and leverage within the school community. Examples include cofacilitating department meetings with change champions, selecting them as mentors for new teachers, and highlighting their work in weekly school-based communications (internal and outward facing to the community) through PD opportunities.

Similarly, parents with high influence as members of the local Indigenous First Nation, but whose interest has waned in the school, could be engaged and reconnected with the school's new focus on Indigenous ways of knowing and being (First Nations Education Steering Committee, n.d.). As the school principal, I can tend to these relationships to shift these impactful groups and build support and resources. Finally, even though the changes proposed for NBMS are geared for the instructional system, primarily affecting teachers and classroom learning, the influence of students guiding their learning will grow as student empowerment grows using problems of practice and collaborative teaching methods (Halse, 2018).

In the long term, with an equity-focused lens, all groups need communication. The core work of equity is to improve outcomes for marginalized, low-influence groups (Safir & Dugan, 2021). Despite being aware of the inequity of focusing first on high-influence audiences, this is a strategic decision to generate early wins by prioritizing ongoing, multimodal, and contextualized communication through the proposed CPM (Deszca et al., 2020) and ETC (Safir & Dugan, 2021) model. The NBMS administration will prioritize two-way, face-to-face communication through weekly emails to the staff and will include at least one item linked to the new strategic school plan. This item could be celebrating a small win, calling for collaboration on a colleague's PoP

(Burnside, 2021), or sharing relevant research for knowledge mobilization. Additionally, the school's ongoing monthly mentorship, the Street Data book club and Cogen, and NBMS CL Council for teachers, all led by NBMS administration, function as a professional learning community continually focused on the use of holistic, data-informed instruction (Datnow & Park, 2014), or on collaborative inquiry (Datnow & Park, 2018; Donohoo, 2013), to allow for capacity building through ongoing communication (Donohoo, 2017a, 2017b).

Knowledge Mobilization Plan

Although there is significant research on data-informed collaborative decision-making for school improvement (Datnow et al., 2007, 2021; Datnow & Park, 2014, 2018; Donohoo, 2013; Donohoo & Katz, 2020; Edwards & Ogle, 2021; Kuh, 2016; Macfayden et al., 2014; Mandinach & Schildkamp, 2021; Safir & Dugan, 2021), mobilizing such research knowledge within the local context of the school for sustained implementation requires building capacity, nurturing collaboration, and active listening (Mosher et al., 2014). School leaders also need to embrace the idea that successful mobilization in the local context can itself change the knowledge being mobilized. Edmondson (2008) noted that many leaders execute change as efficiency, seeking to attain results in a timely and consistent manner. This hurry can backfire in a knowledge-centred workplace. Edmondson suggested that the execution of change must allow for learning to occur, where employees discover answers through this process. Experimentation and iteration should be encouraged; problem-solving requires collaboration and two-way communication (Dempster & Robbins, 2017).

It is no longer appropriate for school leaders to sift through research and proclaim their conclusions in a linear, one-way relationship (Campbell et al., 2017) with interested and impacted audiences. Instead, knowledge mobilization must be a collaborative and collective task

of building capacity with the team (Datnow et al., 2021). Gathering diverse perspectives on research (Safir & Dugan, 2021) facilitates constructive and critical dialogue (Heffernan, 2012), applying research to the local context. This process may be slow and messy, yet both Edmondson (2008) and Mosher et al. (2014) argued that such a learning-based knowledge mobilization process leads to a sustainable change within an organization and greater uptake of new knowledge and practices.

For example, rather than sharing best practices in formative assessment during PD with staff using a sage-on-the-stage approach (King, 1993), the SBT and CL teacher coalition will coordinate and interview Indigenous students in Grades 6 to 8, asking them three key questions: (a) Share a bright spot in your student experience at NBMS; (b) Reflect on an experience of inequity or exclusion that you've had at NBMS; and (c) Imagine you could wave a magic wand to strengthen equity, relationships, and successful learning experiences at NBMS. By preplanning (Dudar et al., 2017; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008) and creating a video of these student stories, the teacher coordinators set the stage for teacher talk to shift from a general discussion about NBMS student experiences to problem-solving for an application in specific classrooms. The diversity of responses from students in the video become qualitative data to begin a critical reflective dialogue (Ellinor & Gerard, 1998; Heffernan, 2012), but it also couches a rational demand for coherence within an emotional appeal (Beatty, 2015). Teachers are more likely to take ownership for the experiences felt by Indigenous students using their own students' feedback (Leithwood & Strauss, 2008) than feedback from a visiting expert.

Heifetz et al. (2009) stated that to generate adaptive practices, leaders must create the holding environment but allow employees to own and do the adaptive work. The example above shows how teachers of the SBT and CL coalition could leverage their strengths and school

knowledge to communicate the need for change and create opportunities for collaboration and two-way dialogue (Burnside, 2021). Leithwood and Strauss (2008) noted that such teacher ownership is key to success for sustainable change. By modelling the work (Beatty, 2015), becoming comfortable with failure (Edmondson, 2008), and being vulnerable (B. Brown, 2018), school leaders communicate their willingness to support change with interested and impacted audiences. The goal of this OIP is to reduce the power distance (Hofstede, 2011) between leaders and teachers in schools, and between teachers and students in classrooms, towards greater psychological safety, which facilitates honest and meaningful communication to promote a culture of learning (Edmondson, 2008).

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

With consideration of the described change implementation plan in place, a system for monitoring and evaluating progress is essential. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks are formative in helping an organization to identify progress, inform decision-making, support accountability, and guide program improvement (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Before moving to implement a monitoring and evaluation plan, it is important to clearly understand and distinguish the meaning of these terms. Monitoring is a continual process that tracks the progress of a plan, identifying what is produced and what is achieved, all while channelling to best support corrective action to the greater plan Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Evaluation is a periodic process that uses the data obtained through monitoring to inform judgement, formulate conclusions, and make recommendations for the next steps in the process (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). The two processes work in conjunction: monitoring informs evaluation, and the changes developed through evaluation will require ongoing monitoring in a generative cycle.

To fully realize the behaviours implicit in culturally responsive school practice, individuals must develop an awareness of their actions as well as the consequences and desired results from these actions. Through a variety of intentional and strategic Cogen opportunities detailed in Appendix C, the goal is for educators to become increasingly self-aware of their actions and consequences. Using reflective questions and collegial conversations, educators have opportunities to become observers of their own words and actions, to analyze their actions, and to begin the process of redefining themselves and their roles. Through transformative learning experiences, such as Cogens (Safir & Dugan, 2021), practitioners can uncover values, assumptions, and beliefs relative to their leadership actions. Emotions and opinions that too often lead to unproductive behaviours are readily clarified. Social relationships between colleagues provide members opportunities to make sense of and transform their actions in the context of their everyday practice. Continuous examination and reflection on leader actions become habits of practice and organizational norms. As a result, the school becomes adaptive, more effective, and progressively better at redefining itself and its purpose in relationship to the students and the community it serves.

According to Argyris and Schön (1974, 1996), patterns of personal and organizational learning occur on two levels: single-loop learning and double-loop learning. Figure 7 displays the relationship between the two patterns. When an individual's or an organization's actions result in undesirable or insufficient results, efforts in learning how to improve behaviour are single-loop, reflecting an analysis of one's actions to improve or perform the same action more effectively. This single-loop learning pattern refers to the one-dimensional examination and change process. It is worth noting that single-loop learning does not typically lend to an

individual questioning the appropriateness of an action or the assumptions from which it derives; the single change made is in the manner which an individual performs that action.

Figure 7

Double-Loop Learning
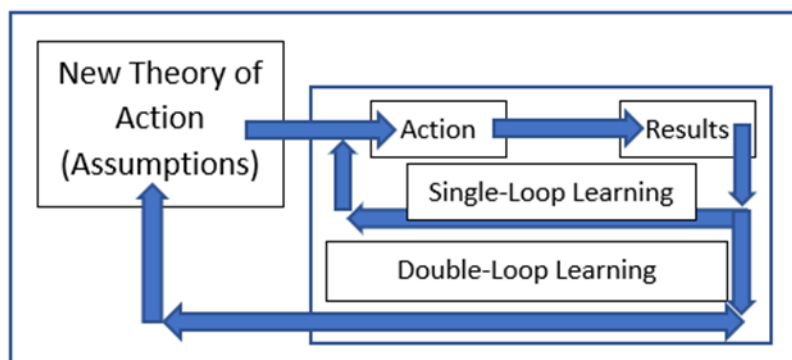
Note. Adapted from *Overcoming Organizational Defenses: Facilitating Organizational Learning*, by C. Argyris, 1990, p. 139. Copyright 1990 by Allyn & Bacon.

The double-loop pattern reflects a two-dimensional examination and change process. In this cycle of learning, an individual questions the assumptions or frames of reference from which the action emerged; the two levels of change are reshaping ways of thinking and learning to do things differently. Thus, the original ineffective behaviour or action is abandoned in favour of a unique way of thinking about the situation, the action, and the desirable result.

Hargrove (1999) extended double-loop learning to triple-loop learning by adding another level: engaging an individual in examining their perception of who they are and what their role or purpose is, and then transforming that self-image into a new way of seeing oneself and their purpose. The key term in this description is "purpose" because a transformative leader values the community they serve. Hargrove described the triple-loop pattern as transformational learning because, as he argued, it is through such learning experiences that an individual fundamentally

transforms their way of being and becomes capable of fundamentally different actions. Figure 8

shows the triple-loop pattern in relation to the single- and double-loop patterns in Figure 7.

Figure 8

Triple-Loop Learning
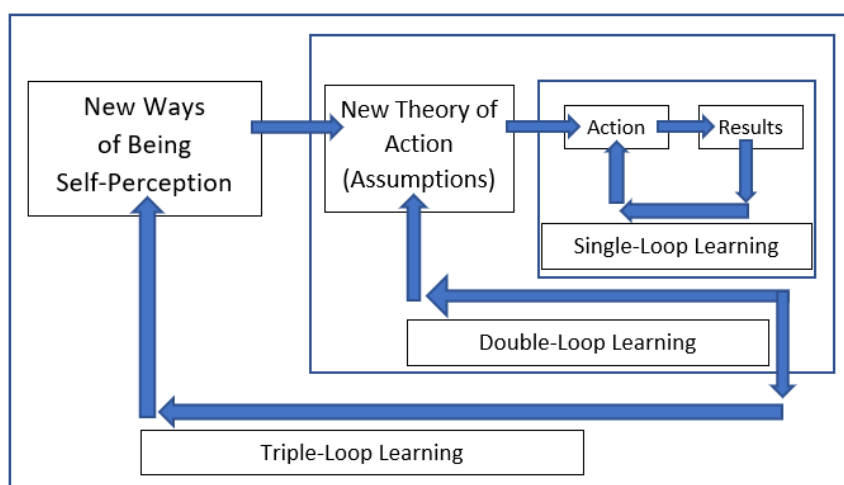
Note. Adapted from *Masterful Coaching*, by R. Hargrove, 1999

(https://www.masterfulcoaching.com/). Copyright 1999 by Robert Hargrove.

Tools and Measures to Gauge Progress and Assess Change

Learning to become a culturally proficient educator requires individuals to go beyond

improving their behaviour to shifting their perceptions about who they are and what the point of

their practice is. This OIP is at a stage where the administration and the NBMS CL teachers are

constituted and in place for the 2023–2024 school year. Understanding the cultural proficiency of

the staff, and perhaps individual staff members will support my next steps as the school leader.

CRSL is deeply personal introspective work one undertakes before attempting to

influence the behaviour of others. According to Lindsey et al. (2013), tools of cultural

proficiency should be designed to support educators in self-examination of their own values and

behaviours and to enable them to examine the practices of the classroom, grade, subject, and

school. As such, I have adapted a tool from Lindsey et al. to guide a teacher through a process of self-reflection (see Appendix D). The tool can be used twice per school year, at the beginning and end, as a self-assessment. The tool not only introduces teachers to important concepts in a manner that personalizes cultural proficiency content, but also has the potential for them to notice a potential shift in mindset as the assessment is revisited at year-end.

Removing Barriers

Redefining student success and examining the transformative impact of deep-learning experiences is equity work. As Safir and Dugan (2021) stated: "Equity work is first and foremost pedagogical" (p. 99). Educators can no longer accept that success can be defined by a metric. Instead, they can choose a pedagogy of voice that transforms everything: the belief that every student is a complex, layered human being with endless potential, brilliance, and access to community cultural wealth. Equity efforts truly begin when school systems redefine student success as the cultivation of student agency and realign measures of success to this goal. Agency is about nourishing students' sense of efficacy—a feeling that "I can make a difference." Teachers can help to remove barriers and minimize opportunities for inequities to persist by redesigning their role with project-based learning, peer surveys, or building a resource for the community that empowers students with a sense of control over their lives. Culturally responsive education invokes a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of instruction and calls for deep cognitive engagement of learners whose culture and experiences have been relegated to the margins (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

For the purposes of this OIP in assessing student agency, NBMS administration has developed a variety of formal and informal communications targeting specific interested and impacted groups. Three tools will measure student agency for learners at NBMS. First, a 10-

question pre- and post-survey on a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*, will occur at the beginning and the end of the school year (see Appendix E). Additionally, administrators, support teachers, or homeroom teachers will be asked to conduct agency interviews in a small group setting, focusing on Indigenous learners and other students who may feel marginalized. Ideally, educators would engage in this kind of empathy interview at the end of each term. If students agreed to be recorded, the interview could serve as humanizing data that could be uncovered in small teaching teams to be analyzed during teacher Cogen times to begin to identify trends and themes raised by students (see Appendix F).

Most often, teachers will have students complete a single-point rubric weekly (see Appendix G). According to J. Gonzalez (2014), a single-point rubric breaks down the components of an assignment into different criteria but only describes the criteria for proficiency; it does not attempt to list all the ways a student could fall short, nor does it specify how a student could exceed expectations. This ongoing student assessment will be regularly reviewed by staff to ensure Indigenous students are heard. If unanticipated inequities exist, staff will listen and cocreate solutions with students, applying a mindset of curiosity to reimagine and move beyond the existing barriers, break free from traditional methods, and bravely engage with student-centred, adaptive practices.

According to Raskin et al. (2021), the development of a school dashboard template offers an at-a-glance means to understand students. Pulling together elements of these categories in one visual can be a critical step in knowing and understanding where to set priorities and actions for school leadership. As such, I have adapted their dashboard tool (see Appendix H) as another way to know the students by who they are racially, academically, and culturally. Seeing the full

picture of school data involves the inclusion of multiyear proficiency data broken down by race as well as other criteria, including attendance and discipline (Raskin et al., 2021).

Ritualizing Reflection and Revision

The necessity to continually refine the implementation plan in response to monitoring and evaluation findings is characteristic of schools with an adaptive pedagogy. Darling-Hammond (2002) wrote about a culture of revision and redemption that characterizes equity in schools:

> An adaptive pedagogy is a learning environment where teachers are aware of what students are thinking, and where the curriculum does not move on when students do not learn immediately . . . by promoting a culture of revision and redemption that encourages students to attempt challenging work, provides continual opportunities for practice and revision, and supports students in developing the courage and confidence to work continuously to improve their successive efforts. (p. 29)

Like Darling-Hammond, many researchers and sociologists have found that how students think about a goal—whether to ace a test, give a speech, make friends, or shoot a free throw—affects their motivation. For example, if a student pursues a goal and their success is based on their own evaluation ("Have I learned?" "Have I improved?"), or on whether they reach an external standard, that is identified as a mastery goal. By contrast, if a student's achievement of the goal is based on demonstrating competence in others' eyes ("Do others think I did well?") or on outperforming others ("Did I do better than others on the test?"), that is a performance goal. Mastery goals have been found to improve students' persistence and sense of well-being (Kaplan & Midgley, 1999). Performance goals have been found to encourage competition ("Only a few students will earn an A") and makes student focus on external judgment and external rewards (LaGuardia & Ryan, 2002). What is most important about both types of goals is that research has

found that students define them in large part based on their learning environment. Educators influence whether students see academic success as a mastery or performance goal, and therefore, educators have the unique ability to influence how underrepresented students respond to the tasks they are given, which in turn affects their likelihood of success.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

This OIP is set to address the academic achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students through the revisioning of a learning environment that better engages Indigenous students. Working with educators and the local Indigenous community, a collaborative approach is suggested that blends the process of the CPM (Deszca et al., 2020) with Safir and Dugan's (2021) equity transformation cycle. This approach distinctly centres Indigenous students from the margins while developing a positive change for all students. Drawing from the strengths of the students and bringing action that values voice helps to set conditions for Indigenous student agency. Through this process educators are unlearning and relearning a better perspective in the quest for equity and deeper understanding. Including Indigenous perspectives into education affirms the importance of Indigenous ways of knowing and being and is instrumental in breaking down existing systemic barriers that continue to dominate education. Setting direction this way is essential to move districts and schools forward as educators work toward reconciliation with Indigenous people.

The notion within the title of this OIP is to consider counter-narratives of Indigenous students, their families, and the local Indigenous community to revision an improved school environment that is welcoming and inclusive for Indigenous learners of all ages. Although SD-Evolve is committed to an anti-racism plan, as mandated through the BC MoE (2023b), a transformative journey must persistently work to unmask and eliminate the systemic barriers still

deeply rooted in the historical fabric of the public education system in Canada. Admittedly, this journey will be challenging as educators work through and confront the very systems and processes through courageous conversations to examine and understand how privilege and bias can be countered to create the needed space for informed and culturally responsive practices to emerge.

Developing Community Points of Connection

Becoming informed about the local Indigenous community and developing needed points of connection will come from the collective stories and experiences of students, families, community members, and staff members throughout SD-Evolve. Most important, the need to set expectations and conditions as a protocol for such work will help to shape a safe environment at large. It will become essential for staff to participate (as they work to develop deep listening habits); personal stories from impacted and interested community members who share lived and living realities will require much learning, relearning, and unlearning for the majority of educators at NBMS and across SD-Evolve.

In addition to school practices for change, greater Indigenous representation within NBMS is needed. Providing a variety of opportunities for greater representation of Indigenous people can help to mitigate the underrepresentation of diversity that exists at large in the Canadian educational system. Therefore, whenever possible, developing points of connection that represent Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and family or community members of the Indigenous students within schools is important. Educational leaders and practitioners can help to set the environment to embrace the local Indigenous voices moving forward in matters pertaining to the delivery of education at NBMS and throughout SD-Evolve.

This OIP has described how NBMS can move from its traditional and colonial teacher-led classrooms to collaborative, inquiry-based practices using various data, especially humanizing data, to improve how Indigenous learners can have a sense of belonging and success in school. Student voice and agency need to emerge as central to the PoP conversations through the teacher Colab discussions. A continuing area of work at NBMS is the critical examination of the voices of students who are experiencing inequity and marginalization (Safir & Dugan, 2021). As the school shifts from teacher-centred classrooms to a student-centred learning community focused on using qualitative and quantitative data to improve the learning experiences within the school, the power dynamic in classrooms will shift.

Cogenerating a Change Resource

NBMS is an excellent school to serve as a pilot for the necessary change addressed in this OIP. The information obtained through this process is foundational, as the greatest need for change should occur in the school with the highest enrollment percentage of Indigenous students in SD-Evolve. To this end, successful gains established will take time and will be incredibly complex, so educators must remain adaptive and diligent in acknowledging both the successes and challenges of the suggested change plan. Cogenerating a district resource that could be adopted for use as a reference for other schools at SD-Evolve and beyond would be helpful. Through the development of this tool, highlighting key points and strategies that have proved effective, while guiding how to overcome challenges and resistance, can also be addressed. This approach of a lived and cogenerated resource would benefit future schools in the process.

A resource of this nature, established through the lived experiences of the NBMS school community, could document stages of change emphasizing a focus on developing trust, strengthening relationships, and seeking to understand why the resistance exists. There is an

anticipated potential challenge in the school community, from members of the dominant majority, who may resist these advances with arguments that these practices may somehow negatively affect their children's education. Providing readily available information through school-based engagement sessions, social media, and in-person meetings, when necessary, will help to provide transparency through explanation as consistent foundational messaging.

Providing communications that celebrate school success to the public will be important, so everyone is aware of the positive changes happening within the school. Options include posting regularly through the NBMS social media, using school-based community communications such as the weekly update and newsletters, and acknowledging progress through school and community celebrations. Furthermore, articulating and documenting the changes in school culture and values internally and externally will be key to sustaining the CIP and to sharing local narratives that challenge dominant central narratives of school reform (Andreotti, 2011; Wiliam, 2010). As the presence and strength of Indigenous voice becomes established, ongoing evaluation needs to be addressed to identify potential discrimination or oppressive systemic practices that need attention. Although the Canadian school system was developed based upon colonial practices of the dominant majority, the counter-narratives and revisioning of education forward cannot be.

Conclusion

As I complete the final words of this manuscript, I reflect on my 2-year journey as the principal of NBMS. Walking down the main corridor one evening as I leave the quiet and empty school building, I pause to observe established school showcases displaying Indigenous student creations from land-based learning experiences with Elders. Another showcase celebrates National Truth and Reconciliation Day with breathtaking images of the local Indigenous chief

and parents of the First Nation community welcoming NBMS students in their first ceremonial canoe journey across the lake. The canoe is filled with Indigenous Elders, Indigenous students, non-Indigenous staff, and various community allies as it moves towards the chief across the lake. Just a few steps further, the athletics display near the entrance of our gym is decorated with images of the charity basketball event between the local Indigenous adult community members against NBMS student basketball teams. The pictures show that the bleachers are packed and Elders are laughing as they watch their grandchildren play; one photo of the scoreboard reveals the adults still had game. As I leave, I cannot help but smile. Looking back into the main entrance, I am overcome with a deep sense of hope. A life-sized dreamcatcher now hangs in the main entrance. Its dangling strands are adorned with images of each Indigenous and non-Indigenous student at NBMS who has voluntarily and bravely read their personalized land acknowledgement from the main office as part of the announcements to start the school day. There is a counter-narrative in all of this; the legacy of a new beginning that recognizes that despite undeniable struggle and resistance, positive change can occur as people begin to realize it is okay to let go of what once was, in exchange to adopt a better way forward for all.

This OIP is crafted to address a specific PoP within NBMS and at a greater breadth within the SD-Evolve division. Considering all forms of data, both statistical and humanizing, the indisputable reality is a consistent achievement gap in the success rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners, which must be addressed in a culturally responsive way. I have chosen to dedicate my professional and doctoral work to examining new entry points in quality public education practices that align with Indigenous education research to inform stakeholders on how to change the lived experiences and academic outcomes for all students, but especially for Indigenous students.

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Appendix A: NBMS Indigenous Student Attendance (2021–2022)

Figure A1 and Table A1 show comparisons of attendance data for Grade 6 to 8 Indigenous students between the full school district and New Beginnings Middle School (a pseudonym). Figure A2 shows trends in attendance of Grade 6 to 8 Indigenous students at New Beginnings Middle School over time.

Figure A1

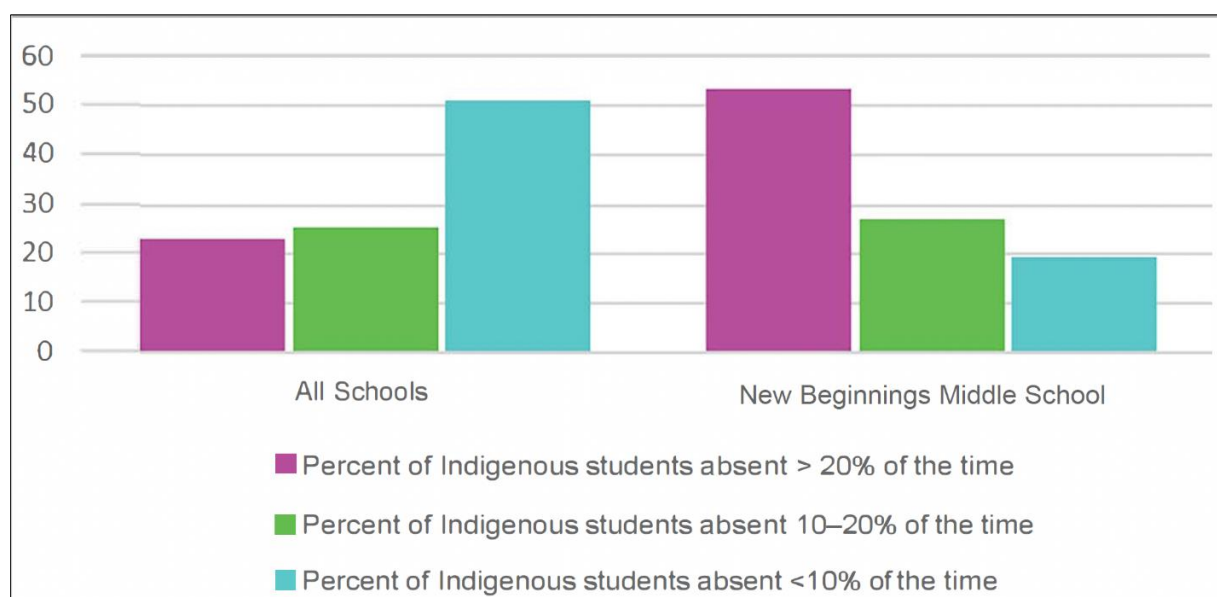*Attendance for Grade 6 to 8 Indigenous Students, 2021–2022*

Table A1

*Comparison of Number of Grade 6 to 8 Indigenous Students Absent from NBMS and School*

District, 2021–2022

Percentage of time absent	Number of students in school district	Number of students at NBMS
> 20	800	74
10–20	883	38
< 10	1759	27
Total	3442	139

Note. NBMS = New Beginnings Middle School, a pseudonym.

Figure A2

Attendance for New Beginnings Middle School Grade 6 to 8 Indigenous Students Over Time
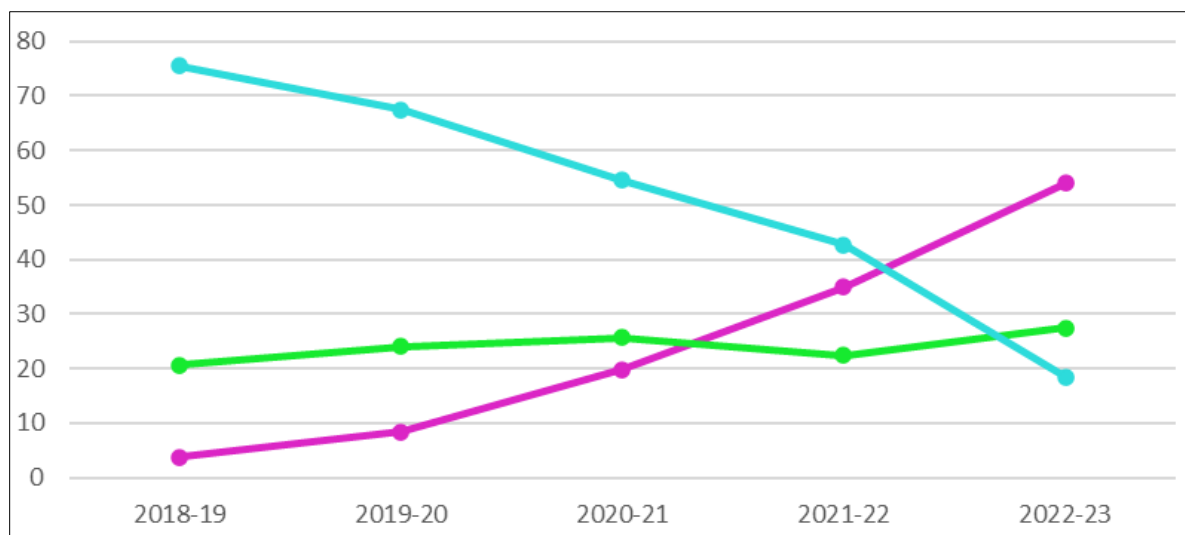
■ Percent of Indigenous students absent > 20% of the time

■ Percent of Indigenous students absent 10–20% of the time

■ Percent of Indigenous students absent <10% of the time

Appendix B: Comparison of NBMS Student Performance With SD-Evolve Averages

Figure B1

Grade 6 English Marks
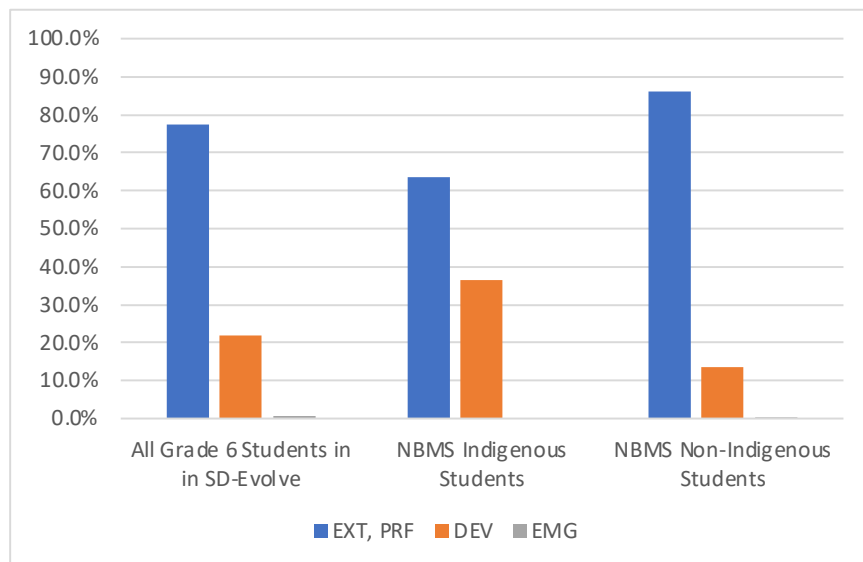
Note. EXT = extending; PRF = proficient; DEV = developing; EMG = emerging; NBMS = New

Beginnings Middle School (a pseudonym); SD-Evolve = School District Evolve (a pseudonym)

Figure B2

Grade 7 English Marks
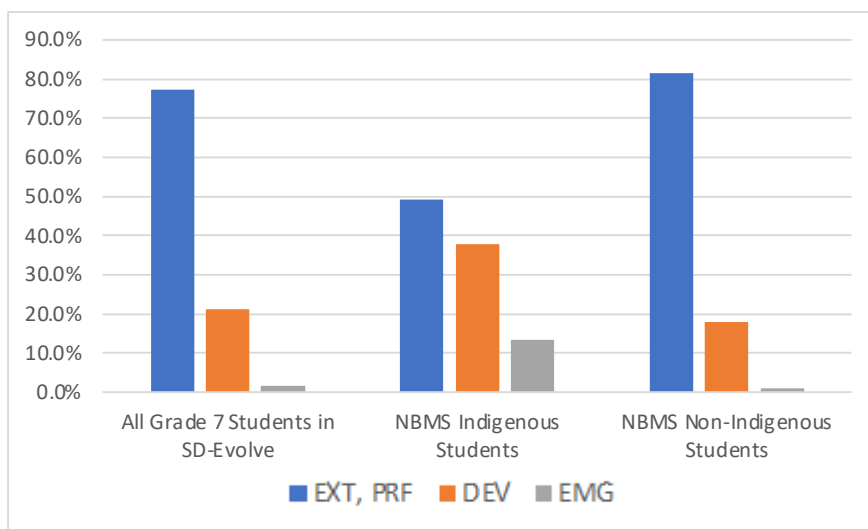
Note. EXT = extending; PRF = proficient; DEV = developing; EMG = emerging; NBMS = New

Beginnings Middle School (a pseudonym); SD-Evolve = School District Evolve (a pseudonym)

Figure B3

Grade 8 English Marks

Note. EXT = extending; PRF = proficient; DEV = developing; EMG = emerging; NBMS = New

Beginnings Middle School (a pseudonym); SD-Evolve = School District Evolve (a pseudonym)

Figure B4

Grade 6 Math Marks

Note. EXT = extending; PRF = proficient; DEV = developing; EMG = emerging; NBMS = New

Beginnings Middle School (a pseudonym); SD-Evolve = School District Evolve (a pseudonym)

Figure B5

Grade 7 Math Marks

Note. EXT = extending; PRF = proficient; DEV = developing; EMG = emerging; NBMS = New

Beginnings Middle School (a pseudonym); SD-Evolve = School District Evolve (a pseudonym)
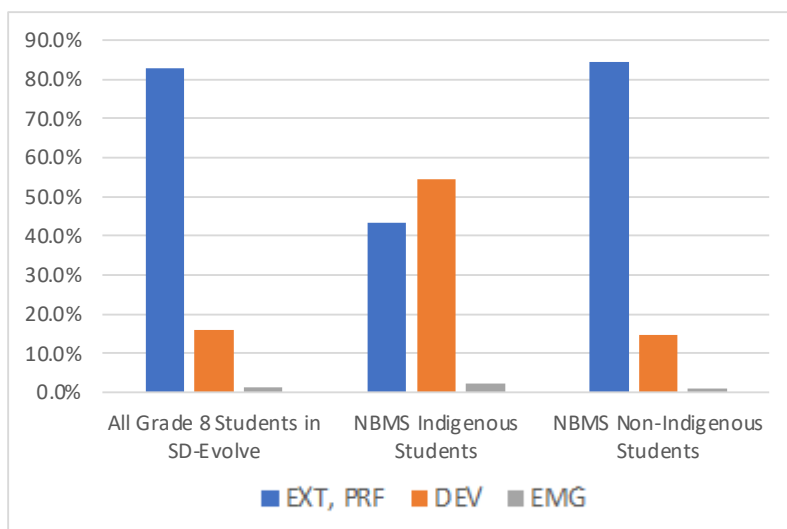
Figure B6

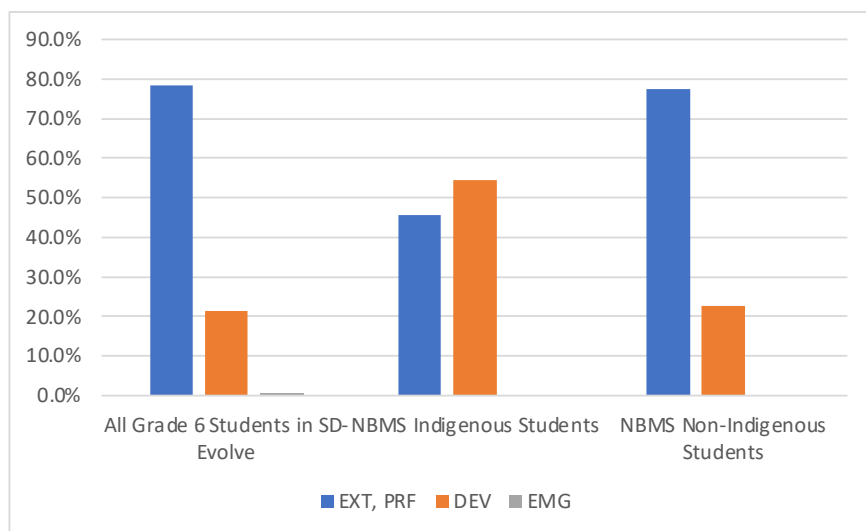*Grade 8 Math Marks*

Note. EXT = extending; PRF = proficient; DEV = developing; EMG = emerging; NBMS = New

Beginnings Middle School (a pseudonym); SD-Evolve = School District Evolve (a pseudonym)

Figure B7

Grade 6 Social Studies Marks

Note. EXT = extending; PRF = proficient; DEV = developing; EMG = emerging; NBMS = New

Beginnings Middle School (a pseudonym); SD-Evolve = School District Evolve (a pseudonym)

Figure B8

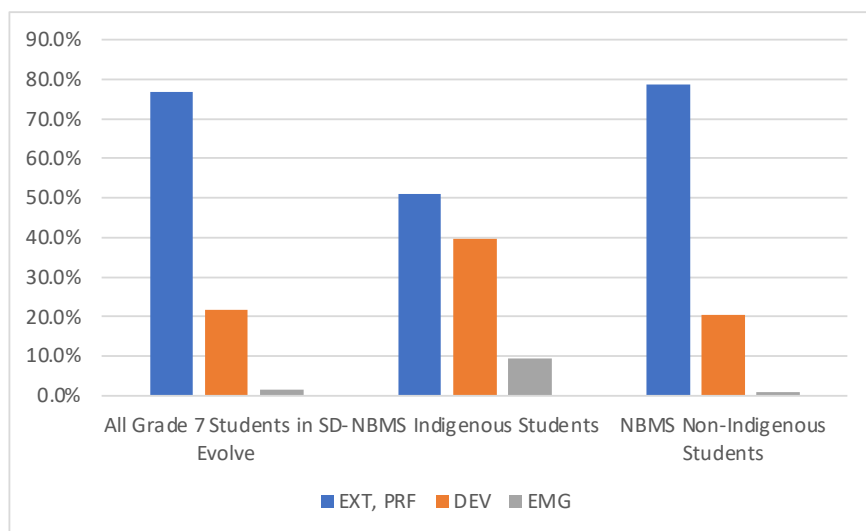*Grade 7 Social Studies Marks*

Note. EXT = extending; PRF = proficient; DEV = developing; EMG = emerging; NBMS = New

Beginnings Middle School (a pseudonym); SD-Evolve = School District Evolve (a pseudonym)

Figure B9

Grade 8 Social Studies Marks

Note. EXT = extending; PRF = proficient; DEV = developing; EMG = emerging; NBMS = New

Beginnings Middle School (a pseudonym); SD-Evolve = School District Evolve (a pseudonym)

Figure B10
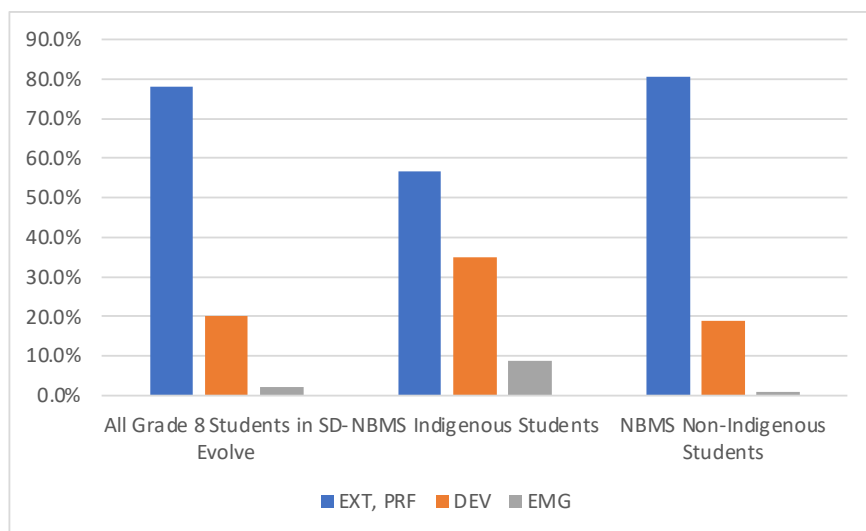
Grade 6 Science Marks

Note. EXT = extending; PRF = proficient; DEV = developing; EMG = emerging; NBMS = New

Beginnings Middle School (a pseudonym); SD-Evolve = School District Evolve (a pseudonym)

Figure B11
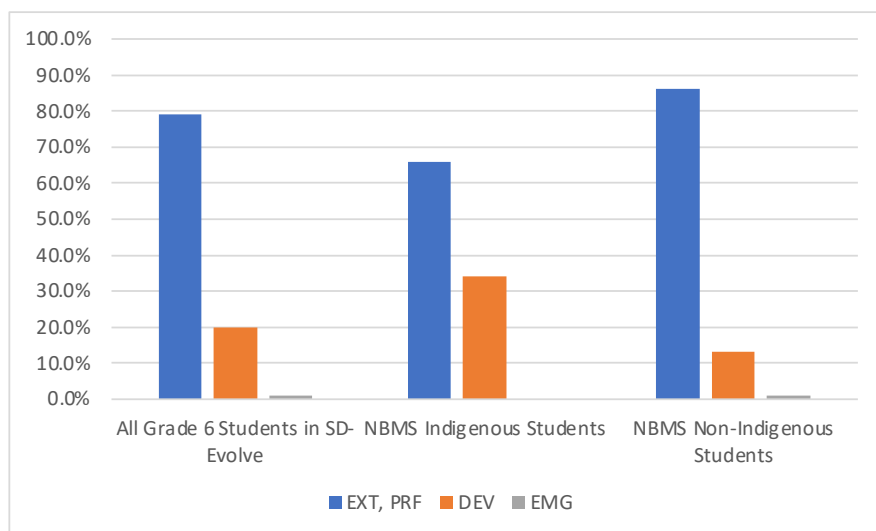
Grade 7 Science Marks

Note. EXT = extending; PRF = proficient; DEV = developing; EMG = emerging; NBMS = New

Beginnings Middle School (a pseudonym); SD-Evolve = School District Evolve (a pseudonym)

Figure B12

Grade 8 Science Marks
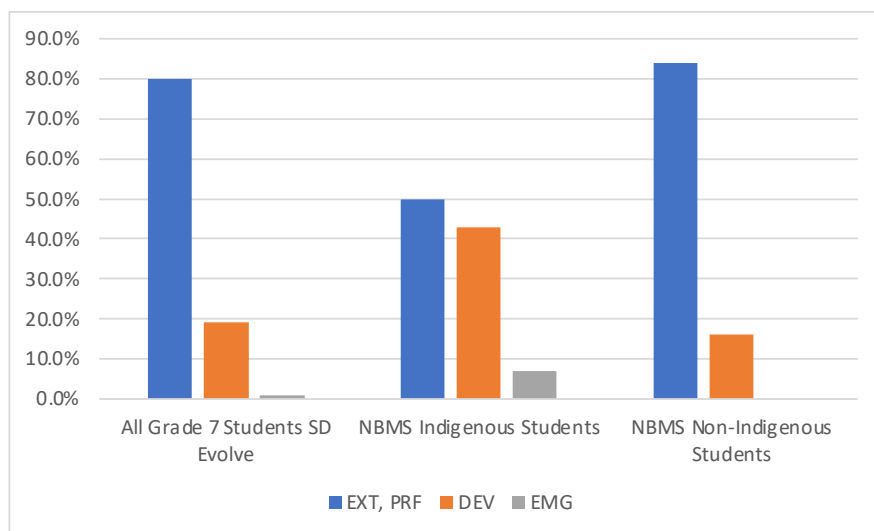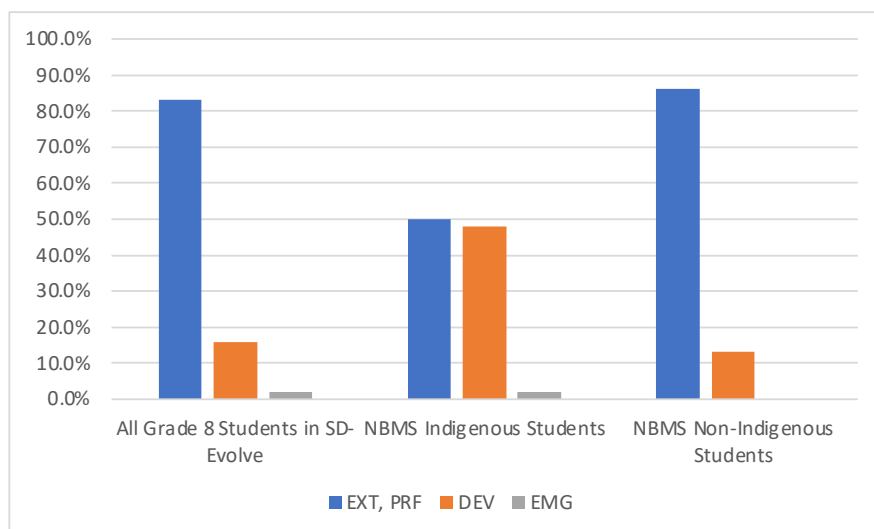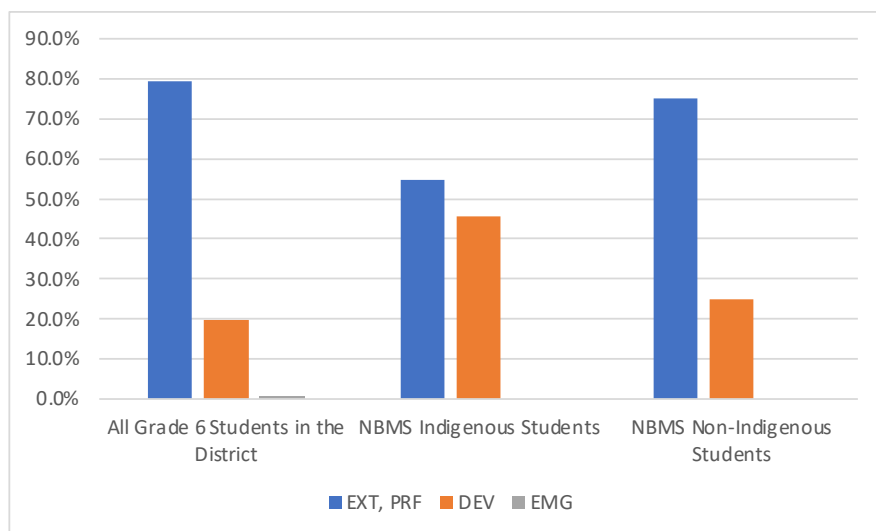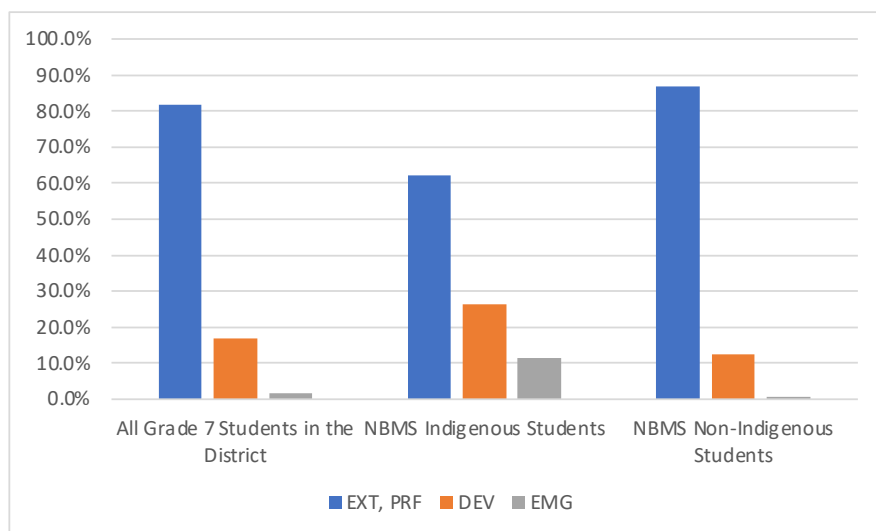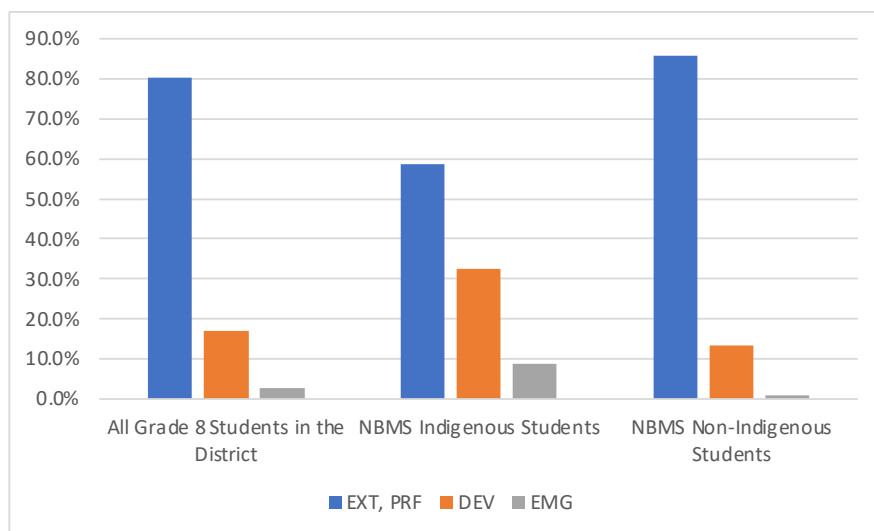

Note. EXT = extending; PRF = proficient; DEV = developing; EMG = emerging; NBMS = New

Beginnings Middle School (a pseudonym); SD-Evolve = School District Evolve (a pseudonym)

Appendix C: Change Implementation Plan 2023–2024

Stage and timeline	Goals	Main activities
Cycle 1, Phase 1		
CPM: Awaken (September–October)	Identify the need for change and confirm problems and opportunities through data. Articulate the gap between the present and envisioned future state and share data. Develop a powerful vision for change. Disseminate the vision for the change and why it is needed through many communication channels.	Share evidence in PLCs and staff meetings that identifies Indigenous learners' learning gaps through SD-Evolve and MoE data on NBMS. Discuss the data and identify the needed change to awaken. Using Cogen groups at various levels within NBMS, collaborate to develop a statement that explains the gap and why it is occurring. Begin to discuss the envisioned future state for NBMS and how addressing the learning gap can create a vision for the change that is needed.
ETC: Listen—with a mindset of radical inclusion (September–October)	Locate the margins of NBMS community students. Cultivate awareness of personal biases. Find culturally appropriate ways to capture listening data. Pay close attention to nonverbal cues. Remember the purpose: healing plus understanding. Aim to work with one student (or small group of students) each week in this way.	Teachers begin to gather artifacts, stories, or observations through student work, empathy interviews between teacher and student (can be audio/video recorded), fishbowl dialogues (small group conversations between teacher and students), or during FSS time. Administrators begin to gather the same artifacts from staff through conversations, meeting feedback, and/or one-to-one conversations.
Cycle 1, Phase 2		
CPM: Mobilization (November–January)	Make sense of the desired change through formal systems and structures; leverage these structures. Assess power and cultural dynamics to build coalitions and support to realize the change. Communicate the need for change organization-wide and	Seek Indigenous community members to support teaching and learning about local Indigenous practices to be shared in PLCs and staff meetings. Create cultural awareness routinely and systematically through personalized land acknowledgements and welcomes at NBMS. Seek various community-building events and opportunities to reignite a welcome for all families.

Stage and timeline	Goals	Main activities
	manage change recipients and various stakeholders' reactions. Leverage change agent assets for the benefit of the change vision and its implementation.	Administrators actively seek greater district supports (for staffing and opportunities) for Indigenous learners. Develop leadership opportunities for Indigenous learners. Improving the Gathering Space and give access for Elders and opportunities of allyship.
ETC: Uncover— with a mindset of curiosity (November– January)	By listening deeply to the voices at the margins (from student evidence gathered to date), resist the urge to disrupt the improvement habit of diving into planning before gathering data. Do not jump to a solution space before thoroughly exploring the gathered evidence. Slow down, reflect, and value the street data via uncovering. Use good team meetings to stretch beyond assumptions. Draw from the iceberg metaphor (Senge et al., 1994).	Teachers study the artifacts (from the previous month) to uncover the root causes of the equity work. Using FSS and Cogen time, teachers share their artifacts and data in a collaborative fashion by studying one another's data with colleagues. Gather key observations as a group without moving to a solution. During collaborative time with colleagues, look beyond the surface (iceberg model) and seek the root causes: What patterns, trends, and systemic structures are barriers to equity for these learners? Ask: How does our thinking allow this to persist?
Cycle 1, Phase 3		
CPM: Acceleration (February— March)	Continue to systemically reach out to engage and empower others in support. Use appropriate tools to build momentum, accelerate, and consolidate progress. Manage the transition; celebrate small wins and the achievement of milestones.	Through PLC and staff meetings, administration will elicit ideas on findings from student artifacts and from collaborative teacher time in FSS and Cogen time. Ideas will be heard, and new approaches considered, with identifiable next steps. Celebrate ideas of students and staff. Assure the proposed idea is a welcomed opportunity, whether it is successful or needs revisiting.
ETC: Reimagine— with a mindset of creativity	Transformational antiracist thinking will emerge from convening a range of perspectives around the table.	Teachers will return to the students they gathered artifacts from in September and October. Now that staff have centred voices from the margins and begun to uncover root

Stage and timeline	Goals	Main activities
(February–March)	Bring the stakeholders (the students) we listened to into the conversation as cocreators. This phase is about inquiry with those at the margins, not inquiry for. Lean towards youth participatory action research. Avoid the pitfall of reverting to the same strategies that are safe and familiar.	causes, teachers will bring these student stakeholders into the conversation as cocreators and codreamers through youth participatory action research. Ideas will be formulated, triaged, and gathered as welcome and constructive moves to address the PoP.
Cycle 1, Phase 4		
CPM: Institutionalization (April–June)	Track the change periodically through multiple balanced measures to make modifications as needed.	Identify students and staff calls to action emerging from the data, ideas, and cogenerated suggestions from Phase 3. Implement and monitor progress and challenges for the next 4 to 6 weeks.
ETC: Move—with a mindset of courage (April–June)	Implement the emerging ideas with a mindset of courage. Act without complete information or perfect design; accept lack of closure but not inaction. Expect resistance, recalcitrance, defensiveness; all those things that stymie progress. Remember that change for equity is bold and emergent.	As a school or classroom community, identify the initiative that emerged from the previous three phases that is actionable now. Begin, even if the plan is not entirely perfect or the result/outcome is uncertain. Be observant and document both successes and failures as additional data that can be addressed moving forward in Cycle 2 (February–June).

Note. Cogen = cogenerative; CPM = change path model; ETC = equity transformation cycle;

FSS = focused student support ; MoE = Ministry of Education; NBMS = New Beginnings

Middle School (a pseudonym); PLC = professional learning community; PoP = problem of

practice; SD-Evolve = School District Evolve (a pseudonym).

Appendix D: Teacher Cultural Proficiency Receptivity Scale

     This cultural proficiency receptivity scale is a nonscientific instrument designed to guide you through a process of self-reflection. Read each of the statements and indicate your level of agreement on the 1 to 7 Likert scale. The purpose of the scale is to introduce you to important concepts in a manner that personalizes concepts related to cultural proficiency related to your role as a teacher/educator.

I believe that all children and youth learn successfully when informed and caring educators assist them and make sufficient resources available to them.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I want to do whatever is necessary to ensure that the students for whom I am responsible are well-educated and successful learners.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I am committed to creating both an educational environment and learning experiences for our students that honor and respect who they are (including culture, identities, ways of knowing and being).

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I am willing to ask myself uncomfortable questions about systemic oppression (e.g., racism), cultural preferences, and insufficient learning conditions and resources that are obstacles to learning for many students.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I am willing to ask myself uncomfortable questions about systemic oppression (e.g., racism), cultural preferences, and insufficient learning conditions and resources that may be uncomfortable for others in my school.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I believe that all students benefit from educational practices that engage them in learning about their cultural heritage and understanding their cultural background.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I believe that all students benefit from educational practices that provide them with hope, direction, and preparation for their future lives.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

It is important to know how well our district serves the various cultural and ethnic communities represented in our schools, and it is also important to understand how well served they feel by the educational practices in our schools.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

It is important to know how the various cultural and ethnic/cultural communities represented in our schools view me as an educational leader and to understand how well my leadership serves their expectations.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Our district and schools are successful only when all demographics and cultural groups are improving academically and socially.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Cultural discomfort and disagreements are normal occurrences in a diverse society such as ours and are part of everyday interactions.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I believe that lack of cultural understanding and historic distrust can result in cultural discomfort and disagreements.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I believe we can learn about and implement diverse and improved instructional practices that will effectively serve all our students.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I believe we can use disaggregated data to understand more precisely the achievement status of all students in our schools and that we can use that information to identify and implement effective instructional practices for each of them.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

As a leader it is important for me to be able to communicate across cultures and to facilitate communication among diverse cultural groups.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix E: Student Agency Measurement Tool 1

My culture, identities, and ways of being are valued here.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

My ways of learning are valued here.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

My ways of knowing and understanding the world are valued here.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I have opportunities to build and construct my own knowledge.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I have opportunities to demonstrate understanding to peers and teachers.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I have opportunities to demonstrate understanding to the community or groups of people beyond my classroom.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I see myself represented in the staff, curriculum, and school culture.

Strongly Disagree			Agree		Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I feel seen and loved by my teachers.						
Strongly Disagree			**Agree**		**Strongly Agree**	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I feel seen and loved by my peers.						
Strongly Disagree			**Agree**		**Strongly Agree**	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I feel like I can make a difference here.						
Strongly Disagree			**Agree**		**Strongly Agree**	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix F: Student Agency Measurement Tool 2

Student Agency Measurement Tool 2

Begin to interview a cross-section of students in a small group dynamic asking the following questions:

Note: If students are comfortable, record voices so that the 'uncover' may occur in colab groups to identify common themes.

The following is a list of questions to guide the conversation:

• To what extent do you feel your ways of being and learning are valued here?
Notes:

• How often do you have opportunities to construct you own knowledge (versus taking notes or digesting information provided by the teacher?
Notes:

• How often do you have opportunities to demonstrate your understanding in a way that's different from a test of quiz? What is that experience like?
Notes:

• To what extent do you feel you belong here? Why or why not?
Notes:

• To what extent do you feel seen and loved here? Why or why not?
Notes:

• When is the last time you felt you could make a difference here about something that matters to you? What was that like?
Notes:

• What ideas do you have to make our school a place where you feel a greater sense of power and agency?
Notes:

Appendix G: Student Agency Measurement Tool 3

Begin to interview a cross-section of students in a small group dynamic, asking the following questions. Note: If students are comfortable, record voices so that the "uncover" may occur in collaborative groups to identify common themes. Students are encouraged to complete a single-point rubric reflection on agency (once per week).

Roses What is something that went well in this area?	Agency areas/domains	Thorns What got in the way or was hard for you in this area?
	Identity: "This week, I felt like my culture, identity, or ways of being, learning and knowing were valued here." Mastery: "This week I had opportunities to build my own knowledge and/or demonstrate my understanding of key ideas." Belonging: "This week, I felt like I belonged here. I felt seen and loved in this classroom." Efficacy: "This week, I had an opportunity to make a difference in this (classroom or school)."	

Appendix H: School Data Dashboard Template

SCHOOL NAME:	Vision:											
	Mission:											
	Perception/Culture:											

Staffing:					Diversity of Student Body:					Student Attendance Data: (students with > 20% absenteeism)				
					Identity:	M	F	#	%	Identify:	M	F	#	%
Positions:	M	F	#	%	Indigenous (self-identified)					Indigenous (self-identified)				
Teachers					Asian					Asian				
CEAs					Black					Black				
Other Support Staff					Indo-Canadian					Indo-Canadian				
Clerical					Hispanic					Hispanic				
Counsellors					White					White				
Administrators					2+ Races					2+ Races				
Indigenous Student Advocates					Gender Identity	-	-			Gender Identity	-	-		
Custodial Staff					Refugee					Refugee				
Staff Demographics:					ELL					ELL				
Identity:	M	F	#	%	SPED					SPED				
Indigenous					Free / Subsidized Lunch					Free / Subsidized Lunch				
Asian					Homeless / In Ministry Care					Homeless / In Ministry Care				
Black					Student FESL Data on Literacy (L) & Numeracy (N) < 50%					Student School Assessment Data on Literacy (L) & Numeracy (N) < 50%				
Indo-Canadian					Identity:	L	N	#	%	Identity:	L	N	#	%
Hispanic					Indigenous (self-identified)					Indigenous (self-identified)				
White					Asian					Asian				
2+ Races					Black					Black				
Gender Identity	-	-			Indo-Canadian					Indo-Canadian				
Years of Teaching (including administration):					Hispanic					Hispanic				
< 3 Years					White					White				
3–10 Years					2+ Races					2+ Races				
10+ Years					Gender Identity					Gender Identity	-	-		
Diversity in Leadership					Refugee					Refugee				
District Position:	M	F	#	%	ELL					ELL				
Area (school's) Superintendent:					SPED					SPED				
Principal					Free / Subsidized Lunch					Free / Subsidized Lunch				
Vice Principal (1)					Homeless / In Ministry Care					Homeless / In Ministry Care				
Vice Principal (2)														