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## Imagining the Possibilities: Co-creating School-wide Equity, Belonging, and Success

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## Abstract

This Dissertation in Practice (DiP) seeks to address the growing opportunity gap adversely impacting marginalized students at an Albertan elementary school. Through a critical theoretical lens, this DiP interrogates the various systemic barriers, contextual factors, and educator biases that perpetuate and reinforce socially and academically stratified learning opportunities that restrict holistic student engagement, belonging, and success. Despite teachers' desire to meet the needs of all students, increasing levels of student diversity and complexity are decreasing the effectiveness of the school's traditional pedagogical practices and structures. Employing a blended transformative and compassionate leadership approach, critically educative possibilities towards deep cultural change and inclusive pedagogical practices are explored using key tenets of social cognitive theory. A continuous professional development framework is designed to leverage staff efficacy, agency, and responsibility at individual and collective levels. Defined by a bias towards action, the change framework in this DiP involves the reconceptualization of leadership as an agentic process that prioritizes equity, empowerment, and inclusivity across the school actor spectrum, thus requiring the engagement of school staff, students, parents/guardians, district staff, and community members. In the proposed solution, capacity building for school leaders, teachers, and support staff is designed to span from ongoing professional collaborations to daily educative classroom teaching and learning experiences. Observational and enactive professional learning to redress instructional practices through iterative inquiry cycles will elevate the prioritization of efficacious, affirming, and empowering learning opportunities for all students.

*Keywords:* agency, efficacy, opportunity gap, equity, inclusivity, collective responsibility

## Executive Summary

Across Canada, compromised levels of achievement are noted for marginalized students, including children with exceptional needs, those living in poverty, recent immigrants, visible minorities, and Indigenous populations, with blame frequently being assigned to the students themselves (Durrant, 2019; Shields & Gélinas-Proulx, 2022). This dissertation in practice (DiP) considers how a school staff can thoughtfully unite to acknowledge, address, and alter the growing opportunity gap in one Albertan elementary school. In the face of persistent of social inequities, this school improvement plan serves as a call to equity to address historic and current patterns of marginalization (Safir & Dugan, 2021) to close the school's growing opportunity gap.

In the initial chapter of this DiP, my identity, positionality, and leadership lens as principal and key change agent at Blueridge Elementary School (BES, a pseudonym) are explored. An overview of the provincial, district, and school organizational contexts is provided, highlighting relevant political, economic, social, and cultural considerations in this leadership problem. This problem of practice (PoP), which investigates how to address current ineffective pedagogical responses and lacking collective responsibility for the school's growing opportunity gap, is further framed through a discussion of current leadership approaches and a PESTEL (political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal) analysis. Guiding questions probe concerns around deficit thinking, within-school agentic opportunities, and possible impacts of ineffective pedagogical approaches. A vision towards organizational improvement is crafted, built upon a foundation of staff collective compassion, responsibility, and efficacy to ensure high levels of expectation, opportunity, and learning for marginalized students.

Chapter two provides an outline of the overarching theoretical approaches employed in this DiP. Thoughtfully aligned with the critically-oriented epistemological underpinning of this

dissertation, a transformative-compassionate leadership approach prioritizes an equity agenda, acknowledges inherent power and privilege dynamics, and nurtures an empathetic, inclusive approach to catalyze change (Ramachandran et al., 2023; Shields 2022). Scaffolding these leadership approaches, social cognitive theory's concepts of efficacy and agency serve as key tools for empowerment, motivation, and action to address this complex leadership problem.

A flexible change framework is provided, including Deszca, Ingols, and Cawsey's (2020) change path model buttressed by Stroh's (2015) four stages of leading systemic change framework. Collectively, these change models offer a thoughtful combination of prescription and process alongside a targeted focus on social equity and systems thinking dimensions in organizational change. An organizational capacity for change tool (Judge & Douglas, 2009) is used to determine the school's readiness for change, followed by an analysis of ethical considerations within the proposed educational change. Lastly, three potential equity-focused, capacity building solutions to this PoP are outlined, each employing a continuous professional development (CDP) structure to leverage emerging understandings of equity, inclusivity, and belongingness (Díaz Maggioli, 2020). An educative action research approach is the selected solution to address this PoP, based on an evaluation of required resources and ethical considerations, and an analysis of each solution's efficacy on Kennedy's (2014) CPD transformative framework continuum and Díaz Maggioli's (2018) efficacy-based INSPIRE tool.

The third and final DiP chapter delves into the implementation, communication, and evaluation plans of the change plan. These plans are predicated upon the involvement of all school actor roles, from school leaders, teachers, support staff, and district personnel to parents/guardians, school partners, and students. The cyclical and iterative change implementation plan is designed to uncover typically silenced and marginalized voices while

simultaneously harnessing agentic possibilities to create change and increase opportunities for marginalized students. Communication plans are organized to ensure ongoing, reciprocal communication pathways, with a targeted focus on knowledge mobilization. Evaluation plans opportunistically interweave provincial and district assurance tools with more qualitative and personalized data metrics to nurture expanded staff collective responsibility for increased learning opportunities for marginalized students.

As school staff expand their efficacy and agency through these ongoing collaborative engagements, increased leadership throughout the school community will be encouraged via transformative and compassionate approaches towards enacting equity. Next steps in this DiP revolve around the reconceptualization of difference and diversity as source of strength, empowerment, and possibility to best meet the needs of all students in our care.

## Acknowledgements

With profound respect and a commitment towards growing my knowledge of Indigenous histories, wisdom, and ways of being, I acknowledge and honour the lands of the Blackfoot Confederacy, including the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai, the Tsuut'ina Nation and Stoney-Nakoda Nations, including the Goodstoney, Chiniki, and Bearspaw, and the People of Métis Nation of Alberta, District 4, whose traditional land I learn, live, work, and play on. I understand that my learning in this endeavour will be without end and will be a lifelong process that must be paired with action.

At the close of this educational journey, these final days are bittersweet. Beyond all other identities in my life, the role of learner has been a constant companion and the most cherished and empowering identity I have accessed in my roles as a teacher, leader, friend, and family member. I have greatly enjoyed this three-year journey and the immense learning and reflection it has nurtured. I take comfort that as this formal learning experience ends, my role as learner will continue, albeit through a myriad of less formal pathways.

I want to express my thanks to my UWO instructors and K-12 cohort colleagues for your expertise, wisdom, and collaboration. Specifically, I wish to express my profound appreciation for the expertise and mentorship I received from Dr. Dianne Yee. Quite simply, she has served as a beacon of support, compassion, and kindness in this journey. I am extremely thankful for her ongoing support. Thank you, also, to the many students, support staff, teachers, leaders, and parents/guardians throughout my career who helped me to learn and grow, challenging me to be a better educator in the process. Thank you to my extended family and friends for their support, encouragement, and challenge along my learning journey – one that started far before I entered this program.

Lastly, I want to extend my most heartfelt thanks to my family. Each of you have contributed to this accomplishment in more ways than I can count. There simply aren't words to share appreciation that I feel. To my big brother, for setting a high bar that seems impossible to follow yet sets an example I always aspire to achieve. To my guide dog Lily, for keeping me safe and reminding me to always honour strengths and possibilities over struggles and limitations. To my four children, for reminding me to find the joy in life and to hold high expectations of myself regardless of my fears. To my partner, for his unwavering confidence in me, for his quiet strength, and for being my better half in more ways than he will ever know or fully comprehend.

This work is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Maureen, my father, Walter, my Grom, Mona, and my father-in-law, Mark, each for different yet equally valuable reasons. I still feel your presence and thank you for the profound impacts you each had, and continue to have, in helping me as a lifelong learner.

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## Acronyms

4SLSC	Four Stages of Leading Systemic Change
ABEd	Alberta Ministry of Education
ATA	Alberta Teachers' Association
BES	Blueridge Elementary School
CIP	Change Implementation Plan
CL	Compassionate Leadership
CoP	Community of Practice
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPM	Change Path Model
DiP	Dissertation in Practice
KMb	Knowledge Mobilization
LST	Learning Support Teacher
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MRP	Most Responsible Person
MSD	Mountain School District
OCC	Organizational Change Capacity
PL	Professional Learning
PoP	Problem of Practice
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SEP	School Education Plan
ST	System Thinking
TL	Transformative Leadership

## Chapter 1: Problem Posing

In the initial days of my doctoral journey, selecting a worthy problem of practice (PoP) was a source of great stress and responsibility for me. Finding a complex situation to problematize led to numerous considerations of what may be “wrong” in my school setting. Instead, I gradually came to understand that I must instead focus on what may be possible, and how I may turn challenges into opportunities in my organizational context.

Recently, I received a letter from a young mother of three children, the eldest of whom had just begun kindergarten at Blueridge Elementary School (BES; a pseudonym), where I work as principal. Amongst the myriad of organizational, contextual, and leadership knowledge I was considering in my problem posing for this chapter, her letter captured the essence of my idealized vision for BES. She asked for permission to write a letter to all school parents to share how excited she is that her child can learn and grow from watching and interacting with fellow students. She wanted parents to know that she believes that children should be able to ask questions about difference and disability, including to and about her own child. To this parent, inclusion is for and benefits everyone. She dreams that every child feels a sense of belonging at their school. This parent’s brave, vulnerable actions reflect the very core of this counternarrative of possibility towards authentic inclusivity to address the growing opportunity gap at BES.

This initial dissertation in practice (DiP) chapter situates my identity, positionality, and leadership lens as key change agent in this elementary school-based PoP. An overview of the organization, alongside an exploration of various environmental factors across the macro, meso, and micro levels, provides clarity around the scope and contextual challenges within the growing opportunity gap at BES. Next, the PoP is discussed via three key lines of inquiry and framed to clarify the gap between the current reality and aspirational vision for BES. Lastly, the leadership-



focused vision for change explores the intersectional influences and broader role of agency as well as a counternarrative of possibility towards impactful change.

### **Positionality and Leadership Lens Statement**

Positionality and leadership lens hold critical influence within this DiP, guiding how my values are actualized, my agency is exercised, and my capacity to enact change is optimized (Bryman, 2016; Holmes, 2020). This statement explores my identity, beliefs, and positionality, as well as my leadership lens, responsibilities, and agency as a change leader.

### **Identity and Positionality**

Identity and positionality can provide valuable leverage in exercising agency to affect change within organizational structures (Chingara & Heystek, 2019; Rowe, 2014). Viewed through an equity-based lens, I understand that my positionality stems from an intersection of cultural values, experiences, beliefs, and positions within my identity and recognize that all knowledge is, at best, partial knowledge (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014). My unique intersectionality in this praxis-based research context offers fluidity across the insider/outsider positionality continuum in multiple ways, at times both granting and preventing access points, insights, and understandings within this proposed change plan (Gelir, 2021; Holmes, 2020).

My love of learning, teaching, and education began at an early age, still unwavering to this day. I began my educational journey as a White, able, middle-class youngster. However, the passing of my father and related challenges very early in my elementary schooling shifted my family's status economically, socially, and emotionally, particularly as my mother struggled with both vision loss and mental illness. Personally, as a legally blind mother, educator, advocate, and leader, I reflectively appreciate the fluidity my positionality affords me across my various intersecting identities yet find best insight and perspective in humbling positions of oppression to

unsettle the invisibility and authority of dominant ideological thinking (Andreotti et al., 2018; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014), including my own. This lifelong journey of changing positionalities has yielded deep paradigmatic shifts and related ideological, psychological, and emotional understandings. In short, I am coming to understand the simultaneous internalized dominance *and* oppression my positionality provides (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014).

As a leader, I continually seek to consider a wide variety of disciplines, cultures, and points of view (Ciulla, 2005). At times, my positionality as “other” (female, disabled) affords insights into unconscious bias, deficit thinking, and lacking inclusivity in my school setting (Doan & Jaber, 2021; Doten-Snitker et al., 2021). Other identities, such as being White, middle-class, and/or as the school’s “formal” leader may also grant or restrict access and agency in key contexts during this work (Baglieri et al., 2011; DeWitt, 2018). Collectively, I commit to mindfully challenging my White, settler, and ableist biases and assumptions (Bourke, 2014; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Tuana, 2014) while leveraging my agency to serve as change leader in this PoP with a dedicated commitment towards marginalized students.

### **Epistemological Lens**

I am guided by a passionate commitment to equity, inclusivity, and belongingness. Operating from a critically-oriented epistemological lens, with a specific focus on disability studies in education theory, ensuring a culture of empowerment, equity, high expectations, and engagement provide the foundational cornerstones for my evolving leadership perspective (Capper, 2019; Collins & Ferri, 2016; Connors, 2013, 2020). I believe that all knowledge and understanding is partial; it can be supported through dialogic methodologies and must be critically questioned to uncover equity ramifications and possibilities. To me, knowledge and its acquisition is related to power structures that are complex and pluralized (Capper, 2019).

Examining knowledge and decision-making, particularly around difference, involves dynamics of power, control, identity, and justice (Danforth & Gable, 2006).

Questioning conventional ways of thinking about difference affords education leaders unique opportunities to explore and respond to student struggles and school failure in unique ways (Taylor, 2006). This provides promise towards desired outcomes when addressing BES's opportunity gap. I believe that inclusion is never fully arrived at and must be consistently pursued to honour the students in our care (Ferri, 2015; Hodge, 2016; Holmes, 2018; Pearson et al., 2016; Van de Ven, 2020), a belief I seek to champion in this change initiative.

### **Leadership Lens**

With almost two decades of experience as principal, I understand that ensuring high levels of student learning and belonging are integral to learner success (Riley, 2022; Robinson, 2009; Timperley, 2005). While not yet a reality for all students at BES, these expectations are clearly outlined in Alberta's Education Act (GoA, 2023), our province's Leadership Quality Standards (ABEd, 2023c), and our district's strategic plan (MSD, 2023c). Closing the opportunity gap at BES will require deep transformative learning and professional capacity building to be undertaken by BES staff as a collective. Towards this end, I will employ a hybrid of transformative and compassionate leadership approaches.

Transformative leadership (TL) focuses explicitly on inclusion, equity, excellence, and social justice, urging school leaders to disrupt inequitable school cultures, unconscious bias, and deficit thinking through transformative action (Dudley-Marling, 2015; Shields & Hesbol, 2020; Walker, 2011; Wellborn, 2019). As our school experiences growing diversity in our student and parent population, I increasingly appreciate the twin concepts of critique and possibility embedded in a transformative leadership stance (Shields, 2010; Taylor, 2007), which I see

encapsulating both high expectations and excellence alongside an unwavering compassion for and belief in my staff. Conceptualized as a process of both individual and collective practice, TL holds power to scaffold everyone's involvement and agency in planning and executing socially just changes (Frost, 2008; Ryan & Rottman, 2007; Timperley, 2011). Transformative leadership is critically educative (Shields, 2019), thus not only recognizing the current conditions in our school, but also how to reconceptualize possibilities to improve student success and belonging.

A compassionate leadership (CL) approach views schools as places of connection, belonging, agency, and possibility (Lyons et al., 2016; Riley, 2022; Safir & Dugan, 2021). These qualities provide powerful scaffolding potential for transformative change (Harris & Jones, 2019, 2023). At BES, change is viewed cautiously and reluctantly by staff, and thus requires a respectful, empathetic leadership approach. However, I see, hear, and feel the phenomenal care BES staff have for each student in the building and their genuine positive intent, even when their actions may reflect unconscious bias regarding certain students. Related to caring leadership (Murphy & Seashore Lewis, 2018), CL supports staff to adjust to transitioning realities, challenges, and responsibilities. Like TL, CL is a critical leadership perspective, affording leaders the ability to do hard things in humane ways (Hougaard et al., 2020; Safir, 2017).

While schools serve as one of the most powerful institutions that reinforce and reproduce traditional cultures of social stratification (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014), CL recognizes that school is also one of the few shared social institutions that can create a sense of safety and belonging for students (Halse, 2018; Riley, 2022). This inherent potential is one of the key reasons that I have come to embrace this humanistic leadership approach. Compassionate leadership is suggested to foster better organizational performance, staff well-being, and employee engagement (Buonomo et al., 2022; Ramachandran et al., 2023). As a warm demander for equity (Safir, 2019), I seek to

actively listen, build trust, and nurture a culture of risk taking while also promoting staff capacity building. Compassionate leadership approaches nurture belongingness, resiliency, staff connectivity, and collective efficacy (Poorkavoos, 2016; Ramachandran et al., 2023) which create cultural conditions to leverage equity-oriented possibilities (Riley, 2022) at BES.

### **Organizational Role, Responsibilities, and Agency**

As a principal, I have wide agency and positional authority in some aspects of my work (Chingara & Heystek, 2019) yet more limited choice in others (Deszca et al., 2020), particularly around provincial and jurisdictional mandates. In the larger context of structural functionalism within my district, I have adopted a balanced approach to agentic practices, recognizing that I must keep one foot in dominant structures of power, authority, and historical expectations, while the other steps up to exercise agentic power, imagine possibilities, and amplify traditionally silenced voices (Chingara & Heystek, 2019).

The single most important factor in the academic achievement of minoritized children is the principal's explicit rejection of deficit thinking (Harris & Jones, 2023; Safir, 2019; Wagstaff & Fusarelli, 1999). I reject a cultural deprivation argument of lowered expectations for student levels of learning, refusing to blame students for poor performance. Instead, I wish to exercise my agency with and alongside that of my staff, by assuming collective responsibility for increasing each student's educational opportunities (Bonner et al., 2020; Hadfield & Ainscow, 2018; West, 2021). Together, we must have a relentless focus on improving instructional practices and school-wide learning (Harris & Jones, 2019; Sharratt, 2018). As change leader, I must nurture BES staff to be both empowered and empowering to address this PoP.

### **Organizational Context**

An organization's immediate and broader context contributes to both problems of practice

and the potential efficacy of related planned change initiatives (Fullan, 2023; Moore et al., 2022). In this section, an overview of the contextual factors across the provincial, district, and school levels will be provided, followed by an analysis of these collective contextual influences on this problem of practice. Lastly, a discussion of provincial, district, and school leadership approaches will be explored in relation to educational leadership theory.

### **Provincial Context**

Alberta Education (ABEd) is responsible for creating curriculum, supporting teacher development, funding school boards, overseeing basic educational policy and regulations, and outlining professional quality standards (ABEd, 2023e). Alberta's progressive inclusive education policy asserts that school authorities must ensure all that students have meaningful learning experiences and instructional supports regardless of race, ability, and other factors (ABEd, 2023b). Providing legislative leverage within this PoP (Winton & Pollock, 2013), the principles in this provincial policy include setting high expectations and employing a strengths-based approach, honouring learner diversity while building staff capacity, and creating responsive learning environments that encourage collaborative practices (ABEd, 2023b).

Despite the province's espoused stance on educational inclusivity, challenges in supporting student complexity are evident in recent changes to Alberta's overall educational funding processes, as well as in their policy for monitoring students with diverse learning needs. While being one of the richest provinces in Canada, Alberta students receive the lowest per-pupil spending. For example, in 2019/2020, Alberta's per pupil funding was \$12,902, compared to a national average of \$14,312 (Li et al., 2022). An additional \$1.2 billion per year would be required just to bring Alberta to the national per pupil funding average (ATA, 2023). Consequently, Alberta teachers have more students per class than any other province, (ATA,

2023). This provides difficulties for teachers working to support increasing student numbers and diversities in larger class sizes, particularly as funds are not directly provided to students with individualized programming requirements (Williamson & Gilham, 2018). Significant budgetary shifts over the past two decades, essentially decreasing districts' power and funding sources, are also impacting boards' abilities to meet diverse learners' needs. In 2020, provincial funding to school districts shifted to a three-year weighted moving average based on student enrolment, effectively underfunding growing boards (Riep, 2021). Last year alone, Mountain School District (MSD; a pseudonym) educated over 800 unfunded students, equating to an annual shortfall of almost eight million dollars (MSD, 2023d) due to this amended funding structure.

### **District Context**

Located in central Alberta, BES is one of approximately 50 schools in MSD. Surrounding a major urban center in Alberta, this burgeoning public board has been shifting from a localized, site-based jurisdiction to an increasingly centralized, formalized, and hierarchical board over the past decade. Pandemic challenges, exponential enrolment growth, increasing student diversity and complexity, and high senior management turnover rates have caused strong, continuous waves of unplanned change throughout this district (GoA, 2022; MSD 2023c).

The district's organizational context is best described as a mix of structural-functionalist and interpretivist epistemologies. This is reflective of the conservative political climate, rural and suburban composition, and traditional agricultural and industrial economic basis of the area (Cuban, 1990; Riep, 2021; Williamson & Gilham, 2018). Under the direction of Alberta's Ministry of Education, MSD is suitably responsive to provincial mandates, legislation, and initiatives. A new provincial curriculum, increased student evaluation requirements, and changing school education planning priorities have caused concerns of an evolving culture of

accountability among MSD school-based leaders, reinforcing the primacy of the board's structural-functionalist perspective (Capper, 2019; Fullan, 2016).

The leadership structures at the district reflect a traditional, hierarchical framework, with distributed responsibilities across geographical and/or topical areas. Our superintendent delegates responsibilities across four overarching departments to respective associate superintendents, including learning, business and operations, schools, and human resources departments, employing a siloed and hierarchical organizational structure (see [Appendix A](#)). While inter-departmental collaborations are in operation, growth pressures and recent senior leadership turnover in the district have significantly slowed desired levels of interaction.

The MSD board of trustees works closely with the district superintendent and senior executive members, particularly in establishing strategic direction and planning duties. The trustees have also recently taken up a strong advocacy role, enlisting parents' support to encourage the province to provide funding for much-needed new schools. As MSD spans a wide geographical area including several rural and suburban locations, priorities of trustees represent diverse interests according to their respective wards' needs. At times, trustees' influence extends beyond governance and administration responsibilities (Campbell & Fullan, 2019), such as their inclusion in principal hiring interview panels and involvement in earmarking funds for specific instructional and curricular projects, such as home reading materials. School trustees each attend their designated schools' monthly school council meetings, seeking to keep abreast of local school events while liaising with and listening to parents and community members.

### **School Context**

Blueridge Elementary School is home to approximately 600 kindergarten to grade four students. The school's culture, founded on a love of literacy and a powerful appreciation for



tradition, serves as a source of staff pride. Since its 2005 opening, student diversity and complexity has grown substantially, bringing families with various cultural and ethnic backgrounds, languages, familial and economic structures, and children with complex learning needs to the school (BES, 2021a, 2022). Teacher and support staff numbers have also increased, with little turnover, comprising largely White, middle aged, middle-class staff demographics, although recent hires support increasing staff diversity. Like MSD, approaching change cautiously and slowly, engaging in traditional instructional and intervention practices, and achieving efficiency have served as long standing priorities at BES (BES, 2014, 2021b).

The school's leadership team includes a principal and an assistant principal who work in close partnership with BES's learning support team. Currently, this team is transitioning from an almost exclusively pullout intervention model towards an inclusive, push-in teaming model (see [Appendix B](#)). Initially, the gradual shift towards this structure was unsettling to most staff. Strong teacher autonomy and institutionalized practices had established a school culture that was resistant to change (Barth, 2001; Reeves, 2009), particularly around how diverse students were served. Recently, the movement towards inclusive student learning environments has slowly gained acceptance at BES. Other leadership structures, such as grade-based "most responsible" persons and "priority area" leadership teams, have evolved to share authentic school leadership opportunities across BES since the change in principals in 2020 (see [Appendix C](#)).

### **Collective Contextual Influences**

In the through line from provincial education structures to BES classrooms, multiple complementary and contradicting forces shape the gap between current realities and ideal visions for inclusive success at BES. At the macro level, the province brings a neo-conservative lens to Alberta's educational vision, as evidenced by new curriculum content, increased accountability

structures, a back-to-basics focus, and increasingly centralized funding authority (ABEd, 2020; ABEd, 2023a; Gutek, 2013; Riep, 2021). While the ministry's vision for inclusion is built on a progressive, values-based approach to accepting responsibility for all Albertan students (ABEd, 2023b), current policy statements and inclusion funding structures suggest a deficit understanding of diverse learners' needs (Irvine et al., 2010; Williamson & Gilham, 2018).

At the meso level, MSD's strategic plan targets improved student learning, increased infrastructure and community connections, and a strengthened workforce (MSD 2023c). New district education plans champion goals involving connection, belonging, learning, and success. Schools are required to employ quantitative goals, measures, and indicators of progress for each school (MSD, 2023a). This focus is indicative of a shift towards an interpretivist epistemological approach to student achievement. However, it is not yet specifically focused on eliminating inequalities or questioning oppressive systems' impacts on vulnerable populations (Capper, 2019; Khalifa et al., 2016; Kuehn, 2020; Safir et al., 2021).

Collectively, the macro and meso levels determine many of the priorities, structures, and expectations at the micro, or school-based, level. While these expectations will require strong leadership to address, I intend to employ leadership as a process to drive change at BES, founded on inclusive learning environments, deeply equitable practices, and social justice action (Lambert, 1998; Katz et al, 2018; King & Stevenson, 2017; Roache & Marshall, 2022). Winton and Pollock (2013) assert that principals committed to equity, inclusion, and diversity can employ strategic policy appropriation to pursue goals more in line with critical and democratic commitments towards socially just practices. With recent mandated expectations around academic assessments at the provincial and district levels and new school-created holistic learner profiles, BES staff are now better positioned to understand the wide gap in our students'

achievement, garnering requisite staff concern and emerging urgency in this PoP.

### **Leadership Approaches and Theories**

Provincially, a conservative government has been in power for almost 50 years, less a four-year period when the New Democratic Party temporarily held a majority government from 2015 to 2019. The United Conservatives embrace neoliberalist principles including economic freedom in a market economy, low taxation levels, debt reduction, and controlled spending, while affirming the family as the core building block of society (United Conservatives, n. d.). Alberta Education prioritizes a conservative approach to education and learning pedagogies, currently rolling out a staggered implementation of a renewed kindergarten to grade six curriculum focusing on core basics, including literacy, numeracy, citizenship, and practical skills.

Mountain School District has experienced rapid staff turnover at the senior executive level over the past decade. As such, the district's leadership approach has experienced shifts in focus as the superintendent teams adjusted to changing personnel. Alongside the district's structural-functionalist perspective, the district's leadership approach appears to shift between a transactional and transformational leadership style. Given the ongoing pressures of exponential growth coupled with emergent provincial change mandates, an authoritative, transactional approach provides requisite efficiency for MSD. Recently, MSD has adopted new hiring protocols and education plan structures and established an Indigenous team. Each initiative has provided opportunities for increased employee involvement through centralized selection processes, suggestive of emergent transformational leadership qualities (Berkovich, 2020).

With my arrival to BES, the school's leadership approach began to shift. My leadership style is predicated on deep, participatory involvement of school actors across BES's community to exercise their agency in unprecedented ways (Goddard & Hart, 2007; Torrence et al., 2021),

seeking equity, belonging, and success at BES. Scaffolding MSD's interpretivist-oriented goals of connection, belonging, learning, and success, this change implementation process will be framed by critically-oriented transformative and compassionate leadership approaches (Capper, 2019; Shields, 2019). Systems thinking for social change and social cognitive theory's concepts of efficacy and agency will be employed towards supporting change at a deep, fundamental level (Bandura, 1986; Senge, 2006; Senge & Böell, 2018; Shields, 2019; Stroh, 2015).

Accepting collective responsibility for student opportunity, engagement, and belonging through these theoretical constructs is required to address this PoP. While this vision for change extends beyond the current operational paradigm at MSD, new provincial and district assessment requirements alongside recent school professional capacity building have served to unveil BES's lowered student achievement alongside increasing student diversity. Spanning the gap between our current and aspired realities will require compassion (Harris & Jones, 2016) and trust (Duignan, 2014; Senge et al., 2019a). Together, BES staff must courageously recognize our collective responsibility for our current reality (Senge & Böell, 2018), establishing a deep desire to achieve equitable opportunities for all students (Capper, 2019; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

The core social justice context in this PoP revolves around issues of equity, inclusivity, belonging, and shared responsibility for all BES students. Historically, both strong and poor performance levels were attributed directly to schools and students themselves - social, political, economic, and cultural factors largely notwithstanding (Angus, 2012; Katz et al., 2018; Torrance et al., 2021). From a critically-oriented lens, causal factors and potential possibilities emerge through an acknowledgement of the systemic forces of power, privilege, and cultural norms of exclusion (Capper, 1989; Dudley-Marling, 2015; Pomeroy, 2020; Shields, 2019). Challenging dominant approaches to close the opportunity gap involves critically seeking spaces of possible

action within this work (Rexhepi & Torres, 2011; Patton Davis & Museus, 2019). Alberta's inclusive education principles, coupled with MSD's strategic plan priorities, scaffold the moral and legislative imperative to prioritize an equity agenda at BES.

### **Leadership Problem of Practice**

This PoP investigates how to address the ineffective pedagogical responses and lack of collective responsibility for the growing educational opportunity gap at BES. Annually, changing demographics at BES bring children to our school with different backgrounds, learning factors, and experiences. These young children have diverse interests and learning preferences, alongside disparate areas of growth and strength. For example, since 2014, our ratio of English as an additional language (EAL) learners has risen from one in 17 students to almost one in four students (BES, 2014, 2023). Similarly, the number of students supported by severe exceptional learner diagnoses has almost tripled commensurate with our population growth over the past decade (BES, 2014, 2023). According to district learner assessment tools, almost 60% of current BES students have learning factors that adversely impact their opportunities for success in school (BES, 2021a, 2023). As our student population continues to grow in both diversity and complexity, gaps in student achievement, opportunity, and empowerment are becoming increasingly evident across our school landscape.

Across Canada, a growing spread between the highest and lowest performing students is clearly apparent, with compromised levels of achievement noted for students with exceptional needs, those living in poverty, recent immigrants, visible minorities, and Indigenous populations (Shields & Gélinas-Proulx, 2022). Canadian school systems are experiencing mounting pressure to respond to increased accountability structures, growing student complexity and diversity, and ever-widening "achievement" gaps (Chitpin, 2021). In traditional educational settings like BES

(BES, 2021b), student academic achievement levels have typically been attributed directly to students, regardless of other key pertinent factors (Capper & Young, 2014; Katz et al., 2018; Shields, 2022). This attribution serves to marginalize some students while unwittingly privileging others (Angus, 2012; Torrance et al., 2021).

As BES experiences continually increasing student diversity and complexity, teachers have made mounting requests for additional supports to offset changing student demographic and contextual factors. While demographic factors refer to individual-level descriptors, such as race or gender, contextual factors refer to community-level descriptors, such as ethnic diversity or socio-economic status (Mayor & Suarez, 2019). The enormous volume of such requests, alongside decreasing funding and increasing class sizes, quickly bottlenecked the school's long-standing learning support structures, funding sources, and human resources in place to support diverse student learning profiles. Such supports typically involve requests for increased pull out services, segregated learning environments, and buttressed learning assistant complements (BES, 2022). The nature and frequency of requests for additional human resources supports indicates that classroom teachers may not yet accept the onus of responsibility for diverse students.

These deficit conceptions in inclusive educational settings present several challenges. Many teachers feel unprepared and even unwilling to teach children with diverse learning profiles, particularly students with specific learning and/or socio-emotional needs (Garwood & Ampuja, 2019). Research suggests many teachers feel they lack the adequate training, resources, and extra time to instruct students with additional learning and behavioural needs, thereby developing negative associations and attitudes towards diversity and inclusion (Ferriday & Cantali, 2020; Ricci et al., 2022). Paju and colleagues (2022) assert that challenges may stem from historical practices and boundaries related to traditional special education services,

respectively siloing the professional experiences of specialist teachers, classroom teachers, learning support teachers, and learning assistants, aptly describing BES's current reality.

Collectively, this spotlights the fundamental need for school leadership to hold all staff responsible for all students at BES, building staff capacity around deficit thinking and inclusive pedagogical possibilities. Although school staff continue to demonstrate unwavering levels of care for BES students and strong concern for students' lack of response to instructional practices, decreased academic achievement has resulted in lowered expectations for marginalized students, alongside deficit thinking and unconscious bias. For example, students who have behavioural or academic challenges are frequently removed from their classrooms under the guidance of a learning assistant, at times on a daily, scheduled basis, given lower-level tasks, or sent to the school office. While structural changes can support a move towards increased equity, changes in culture at BES, including an explicit commitment to serve all learners, drive the leadership responsibilities in this PoP (Datnow et al., 2023; Fullan, 2015, 2021).

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

In framing this PoP, a brief narrative of Blueridge Elementary School's historical practice and operations provides numerous insights, challenges, and opportunities regarding this evolving school problem. Following this, I will share an overview of the contributing forces that shape this PoP, employing a PESTEL analysis (Deszca et al., 2020) to review the political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal considerations within this leadership problem.

### **BES Historical Narrative**

Opening in 2005, BES was built in a brand-new, middle-class neighbourhood. The school quickly became the heart of this emerging local community. Originally, demographic and contextual factors for this newfound neighbourhood represented a largely white, middle to upper

middle class, two-parent family community (City Census, 2013). The school's culture was founded on legacy, tradition, and an ethic of service, rapidly garnering powerful appreciation from vocal school actors within and beyond the school community (BES, 2014). Monthly student academic achievement awards, Christmas and Easter school performances, and charitable service assemblies brought parents and community members into BES several times each year to celebrate student excellence. Pedagogical practices reflected a traditional approach to teaching, learning, and schooling, with a core focus on reading, writing, and mathematics. This approach was wholeheartedly supported by school staff, suiting the learning needs of most students during this time (BES, 2014). As student demographic and contextual factors slowly began to shift, annual school fees and field trip costs were waived, as the school's dedicated parent fundraising society sought to support lower income families new to the school. In short, according to the structural-functionalist perspective of the school, district, and surrounding community, this school narrative presents as one of success, care, and excellence (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

### **Unfolding BES PESTEL Analysis**

Numerous shifts to BES's environment since opening, including those at the local, district, provincial, and societal levels, are simultaneously driving the need for -- and resistance to -- change in this school. Due to the complex and interdependent factors across this analysis, the narrative below interweaves factors across the political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal considerations to accurately depict the context of this layered PoP. This PESTEL analysis is also provided in a detailed chart format in [Appendix D](#) for clarity.

From a political lens, while levels of student diversity and complexity at the school grew, BES teachers remained committed to traditional pedagogical practices. The school largely employed a one-size fits all, industrial model of teaching (Colby, 2017; Fullan, 2020; Steinhoff et



al., 2022), relying on pull out supports and learning assistant services to manage diverse needs. Globally recognized external assessments, such as the Program for International Student Assessment, report that Canada consistently ranks among the most equitable education systems in the world (Mayor & Suarez, 2019). This mirrored local subjective accountability measures, including BES teachers' and parents' perceptions of the school in provincial and district surveys (BES, 2021b). During this period, elementary schools were not expected to complete provincial achievement testing. Thus, these ratings did not reflect any BES student academic achievement data (French, 2019). These accountability structures, coupled with lacking district academic data collection practices, effectively insulated BES from any academic achievement scrutiny, in turn reinforcing the school's comfortable pedagogical approach and preservation of BES's status quo.

Changing political and economic priorities at the provincial level have resulted in shifting budgetary funding structures, causing decreased funding for Alberta schools (Li et al., 2022; Riep, 2021), and posing challenges to BES's historical approach to supporting diverse students. For example, in 2022/2023, MSD spent four million dollars over what the province allocated for inclusive education support grant dollars; similarly, BES overspent by 36%. Further, MSD schools, including BES, have experienced increasing class sizes combined with steep infrastructure and space challenges (MSD, 2023d), making accommodations for segregated special education classrooms difficult. According to ABEd, a school is considered "at capacity" when its utilization rate is 85%. Across MSD, the overall utilization rate is over 95%, with annual student enrolment growth of approximately 5%, indicative of the reality at BES. High utilization rates require schools to use non-designated rooms and spaces as classrooms, such as learning support rooms, work rooms, music classrooms, learning commons spaces, and hallways. This severely restricts available spaces for specialized equipment and service provisions,

enriched programming opportunities, students' privacy when experiencing intense emotions, and more.

Concurrent to these forces, my arrival as the school's second principal brought altered leadership practices to BES, including a markedly different approach to teaching, learning, and diversity, as well as a deep commitment to the use of systems for monitoring students' learning, engagement, and responses to instruction. The shift in leadership approach was surprising to staff, although teachers and learning assistants have grown to appreciate the increased voice and leadership opportunities for staff that this approach provides. Many of my instructional leadership practices, including class observations, triangulated data source analysis, and shifts away from BES's preferred "pull-out" special education model have been unsettling to staff, garnering frustration and, at times, resistance from some teachers and learning assistants.

Using our school-created comprehensive learner profile system, analysis of student data highlighted a stark disparity in BES students' academic achievement. Led by the principal team and supported by the learning support team and interested teachers, a database was created to monitor the impact of our instruction and support services. Using this tool, staff learned that children with lagging attendance rates, exceptional learning codes, EAL learner designations, complex family structures, school behavioral records, and/or those from families qualifying for a GST credit represented the very large majority of students performing below grade level expectations (BES, 2021a). Sadly, as is the case at BES, blame for a lack of achievement is frequently assigned to students themselves, at times extended to blaming poor parenting practices, socio-economic factors, or other factors of difference (Darling-Hammond, 2013; LeFevre et al., 2020), rather than placing the accountability for such differential achievement on oppressive structures, policies, and practices within educational and institutional settings (Patton

Davis & Museus, 2019; Seghers et al., 2021).

In 2021, the establishment of both provincial and district student assurance measures placed increased pressure and accountability on schools (ATA, 2023; MSD 2022). Socially, while new accountability initiatives have shone a spotlight on student opportunity gaps at BES, teachers largely continue to look outward to explain these findings. Park (2018) reminds us that as data are socially, culturally, and politically co-constructed, teachers make sense of data through their own lenses and pre-existing belief structures. Current neo-liberal beliefs, such as the assumption that equal educational opportunity is a reality for all Canadian students, reinforces beliefs that the causes of continued low levels of achievement are due to students' lack of effort, laziness, or lower cognitive abilities (Darling-Hammond, 2013). The school's reluctance to critically interrogate possible causal factors within their collective agency to address marginalized students' poor performance (Kennedy & Soutullo, 2018; Park, 2018) serves to insulate the school's status quo operations. Critically, maintenance of the school's status quo advantages already privileged students over historically disadvantaged and marginalized ones (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Katz et al., 2018; Shields, 2022; Torrance et al., 2021).

Upon my arrival, BES already possessed a robust technological infrastructure for both staff and students, yet staff members primarily employed these tools for substitutive rather than modified or redefined pedagogical purposes (PowerSchool, 2021). Rather than leveraging technology's accessibility potential, paper worksheets went digital, thereby maintaining literacy and interest barriers for some students. While students had ready access to digital technologies, staff did not yet possess an enduring understanding of how technology could be used to personalize learning opportunities, increase students' abilities and interests to access information, and showcase their learning in diverse and empowered ways (Zwarych, 2023).

Our school environment has been primarily defined by classrooms with desks in neat rows alongside numerous pull-out and segregated settings inside the school, organized according to teachers' preference or perceptions of student ability for learning. This approach limits these students' access to key curricular learning, teacher expertise, and sense of belonging (Baglieri et al, 2011), as opposed to an approach that embraces inclusive learning strategies and varied environments that ensure all students are seen and understood as valued and vital members of their classroom communities (Collins & Ferri, 2016). Legislatively, ABEd defines inclusion as a concept involving the belonging of all students (ABEd, 2023b). However, Alberta Teachers' Association survey feedback asserts that teachers feel less and less supported in maintaining an inclusive learning environment in Alberta's schools (Williamson & Gilham, 2018).

Collectively, my unfolding PESTEL analysis of the leadership problem at BES suggests that while staff demonstrate deep care for and commitment to students, many hold unconscious, deficit-oriented views of marginalized students, looking to preferred traditional special education practices to address these students' needs. Despite marginalized students' poor response to teachers' instruction and intervention, many teachers indicate that students' failures are beyond their control, falling outside the purview of their jobs, in some cases leading students to hold deficit understandings of themselves (Steinhoff et al., 2022) rather than questioning the efficacy of their pedagogical approach or instructional designs.

### **Guiding Questions**

Amidst the numerous and intricate factors that emerge through framing this complex PoP, there are three main lines of inquiry driving the next steps in this DiP journey. First, while an ethic of care and a core understanding of the importance of relationships are clearly evident at BES, staff generally demonstrate decreased expectations and narrowed engagement opportunities

for select students. Second, staff typically view students' lack of achievement and opportunity to be a concern lying distinctly outside of classroom teachers' sphere of agency. Lastly, current pedagogical systems, structures, processes, and practices are not yet effectively increasing learner opportunities, engagement, and belonging for marginalized students at BES.

### **Guiding Question 1: Unpacking Deficit Thinking**

Blueridge Elementary School staff provide decreased expectations and siloed learning experiences for students with complex learning, language, and/or behavioural needs, indicating that implicit and pervasive deficit beliefs are adversely impacting BES students experiencing opportunity gaps. In short, deficit thinking holds students from historically marginalized groups responsible for the inequalities and challenges they experience (Buxton, 2017; Gorski, 2018; Lasater et al., 2021; Valencia, 2010). Patton Davis and Museus (2019) outline core themes inherent in deficit thinking, including a pervasive and implicit nature, a "blame the victim" orientation, and a grounding in larger systems of oppression and hegemony. Decreased student engagement and lowered teacher expectations illustrate the adverse impacts of deficit thinking at BES. How can deficit thinking be acknowledged, unpacked, and addressed to better meet the needs of underserved and marginalized students and increase teacher and support staff understandings?

### **Guiding Question 2: Examining Within-School Agentic Opportunities**

As BES staff grow increasingly aware of the opportunity gap, staff unconsciously look to the concept of victim blaming, as it provides a more direct, palatable, and less threatening rationale to explain our current challenge (Valencia, 2010), one that meshes well with the school's predominantly structural-functionalist operational paradigm. In this discreet way, deficit thinking allows staff to blame students and their families for the challenges they face (Patterson

et al., 2007; Valencia, 2010) while also remaining uninformed to the ideological beliefs, structures, and practices that are contributing to the school's growing opportunity gap (Gorski, 2016). In the pursuit of a counter-narrative fueled by a differential paradigmatic approach, leveraging staff agency and shared accountability for student achievement and opportunity provide thoughtful divergent possibilities (Aguilar, 2020; Allen et al., 2018; Chingara & Heystek, 2019). What intentional transformative and compassionate leadership actions will motivate staff to engage in shared ownership and agentic practices to address the growing opportunity gap for underserved and marginalized students?

### **Guiding Question 3: Addressing Ineffective Pedagogical Approaches**

As described by Hattie (2015), the variance *between* Canadian schools' scores on recent PISA reading assessments is 20%, while the variance *within* Canadian schools is a whopping 80%. This reality is closely mirrored at BES, with some classes making strong learning gains throughout a school year, while other classes' learning rates plateau or decline. The integral purpose of schools, one within the shared scope of agency of principals and their staff, is to ensure that all students in all classes are learning at high levels, requiring that all staff are involved in examining every existing practice, program, and procedure to ensure each aligns with that purpose (DuFour & Mattos, 2013). Rather than working in silos, all staff working with students must continuously collaborate around efficacious and inclusive pedagogical practices, ensuring transparency of impact and engaging in ongoing critical conversations about improving instruction throughout BES (Bryk et al., 2010; Seashore Louis et al., 2010). How can improved pedagogical systems, structures, processes, and practices increase educational opportunities, engagement, and instructional efficacy for marginalized students?

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

Collectively, this PoP problematizes deep cultural and ideological legacies about diversity and difference in Alberta elementary schools. In this section, I explore unique considerations and vulnerabilities in my positionality influencing my evolving leadership-focused vision for change. Next, numerous educational gaps at BES garnered through a critical epistemological analysis are shared, followed by a counternarrative towards an envisioned future for our school, including key priorities for change. An exploration of school actor and leadership considerations across the larger organizational context for this proposed change initiative concludes this section.

### **The Polysemic Nature of Vision**

The concept of vision holds a powerful duality of meaning for me. It simultaneously serves as a constant force in my ever-evolving educational leadership philosophy, alongside a continuous and irrevocable influence on my positionality along the ability/disability continuum (Gelir, 2021; Holmes, 2020) in the narrative of my life. The intersectional meanings of this polysemous word, vision, not only represent my gradual transition towards low vision and blindness, but also represent an ironically insightful and increased wisdom to support my leadership-focused vision for change. Objectively, the transition towards becoming blind and thus “disabled” has fascinatingly been so much less about the loss of my eyesight and so much more about how others, both those known to me as well as strangers, act and react to my growing difference from society’s idealized norm (Capper, 2019; Connors, 2013, 2020).

As my rather naive trajectory of vision loss has become increasingly apparent to others, by virtue of my need to orient myself, use my white cane, or access the support of my guide dog, conversations with me and about me have helped me to gain budding insights about positions of marginalization and oppression. I have experienced others’ (likely well-intentioned) gradually lowered expectations (Doan & Jaber, 2021) of me alongside questions regarding my ability to

hold a job, let alone one as a school principal, even from friends, colleagues, and MSD senior executive members. Most poignantly, as a marginalized individual I have learned that to some, my disability warrants me to be inconspicuously or overtly subject to curiosity, invisibility, others' discomfort, and even their taunting (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014). Collectively, this ongoing journey has further catalyzed my commitment to serving those students who bear the weight of stigmatization around difference, the frustration of a system ignorant to alternate possibilities, and the responsibility to advocate for equity (Capper, 2019; Whitburn, 2016; Shields & Hesbol, 2022).

Just like the need to physically orient myself when entering a new space, the power of narrative provides opportunities to orient our personal experiences, embodying emotions and knowledge bound together (Egan 2019), providing potential for transformative change for both the narrator and the audience (Eizadirad et al., 2022). Intentional pedagogy, informed by stories of challenge, oppression, and “researching back” (talking back to recover oneself in the struggle for self-determination) (Freire, 1970; Iseke & Brennus, 2011), provide space for reoriented counternarratives. These new perspectives help me to learn, unlearn, and disrupt normalizing, hegemonic practices in traditional educational settings (Douglas & Santinele Martino, 2020).

### **Gap Analysis**

A leader's orientation towards educational gaps, whether referred to as more traditional achievement gaps or, more critically, as opportunity or empowerment gaps, has a predictive relationship with the identification of such gaps and the interpretation of school data sources to ignore, interrupt, or address justice and equity concerns within these gaps (Flores & Gunzenhauser, 2021; Lasater et al., 2021; Mayor & Suarez, 2019; Roache & Marshal, 2022). Ensuring all staff adopt a rich, triangulated approach to school data sources (Lasater et al., 2021)



presents as a key gap at BES. Teachers' oft-used term "achievement gap" tends to place blame on individual students, with a predominant narrowing of the school experience to academic achievement outcomes (Mayor & Suarez, 2019), only one of several considerations around holistic student success in school.

Employing a critically-oriented theoretical framing and a systems thinking perspective, an educational gap analysis of BES yields several further opportunities for improvement. A critical investigation of BES's current cultural values, beliefs, and norms on a collective and individual level (Amatea & Behar-Horenstein, 2004; Datnow et al., 2023; Fullan, 2015, 2023) demonstrates a lack of understanding of the social purpose of schooling (Katz, 2018) and a paucity of knowledge around inclusive pedagogical knowledge and skills (Aguilar, 2020). These internalized dominant beliefs, steeped in hegemony, privilege, and structural bias (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014), must be challenged to address fundamental equity gaps for diverse and minoritized persons across the school actor spectrum (Shields & Gélinas-Proulx, 2022). In addition to reconceptualizing extant structural-functionalist mental models to grow teachers' capacity in diverse and inclusive settings, our staff must also reflexively challenge traditional notions of teacher leadership and agency possibilities (Apple, 2016; Bandura, 1986). Specific focus must be given to the underlying belief systems and values inherent in contemporary educational institutions in general (Apple, 2016; Stroh, 2015). In doing so, authentic participation, voice, and leadership experiences must be committed to school actor groups throughout the BES school community (Apple, 2016; Ryan & Rottman, 2007).

Underpinned by systems thinking for social change framing (Stroh, 2015), I now acknowledge that the learning gap that matters most for change is not between what we do know and do not know, but rather between what we know and what we do (Reese, 2020). Like many

schools, BES has been trapped in norms of a professional courtesy of “niceness,” appeasing privileged staff and parents’ predispositions and navigating around tricky conversations instead of forging authentic, collaborative teams willing to embrace conflict without defensiveness (Senge et al., 2019b). Sweeping issues under the metaphorical rug or turning a blind eye to injustices does not support the fierce and critical dialogue and vision required to discuss issues of equity, bias, privilege, and assumptions (Eschenbacher, 2017; Katz, 2019).

### **A Counternarrative Vision Towards Change**

In the face of this PoP, I refuse to hold students from marginalized populations responsible for the challenges and inequalities they experience. I vehemently reject the conclusions that deficit thinking suggests of these students. While growing staff’s awareness around the adverse impacts of deficit thinking, crafting a counternarrative founded on empowered possibility uncovers rich possibilities for BES. Shifting the narrative, difference and diversity must be reconceptualized as a primary source of strength and empowerment (Dudley-Marling, 2015; Ferriday & Cantali, 2020).

Through my agency as principal, building collective compassion, collective responsibility, and collective efficacy in our school will be prioritized above all else. These priorities hold transformative power to fundamentally change the nature of work for BES staff. Shifting from a philosophy of deficiency to one of possibility and from a culture of isolation to one of collaboration through process-based, transformative, and compassionate leadership can powerfully impact social environmental factors within schools (Aguilar, 2020; Fullan, 2023; Katz, 2018; Riley, 2022). Rather than working in silos, all staff working with students must continuously collaborate around efficacious, inclusive pedagogical practices, ensuring transparency of impact (Bryk et al., 2010; Seashore Louis et al., 2010). Engaging in these

transformative belief systems and practices will ensure high levels of expectation, opportunity, and learning for students experiencing opportunity gaps, as well as for the staff who serve them.

### **Counternarrative Contextual Considerations**

At the macro, or provincial level, Alberta Education's inclusion policy standards provide strong legislative alignment with the vision of improvement in this PoP (ABEd, 2023b). These principles include a culture of high expectations, staff capacity building, collaborative practices, a strengths-based approach, and an appreciation for diversity, flexibility, and responsiveness. Increased accountability measures and data collection at the provincial level provides both opportunity to foster engaging learning experiences for staff and students (Datnow & Park, 2018) and challenge to ensure that dominant ideology and deficit dispositions do not destroy or erode the potential of effective data use (Lasater et al., 2021).

From a meso level or district perspective, both possibilities and threats exist within this leadership-focused vision for change. As an experienced principal and long-time staff member at MSD, my contextual understanding of our district affords me insights around possible equity-minded principal and district allies, as well as a honed understanding of potentially efficacious micropolitical strategies (Ryan, 2010) towards garnering jurisdictional support for this proposed change plan. Concurrently, shifts within MSD towards accountability-oriented practices present threats to the vision for school improvement (MSD, 2022). Some influential district staff favor narrow data sources around student achievement (Cole, 2009; Schildkamp & Poortman, 2015), present as being less aware of structural inequities that can contribute to student performance (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Gorski, 2018; Starr, 2017), and unintentionally evoke vulnerabilities of teachers and school-based leaders in discussions around student data metrics (Flores & Gunzenhauser, 2021; Lasater et al., 2021). Collectively, I recognize that thoughtful and strategic

alliances, conversations, and diplomacy will play key roles in this DiP enactment.

Within BES, school, group, and individual factors comprise important considerations in this change initiative. Shields & Hesbol (2020) speak to the leadership challenges in schools with changing student demographics, highlighting the importance of holistic, equitable educational practices alongside targeted, inclusive ones. These both serve as primary areas for principals' attention, aptly summarizing key facets within this context. Transformative and compassionate leadership possibilities at BES encompass not only the roles of school administrators, but also of teachers, learning assistants, support staff, and students, not to mention parents and community partners, who collectively comprise key school actor roles. Relationship and trust building within and across these groups will be critical to leveraging their individual and collective leadership potential (Apple, 2016; Flores & Gunzenhauser, 2021; Ishimaru, 2018; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Together, school formal leaders, staff, students, and parents must learn to come together to use belief systems, strategies, and practices that foster agentic collaboration, champion authentic inclusivity, and catalyze rich learning opportunities across the school actor spectrum.

### **Chapter Summary**

This DiP problematizes deeply rooted, traditional ideological legacies about difference in the face of increasing student diversity and complexity. An exploration of my positionality, agency, and epistemological disposition in my role as elementary school principal provide windows of opportunity to frame possibilities for change within BES. Viewed through a critical, transformative, and compassionate leadership approach, the gap between the current reality and aspired vision is explored. Guiding questions in this problem of practice seek to shift perceptions of responsibility for the school's opportunity gap from marginalized students and parents to the systemic and structural barriers surrounding them. Collectively, this framing yields various

possible pathways towards change to be discussed in the following chapter.

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

van Oord (2013) suggests that leadership holds potential to “dream up the organization of tomorrow,” providing promise to address the gap between the current reality and aspired vision at BES (p. 420). While the previous chapter explored this gap in detail, chapter two will investigate a plan to address the PoP therein, starting with an overview of the leadership theories that will inform this DiP. Next, a framework for change will be described, followed an analysis of the organization’s readiness for change. An investigation of ethics surrounding organizational change will outline key considerations and challenges. Finally, three potential solutions will be discussed and evaluated to determine a preferred solution for this PoP.

### **Leadership Approach to Change**

Transformative and compassionate leadership theories, intertwined with aspects of social cognitive theory (SCT), will be employed to actualize change at BES. First, an overview of the relevance of each theory will be provided. Next, a discussion involving the combined equity-oriented and empowering aspects of this leadership framework will be explored, analyzing the possibilities and limits therein. Finally, I will discuss how this leadership framework mindfully honours the current organizational context yet compassionately propels BES towards a desired transformative vision of equity, inclusivity, and belongingness.

### **Transformative Leadership Theory**

Transformative leadership theory provides a unique theoretical approach within and beyond educational settings (Shields, 2010) based on a solid foundation of agency and activism to support authentic empowerment (Roache & Marshall, 2022). Questioning constructs of justice and democracy (Shields, 2019), this critically oriented approach eschews tradition by focusing on those most neglected and marginalized within existing structures in the relentless pursuit of

equity, inclusion, and quality treatment of minority groups (Roache & Marshall, 2022; Shields, 2010; van Oord, 2013). Premised on an understanding that we are all complicit in systems of oppression and privilege (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014), this approach adopts a critical, collaborative perspective to gather knowledge from widely different points of view (Weiner, 2003). This knowledge is then critiqued and evaluated to deploy equity-based understandings in shared decision-making approaches to support both individual and collective good (Shields, 2015; Shields & Gélinas-Proulx, 2022; Shields & Hesbol, 2020; van Oord, 2013).

### **Compassionate Leadership Theory**

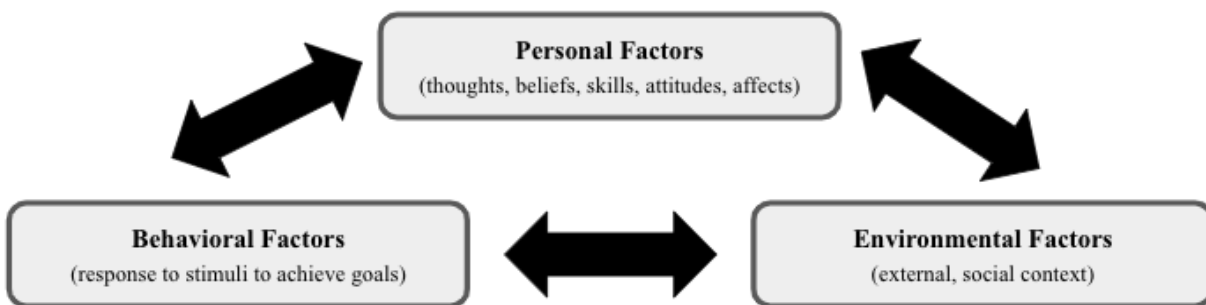
Compassionate leadership centers around collective responsibility for high quality standards and the establishment of a genuine ethic of care and belongingness throughout an organization (Ramachandran et al., 2023; West, 2021). This leadership approach seeks to identify and ameliorate inappropriate uses of power, hierarchy, and control over resources (West, 2021). Compassionate leadership champions practices fostering care and inclusivity to create environments characterized by core values, connectivity, and engagement (Ramachandran et al., 2023; Riley, 2022; Starratt, 2005). Considered as a radical, innovative, and transformative leadership approach to change (West, 2021), equity is prioritized through diplomacy, respect, and dignity, underpinned by the belief that compassion lies at the center of what makes us human (Baron et al., 2021; Shuck et al., 2019; Starratt, 2011). Harnessing open communication, positive intention, and authentic concern for others (Riley, 2022), proponents of CL seek to create conditions to achieve high expectations and equitable practices, characterized by powerfully collaborative cultures founded upon belonging, trust, and compassion (Hougaard et al., 2020; West & Bailey, 2019).

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

Developed by Albert Bandura, social cognitive theory is an interpersonal theory of human behaviour that emphasizes learning within the social environment through the dynamic, reciprocal interactions between people, their behaviour, and their environments (Schunk & Usher, 2019, see [Figure 1](#)). These interactions, referred to as triadic reciprocal determinism, serve as a central concept in SCT, with particular relevance to learning, motivation, and agency (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2023). According to Bandura, personal, behavioral, and environmental interactions form the basis for behavior, as well as for potential interventions to change behavior (Bandura, 1977).

### Figure 1

#### *Triadic Reciprocal Determinism*



*Note.* Adapted from Schunk, D. & Usher, E. (2019). Social cognitive theory and motivation. In R. M. Ryan (Ed.) *The Oxford handbook of human motivation* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). (pp.10-26). Oxford University Press. <http://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195399820.013.0002>

### ***Human Agency***

Relevant to this leadership framework, SCT adopts an agentic perspective towards learning, growth, and change (Bandura, 1986). Humans seek to develop a sense of agency and exert a large degree of control over their lives through their thoughts, feelings, and actions (Bandura, 1989). Rather than simply reacting to events, individuals are proactive “producers of experiences and shapers of events” (Bandura, 2000, p. 75). A sense of agency and control is



mediated through several factors, including goals, self-evaluation, outcome expectations, and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989; Schunk, 2012). Among these factors, the preeminent role of self-efficacy serves as the foundation of human agency (Bandura, 2000).

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to complete a task or achieve a goal (Schunk, 2012). Bandura (1986) outlined four major sources of self-efficacy, including mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and psychological responses. Efficacy beliefs have an integral influence on confidence, goal setting, motivation, outcome expectations, perseverance, resiliency, and accomplishments (Bandura, 2000). Learning and behaviour frequently occur in social environments through interaction with and observation of others (Schunk & Usher, 2019). Individuals learn enactively, learning from their own actions, and vicariously, through the examples of others (Schunk & Usher, 2019), in turn influencing one's sense of efficacy through both practice and observation (Donohoo et al., 2020).

Beyond individual agency and self-efficacy, Bandura's (1986) SCT also considers the roles and impacts of collective agency and collective efficacy, including triadic reciprocal determinism at the group level. While collective agency refers to a group working together to achieve common outcomes and goals, collective efficacy refers to a group's shared perceived capabilities of obtaining said outcomes and goals (Bandura, 2000; Schunk & DiBenefetto, 2023). See [Appendix E](#) for an overview of SCT, agency, and efficacy as they apply in this PoP.

### **Proposed Leadership Framework**

Collectively, transformative leadership, compassionate leadership, and the agentic motivational dimensions of SCT frame the leadership approach in this PoP (see [Appendix F](#) to view framework figure). Both TL and CL are positioned as critically-oriented approaches to leadership that prioritize equity, empowerment, collaboration, and inclusivity (Capper, 2019;

Ramachandran et al., 2022). Compassionate leadership seeks to identify the inappropriate uses of power (West, 2021), complementing transformative leadership's goal of redistributing power to those in the margins of society (Shields, 2022). These leadership approaches work together in an environment defined by care, high expectations (Riley, 2022), and greater individual achievement in harmony with others (Shields, 2010). Alongside this, SCT's theories of collective efficacy and agency posit that groups can create visualized futures that act on present circumstances, allowing construction, evaluation, and modification of various courses of action that override environmental influences to achieve desired outcomes (Bandura, 2006). Each theory's key tenets are provided in [Figure 2](#), providing an overview of my leadership approach.

## Figure 2

### *Proposed Leadership Framework Theories' Key Tenets*

<b>Transformative Leadership Theory</b>	<b>Social Cognitive Theory in Motivation and Learning</b>	<b>Compassionate Leadership</b>
<b>Key Tenets (Shields, 2010):</b>	<b>Key Tenets (Schunk &amp; Usher, 2010):</b>	<b>Key Tenets (Ramachandran et al., 2023*):</b>
Balancing critique and promise	Individuals are motivated to develop a sense of agency through:	Empathy to sense others' feelings, listening and understanding
Effecting deep and equitable change	Goals and self-evaluations of progress	Openness, honesty, and transparency of communication
Creating new knowledge frameworks	Outcome expectations	Prioritization of physical and mental health and well-being
Acknowledging power and privilege	Values	Inclusiveness to invite and appreciate others' contributions
Emphasizing both private and public good	Social comparisons	Integrity, ethical behaviour, trust, and fairness
Focusing on liberation, democracy, equity, and justice	Self-efficacy	Respect and dignity for all, valuing everyone's contributions
Demonstrating moral courage and activism	Collective efficacy	*Authors acknowledge that this is a newer leadership theory

## Leadership Approach Contextual Alignment

As outlined in chapter one, addressing the PoP at BES will involve considerable school transformation, including a long-term plan towards equity-seeking change (Datnow, 2000; Honig & Rainey, 2020; Safir, 2017). A transformative, compassionate leadership approach upholds the importance of empathetically listening to the perspectives of staff, students, and parents (Safir, 2019) alongside openly espousing a strong bias towards action (Adams et al., 2023). Engaging in difficult conversations involving equity at BES will require that high expectations be strategically partnered with high support (Datnow & Park, 2018; Durrant, 2019; Safir, 2019). Through this leadership approach, the vision must be defined, coached toward, and messaged as

a vivid image of success that is both valued by all BES staff and achievable for all students (Adams et al., 2023; Bandura, 2006; Honig & Rainey, 2020), weaving together transformative, compassionate, and efficacious approaches.

This leadership approach seeks to align leadership processes with the motivational energy required from school staff to bring aspired visions into reality (Adams et al., 2023) through an understanding of micro-contextual influences (Aas, 2017), including perceptions of teacher self-efficacy and collective efficacy (Schunk & Usher, 2019). Bandura (1986) argues that learning complex skills, both enactively and vicariously, can only occur through careful observation, practice, and feedback, helping to define promising pathways towards addressing the extant opportunity gap at BES. Through this approach, BES staff will be encouraged and empowered to identify school-level issues and consider possible solutions and strategies, engaging in critical inquiry and thoughtful evaluations of school-level data (Datnow, 2000).

With the recent shift towards data informed practices at BES, Oakes and Roger (2006) caution that merely documenting inequality and opportunity gaps will neither lead to more just educational beliefs and practices nor more equitable school experiences. A key aspect of this leadership approach includes the shared responsibility of BES leaders, teachers, and support staff to employ data use for equity, addressing instructional strategies, rather than students, as the root of the opportunity gap (Datnow & Park, 2018). This leadership framework acknowledges that approaches stem not only from increasing pedagogical knowledge, skills, and attributes according to Alberta's Teacher Quality Standard (ABEd, 2023f), but also from staff's acquisition of self and collective efficacy, confidence, and moral imperative (Durrant, 2019; Fullan, 2023). With teachers serving as key actors, participation, voice, and agency must serve not only as vital aspects in the process of leadership (Ryan & Rottman, 2007), but as critical outcomes to address

ongoing equity and inclusivity needs (Durrant, 2019). Educational research involving efficacy and agency demonstrates the powerful alignment between effective professional learning (PL) and validated constructs of SCT, including individual and collective efficacy, supporting the collaborative agency of educational staff in designing their own learning, as well as that of their students (Donohoo, 2017; Donohoo et al., 2020; Durrant, 2019; Goddard et al., 2004; Loughland & Nguyen, 2020; Loughland & Ryan, 2022; Meyer et al., 2022).

As student diversity and complexity grow, BES must embrace all students of every circumstance, working to establish environmental and learning conditions grounded in equity and full participation (Shields & Gélinas-Proulx, 2022). Given the mature teacher and support staff demographics at BES, this leadership framework honours the recognition that staff were educated and prepared for their profession in a time when requirements to address diversity and related opportunity disparities were not yet fully recognized (Shields & Gélinas-Proulx, 2022). This acknowledgement of care and positive regard during the rethinking processes required to meet the needs of today's students also encourages the grace of self-compassion to acknowledge staff's own gaps in knowledge regarding how to best support diverse student needs (Riley, 2022). A blend of transformative and compassionate leadership nurtures space for safe and open conversations around staff's beliefs and values regarding marginalization and diversity while a commitment to efficacy and agency building provide staff with an effective and supportive means to enact change (Bandura, 2006; Hargreaves, 2019; Riley, 2022; Shields, 2022).

This leadership framework thoughtfully positions BES to focus on the possibilities that can emerge from reconfiguring what is to *what can be*, moving away from a status quo that supports exclusive practices and a sense of marginalization (Riley, 2022). Undoubtedly, this transformative aspiration is a significant undertaking, yet one made less onerous by the high

levels of care and compassion already within the hearts and minds of BES staff.

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

Characterized by rapid acceleration and intensification, change is emerging as a constant feature in contemporary educational landscapes (Deszca, 2020; Evans et al., 2012; Fullan, 2006, 2023; Guerrero et al., 2018; Stroh, 2015). First, a discussion of the proposed change framework is provided and subsequently situated within the overarching leadership approach. Next, an analysis of the multiple dimensions of change are reviewed. Finally, considerations around context-specific framework limitations and strengths are explored.

### **Leading Change Framework**

For this DiP, the change path model (CPM) will serve as the primary change framework due to its integration of process and prescription (Deszca et al., 2020; see [Appendix G](#)). Change path model creators recommend using multiple frameworks for change to increase the scope and variety of change tools available for use, especially when seeking deeply value-based and emotionally charged change (Deszca et al., 2020). As such, the framework will be amended to feature a cyclical orientation (Halbert & Kaser, 2022) and scaffolded by the inclusion of Stroh's (2015) four stages for leading systemic change model (4SLSC, see [Appendix H](#)). These modifications honour the iterative and equity-oriented tenets embedded within transformative and compassionate leadership (Datnow et al., 2023) while promoting school-wide possibilities for change with particular focus on BES teachers as key enablers of change (Halbert & Kaser, 2022).

This change framework provides a practical option for this PoP as it lays out a sequential, four-step systematic process for change, helping diverse school actor groups to comprehend the large scope of the change while supporting a clear understanding the step-by-step processes

therein. Simultaneously, the CPM is prefaced on the acknowledgement that organizations are non-linear, complex entities with constantly shifting environments, thus layering in requisite flexibility as BES staff co-create possibilities towards increasingly equitable and inclusive learning environments (Deszca et al., 2020). The model's adaptability throughout the iterative change process (Deszca et al., 2020) can accommodate for any tweaks required as shared responsibility for student success is established and institutionalized (Datnow & Park, 2018).

In the awakening step, a need for change is established by exploring the gap between the present and idealized states. The vision for change is then cocreated and broadly communicated throughout BES. Second, during the mobilization step, structures and processes are leveraged, power and cultural dynamics are uncovered, and communication around the need for change is provided system-wide, tapping into change agent acumen. Third, engaging and empowering others to support the change initiative launches the acceleration step, working to build capacity across school actor groups and catalyze traction by way of inquiry cycles and incremental celebrations. Lastly, the institutionalization step tracks periodic changes, refines needs, gauges progress, and modifies processes to develop and refine new structures, processes, knowledge, and abilities to stabilize the transforming organization (Deszca et al., 2020).

Leading change at BES will require careful navigation and strategic school actor engagement (Deszca, 2020). Additionally, efficacious adaptive communications and innovative, responsive leadership will be vital (Fullan, 2006). Proposed change initiatives, particularly ones involving deep, cultural changes, rarely succeed as proposed shifts to the status quo are frequently accompanied by strong resistance (Basile & Azvedo, 2022; Deszca, 2020; Deszca et al., 2020; Fullan, 2023; Lewis, 2019). Stroh's (2015) 4SLSC has been intentionally included to scaffold the CPM to address any emergent resistance by nurturing a sense of collective efficacy

and “power with” (Shields, 2019) during this change. This inclusion will support individual and shared visioning, collaboration, and collective capacity building as a school team (Senge et al., 2019a). This hybrid change framework supports the inclusion of powerful systems-level engagement activities promoting mindful consideration of organizational contextual variables (Deszca, 2012; Stroh, 2015), while keeping a core focus on achieving change at the classroom and school culture levels (Fullan, 2023, see [Appendix I](#) to view the change framework graphic).

### **Change Framework and Leadership Approach: Ensuring Strategic Alignment**

The proposed change holds potential to significantly alter our school’s fundamental values and assumptions, particularly considering the themes of insulation and isolation still permeating current school operations (Shields, 2019). Without critical dialogue offering alternative views or challenging negative beliefs about students, the dominant deficit construction of students’ capabilities will likely be reinforced and reproduced (Park, 2018; Valencia, 2010). The use of both transformative and compassionate leadership approaches will prime our team to understand, accept, and act upon new learnings and awareness garnered during the change process, catalyzed with the awakening step towards equity-based understandings and envisioned changes (Deszca et al., 2020; King & Biro, 2006; Taylor, 2006).

Helping staff to rethink our work, while exploring and even challenging some of our assumptions, can be an incredibly powerful driver of school change, albeit a tricky one to bring to fruition (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018; Shields, 2011). The proposed change framework, in tandem with both transformative and compassionate leadership strategies, will provide a sense of compassionate urgency. This will be scaffolded by Stroh’s (2015) change framework and Bandura’s (2001) concepts of efficacy and agency, which embed school actor engagement, empowerment, and ongoing collaborations. Collectively, these actions seek to

garner increasing support towards a commitment to change by leveraging the high levels of care that BES teachers and support staff have for our students.

Both the CPM and 4SLSC see change management as an intensely human activity, dependent upon individual values, beliefs, perceptions, and reactions, and overarchingly, the culture of the organization itself (Deszca, 2020; Stroh, 2015). Fink and Stoll (2005) argue that change strategies and approaches that fail to consider the emotions and cultures of schools are doomed to failure, buttressing further support for this proposed change framework. This awareness aligns directly with the leadership approaches embedded in this PoP, including the need to engage and empower others in the support, planning, and implementation of this significant change (Deszca et al., 2020). Building BES teacher and support staff efficacy is critical to support BES's culture change. While social persuasion facets of efficacy building will be leveraged during the awakening phase of this change framework, direct staff involvement during the mobilization and acceleration steps provide time on task for both enactive and vicarious efficacy-building learning experiences. As individual and collective efficacy are strengthened, staff's perception of their ability to provide innovative and inclusive learning environments grows (Mudhar et al., 2023). In turn, this spurs staff's increasing agency to develop changes in structure and culture towards equity-orientated outcomes (Aas, 2017; Bandura, 2006; Durrant, 2019). Innovative leadership and an equity-seeking change framework serve to support the dismantling of our inequitable school culture (Shields & Hesbol, 2020).

### **The Nature of Change: Key Considerations**

The nature of change includes two fundamental and interrelated matters; namely, what needs to change, and how to go about managing the change process (Deszca, 2020; Lewis, 2019). Underneath these matters lies the *why* of change, which can have significant differences



in scope, complexity, and content (Guerrero et al., 2018; Ryan & Watson, 2021). The nature of change required in this PoP extends beyond simple, incremental initiatives towards vastly disruptive cultural and paradigmatic transformations at the far end of the change continuum, requiring comprehensive action and school actor involvement to achieve (see [Appendix J](#)).

First order change requires actors to consider changes within the extant framework of the organization, thus maintaining the paradigmatic status quo (Ryan & Watson, 2021). Second order change increases in scope and complexity, involving modifications in the frameworks themselves (Bartunek & Moch, 1987). Third order change, involving responses to the broader societal context (McDowell, 2022), provides impetus towards the co-creation of new organizational realities. This will require school leaders to empower school actors to transcend the limits of the current paradigms at BES (Bartunek & Moch, 1987; Ryan & Watson, 2021).

As key change leader, I must adopt a thoughtful, multi-dimensional perspective across first, second, and third order change lenses. Concurrently, I must also recognize the need for subtle shifts in leadership approach across the transitioning dimensions of change required at BES (Bartunek & Moch, 1987; Deszca, 2020; Ryan & Watson, 2021). School staff will need to be inspired and empowered to understand, challenge, and grow beyond the current operative school paradigm. This will require staff to embrace multiple alternative ways of thinking, guided by a thoughtful, facilitative approach by key change leaders. It will also be imperative to address the lacking pedagogy and deficit-oriented perspectives impacting BES's opportunity gap (Bartunek & Moch, 1987; Ryan & Watson, 2021).

### **Framework Possibilities: Potential Limitations and Strengths**

Interestingly, potential limitations in the CPM framework also offer some of its greatest strengths in the context of this proposed organizational change. The “change agnostic” (Deszca,

2020, p. 2) nature of the CPM allows it to flex across first, second, and third order changes, offering requisite flexibility. However, such flexibility has the potential to exhaust collective actor capacity for change due to ongoing iterative shifts. Built upon strengths of other change frameworks and scaffolded by experience, Deszca (2020) touts the CPM as combining both process and prescription. Again, given the scope of change needed at BES, this provides helpful direction via a step-by-step process, while allowing for responsiveness as needed (Deszca et al., 2020). This flexibility demands that I be nimble and reflexive throughout the entire process; thus, caution is warranted. Transitioning from an approach that unwittingly honours systems of privilege and power (Capper, 2019) may result in increased emotionality as staff come to recognize the internalized dominance this perspective upholds (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014), particularly as BES staff demonstrate a strong ethic of care for students. Thus, the incorporation of a compassionate leadership approach and Stroh's (2015) systems-thinking influences alongside the CPM change framework is vital. Lastly, as a school principal, limitations in agency due to my middle leadership status (Hargreaves, 2024) are likely, potentially limiting possibilities for change.

### **Organizational Change Readiness**

Among the myriad of perspectives and studies regarding organizational change, a common observation prevails. Planned organizational change reportedly suffers from high failure rates (Deszca, 2020; Judge & Douglas, 2009; Wang et al., 2020). Failure to establish sufficient readiness is reported to account for half of all unsuccessful organizational change efforts (Wang et al., 2020). Conversely, readiness for change is considered a key prerequisite for increasing change success rates (Mladenova, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). Use of readiness assessment tools can provide change agents with invaluable information regarding what needs to be done to plan

for successful change, as well as to increase change recipient buy-in for aspirational organizational achievements (Armenakis & Harris, 2009).

### **Organizational Capacity for Change Analysis**

Organizational change is a complex, ongoing, and multi-dimensional phenomenon (Mladenova, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). In recognition of this, Judge and Douglas's (2009) organizational capacity for change (OCC) tool will be used to assess BES's capacity for change. This tool explores several interrelated dimensions of change across three overarching categories. In the category of human capabilities, dimensions include trustworthy leadership, trusting followers, capable champions, and involved middle management. In the category of informal organizational culture, innovative culture and accountable culture dimensions are explored. Lastly, the category of formal organizational systems and processes encompasses effective communications and system thinking dimensions (Judge & Douglas, 2009).

Employing these eight OCC dimensions to reflexively explore organizational capacity for change at BES demonstrates the complexity of the proposed change initiative, as well as the critical importance of growing the school's change capabilities. This tool's focus on trust, innovation, accountability, and systems thinking provide strategic alignment to transformative and compassionate leadership approaches, the depth of desired change for this PoP, and the systems thinking concepts in this DiP's change framework. While the OCC tool can help scaffold support towards change, Judge and Douglas (2009) caution that due to the inherent complexity of change, thoughtful consideration must be given to the environment, nature, and scale of proposed change when interpreting OCC tool results.

As principal and key change agent, I completed this assessment to determine possible routes towards efficacious change. As this organizational improvement plan shifts towards

action, this tool will also be administered to BES staff. Judge (2012) suggests that the OCC tool can be administered both quantitatively and qualitatively. Reflecting on previous OCC results analyses, Judge (2012) notes that organizational leaders tend to have the most optimistic view of their organization's capacity for change, while frontline workers -- teachers and support staff, in this context -- tend to have the most pessimistic view. As such, a blended approach using both quantitative and qualitative means will be adopted with BES staff to support requisite candor through quantitative means and context-specific narratives through qualitative interviews. As organizational capacity for change is a dynamic capability that can be built upon during ongoing organizational changes (Mladenova, 2022), OCC tool use provides opportunity to nurture and refine organizational change capabilities at BES. The following sections outline the metacognitive processing and accompanying prioritizations for change yielded from my preliminary evaluation (see [Appendix K](#) to view completed assessment chart).

### ***Trustworthy Leadership and Trusting Followers Dimensions***

The way that formal leadership is perceived plays a critical role in the success of instigated transformative change (van Oord, 2013). Since I joined BES in 2020, there have been three different assistant principals at the school. Collectively, these leadership changes have provided rich opportunities and multiple vantage points to ascertain staff perceptions around trustworthy leadership and followership development in this school context. Clarity and transparency in leadership has been a frequent topic during my biannual one-on-one conversations with staff, particularly as it pertains to trust building. The use of a compassionate leadership approach has been positively reinforced by staff feedback (Buonomo et al., 2022) during formal and informal conversations, as well as via anonymous feedback mechanisms including district and provincial assurance measures and school-created staff surveys.

Transformative leadership and agentic practices have increased staff involvement in key decision-making areas (Shields, 2022) through school team leadership groups. Blueridge staff have grown to understand the necessity of their voice and agency in optimizing ongoing and innovative school operations (Roache & Marshall, 2022). Reciprocal trust between leaders and followers continues to develop at BES. More recently, staff have indicated their appreciation for the school's shared processes, slowly forging a shared vision regarding the gap between BES's current reality and aspired future.

### ***Capable Champions and Involved Mid-Management Dimensions***

In addition to school administration changes, numerous changes in BES's learning support teacher (LST) team have provided fruitful insights into the capable champion and middle management involvement dimensions of our school's capacity for change. Blueridge learning coaches (considered the "middle managers" in this context) seek to challenge the status quo in the pursuit of increased equity (Durrant, 2019). Upon occasion, this passionate advocacy has been interpreted by some staff as being too directive. In response to this, the principal team and the LST team have worked to learn from these experiences, seeking to broker trust and employ a strengths-based approach when teaming with staff (Safir, 2019). Under careful mentorship from the principal team, the LST team now operates from an increasingly shared vision, including the adoption of a compassionate, coaching-based lens when supporting staff to stretch and reflect on their practice. Coaches now engage in dialogic conversation to scaffold teacher agency, working to balance clarity and curiosity with affirmation and praise (Bandura, 2006; Durrant, 2019).

Leadership is increasingly being viewed as a process by BES staff, one that requires collaborative efforts to enact (Ryan & Rottman, 2007; Shields, 2019). After effective classroom teaching, leadership is considered to be the second most influential school-related factor on

student learning (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). As such, capable champions within and beyond these teams will be critical in realizing our aspired vision. Our teaming approach to coaching strives to honour Shield's (2019) conception of *power with* to assist staff in feeling a sense of safety to share openly, try out new ideas, and learn from mistakes as they occur.

### ***Innovative Culture and Accountable Culture Dimensions***

Deal and Peterson (2009) speak to the power of culture and its potential impact in schools. The creation of a culture of innovation requires trust, risk taking, and vulnerability (Banwo et al., 2022). The ability to be vulnerable and to learn from each other in supportive relationships requires patience and empowerment, nurtured through thoughtful engagements designed to reinforce the existence of these values at BES (Bandura, 2006; Galvez & Munoz, 2020). School structures at BES involve frequent and ongoing collaborative opportunities, bringing together diverse voices to share and listen to ideas and wonders. Slowly yet steadily, staff are stretching their comfort zones towards sharing conflicting ideas and exposing vulnerabilities, making strides towards a culture of innovation. Ensuring regular opportunities for these collaborative, empowering exchanges remains a core priority to increase change readiness (Mladenova, 2022), and have been embedded into the BES school calendar on an ongoing basis.

While strategic resource management efficacy and efficiency are growing under the leadership of BES's budget and operations team, a culture of accountability around equity has also started to emerge. In my early days at BES, even with the most compelling data, there was resistance to changing in response to such analyses. Many staff were not willing to acknowledge the reality of what collaboratively collected school data suggested, continuing to operate as they always had (Barth, 2001; Calabrese, 2003). As change leader, I am learning that when research and data elicit genuine feelings, personal connections, and moral agency, small spaces for

opportunistic impact are possible through dialogue and reflective questioning with BES staff. This journey towards enacting equity has required a continual process of learning, disaggregating data, and questioning assumptions (Endo, 2020). A culture of innovation and accountability will require leaders, internal personnel, and external school actors to build a shared sense of empowerment towards uncovering inequitable practices and allow marginalized voices to gain priority (Lashway, 1997; Shields, 2019; Taylor et al., 2014) while simultaneously meeting the ongoing deadlines and responsibilities of busy school operations.

### ***Effective Communication and Systems Thinking Dimensions***

Effective communication during change involves two-way vertical and horizontal communication pathways across levels of the organization as well as reciprocal communications between the organization and external school actors, including district staff, parents, and school community partners (Judge & Douglas, 2009). Considering change through change recipients' perspectives compels change leaders to take action in "selling" the merits of proposed organizational change plans (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). The collaborative leadership approach currently in place at BES gives credence to strong levels of school actor participation in decision-making and change process activity, particularly with staff. Such involvement is suggested to increase staff's perceived efficacy and valence, thus growing their receptivity to change (Mladenova, 2022; Wang et al., 2020; Weiner, 2009). During change, communication practices must involve several intentional communication strategies. These include formalized and transparent communication pathways, thoughtful management of internal and external information, multi-dimensional and persuasive communication strategies, and regular celebrations throughout the change process (Dezsca et al., 2020; Armenakis & Harris, 2009).

As the change framework for this DiP draws on system thinking (ST) concepts (Stroh,

2015), selection of this OCC tool is well aligned (Fullan et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2020). A ST approach considers the what, how, where, and who of proposed change (Wang et al., 2020). Considering the growth of complexity in schools and in school leadership, in particular (Shaked & Schechter, 2018), this multi-dimensional approach to change readiness provides thoughtful support to scaffold amenability to change. The current leadership approach at BES compliments ST's acknowledgement that "although formal position and authority matter, we have watched people contribute as system leaders from many positions" (Senge et al., 2019b, p. 14). A ST approach allows BES staff to recognize that we are all part of the system we seek to change (Senge et al., 2019b) while encouraging an examination of our own positionalities to understand what we may need to learn and unlearn to achieve desired change (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021).

### **Readiness Assessment Reflections**

Assessing organizational readiness for change requires change leaders to practice active listening. Leaders must understand and be responsive to the perspectives and reasons school actors have for supporting or resisting proposed change (Dezsca et al., 2020). Encouraging BES staff and external school actors to pursue change to address how systemic inequalities shape dynamics in teaching-learning spaces (Van de Ven, 2020) will require change leaders and champions to frame their approaches to change thoughtfully (Wong et al., 2020). Garnering support and commitment to implement this organizational change at BES will require the collaborative creation of a shared vision and plan for change, while fostering a collective sense of efficacy and agency to enact the change vision. Confidence in leadership and collaborative acknowledgement around the benefits of change will also be essential (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). With the progress towards readiness achieved thus far, BES demonstrates solid and steadily increasing readiness and capacity to address the school's equity and inclusivity gap.



## **Leadership Ethics in Organizational Change**

Ciulla (2004) argues that to appropriately comprehend ethics and leadership, one is obliged to consider a wide variety of disciplines, cultures, and perspectives. Beginning with the provincial and local context, a brief review of ethical accountabilities for this PoP is provided below. Next, using Shapiro and Stefkovich's (2022) multi-dimensional framework for ethics in educational issues, an overview of ethical considerations, challenges, and responsibilities inherent in this change process are explored.

### **Organizational Ethical Accountabilities**

Alberta's leaders and teachers hold unique positions of trust and influence as educational professionals (ABEd, 2023c). Collectively, these professionals are obliged to meet respective educational practice standards and to adhere to Alberta's code of conduct for teachers and teacher leaders (ABEd, 2023d, 2023a). Together, these key documents outline the overarching ethical principles that guide the education profession in Alberta. These quality standards are thoughtfully aligned with other federal and provincial legislative regulations, as well as with district-specific policy and administrative procedures. In this PoP, particularly relevant ethical considerations include those found in Alberta's inclusive education principles (ABEd, 2023a) and the district's policy around respectful working and learning environments. Specific to BES, ethical responsibilities of school principals, teachers, and support staff include conceptions of trust, respect, integrity, and belongingness to support diversity, inclusivity, and shared responsibility for the safety, care, and success of all children at the school.

### **Contextual Ethical Considerations and Challenges**

According to Shapiro and Stefkovich (2022), five ethical paradigms provide a rich and layered perspective in educational ethics, addressing a complex mix of ethical considerations.

These complementary ethical paradigms comprise the ethics of care, justice, critique, profession, and community, working in tandem to provide comprehensive ethical frames for consideration in educational settings. Alongside use of multiple perspectives to support ethical decision making in educational contexts, the responsibilities for ethical behavior also expand across school actor roles. [Appendix L](#) provides an overview of the various paradigms, with the needs of the students at the center. This graphic representation demonstrates the multiplicity of ethical considerations involved in this change, while highlighting the unwavering prioritization of students' needs as the ethical core.

Tuana (2014) makes the distinction that it is not enough for a school principal to lead with ethics; this must be extended to encompass the entire community. This responsibility engenders accountability for ethical behavior to be enacted by all school actors, from the principal to teachers, support staff, students, and beyond to those community members outside of ongoing daily life at BES (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2022). As our school becomes more demographically diverse, the ethical call to action towards equitable practices, such as viewing diversity and inclusion through a strength-based lens, must hold increasing prominence and commitment in the eyes of all school actors, starting with school leaders and teachers at BES (Apple, 2016; Capper, 2019; Shields, 2019).

As school leaders and teachers hold the largest influence on the academic and holistic success of students (Darling-Hammond, 2013), ethical decision making starts with these educational roles. This adds moral urgency towards change at BES, requiring that we uphold our ethical responsibilities to both our profession and our community. As role models, BES staff must also encourage community participation in decision making and change prioritization, modeling equitable involvement, participatory democracy, and increased agency (Furman, 2012).

When making room for more voices, particularly those who have been historically silenced and underrepresented, vulnerability must be viewed through a lens of strength and as a source of power at BES. Brown (2012) asserts that “vulnerability sounds like truth and feels like courage. Truth and courage aren’t always comfortable, but they’re never weakness” (p. 157). The presence of personal and professional vulnerability, particularly in connecting with others to harness collective capacity, is key. Employing what Shields (2019) refers to as *power to* and *power with*, vulnerability can be used to build trust, empowerment, and ethical imperative.

### **Change Centric Ethical Considerations**

Organizational change readiness has been defined as a shared psychological state in which all school actors feel that a change initiative is beneficial, are committed to its implementation, and have collective confidence in their abilities to meet the demands of the proposed change (Mladenova, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). Organizational change must be planned, implemented, and evaluated ethically even when the planned change is seeking to eliminate unethical practices and implement shifts designed to satisfy justice and other ethically based priorities (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). During the upcoming positive -- yet likely unsettling -- process of change at BES, the need for ongoing and transparent two-way communication provides a thoughtfully ethical strategy in caring for all school actors during the change process (Dezsca et al., 2020). Doing so recognizes, values, and enhances voice and agency during change (Durrant, 2019).

Considerations of individual and group needs and perceptions throughout change will remain a top priority in this DiP process. As change leader, I must also be reflective regarding my own positionality, assumptions, and biases while simultaneously ensuring that active listening to others’ thoughts and concerns takes equal precedence (Apple, 2016; Dezsca et al., 2020). The

emotionality involved in change cannot be ignored (Endo, 2020), particularly given the nature of deep, cultural change (Deszca, 2020). To be worthy of others' trust, change leaders and champions must remain compassionate, humble, and supportive as change recipients make sense of and grow new perspectives around inclusivity, diversity, and equity in this school context.

### **Professional Capacity Building Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice**

This section reviews potential professional capacity building solutions to address the student opportunity gap at BES. An overview of key considerations regarding transformative school-based change will be provided, followed by a review of each proposed solution, including respective required resources and ethical considerations. Lastly, an evaluative comparison of proposed strategies will conclude with a preferred solution for this PoP.

### **Nurturing Transformative School-Based Change**

Recognizing that traditional ways of teaching are no longer meeting the needs of contemporary students (Korda, 2019), proposed solutions support an equity-focused, capacity building model designed to address the guiding questions framing this PoP. Each possible solution is based upon the recognition that all BES staff are working to the very best of their ability to adapt their teaching to the evolving, complex needs of the diverse learners in their care (Richardson & Díaz Maggioli, 2018). Throughout the forthcoming possible solutions, all staff, and perhaps most specifically me as key change leader, must engage in ongoing self-reflection to understand possible biases and potential impacts of beliefs and practices (Robinson et al., 2009).

Parallel to the belief that inclusion is never fully arrived at (Ferri, 2015; Hodge, 2016; Pearson et al., 2016), the professional nature of teaching and learning necessitates a capacity building model based on continuous professional development (CPD) to support collective and evolving understandings of equity, inclusivity, and belongingness (Díaz Maggioli, 2020;

Kennedy, 2014; Rich et al., 2021; Richardson & Díaz Maggioli, 2018). The desired future for BES is predicated upon staff developing transformative learning objectives, equity-oriented reflexivity, and paradigmatic shifts in agency, responsibility, and efficacy. Proposed solutions have been crafted to ensure a supportive, collaborative, and empowering lens for professional capacity building in service of the compassionate (Azorín & Fullan, 2022; Banwo et al., 2022; Senge et al., 2019a) and transformative (Capper, 2019; Shields, 2022; Shields & Hesbol, 2020) leadership approaches embedded in this DiP. While proposed solutions differ in their method of delivery, level of collaboration, and professional agency, achieving impactful change in this context will require a dedicated, targeted focus on professional capacity building for all school staff where formative, continuous improvement serves as the key driver (Fullan, 2021).

### **Solution 1: Communities of Practice Professional Learning Model**

According to Wenger (1998), a community of practice (CoP) is a group of individuals who share a problem with or passion for something, working together to learn how to do it better through regular interaction. Nussbaum-Beach and Ritter Hall (2012) suggest that a CoP can serve as a key professional development strategy. CoPs have strong potential to benefit both students and teachers (Riel & Fulton, 2001) by improving teaching and learning through collaboration and knowledge construction (Sherer et al., 2003), serving as the first proposed solution approach in this PoP.

The CoP model of capacity building, considered to be the pedagogical approach underlying more than half of contemporary teacher professional development (Dede et al., 2005), has been used regularly throughout MSD over the past decade for both district and school-based PL purposes. In 2022, BES established a shared leadership model akin to a CoP. Staff brainstormed areas for growth and development to support school education plan priorities,

creating five leadership groups (see [Appendix C](#)). In each group, diverse staff working in various grades and positions come together regularly to review topics and concerns specific to their priority area with a group-appointed most responsible person (MRP) leading respective groups. In turn, members of each leadership group also liaise within their grade or role-based teams to confer and collaborate in an ongoing reciprocal feedback structure. A solution leveraging a CoP approach is attractive as the structure, purpose, and design of CoP learning is familiar to all staff and could be transitioned from the school's current leadership structure to one more directly aligned to CoP protocols.

The CoP structure supports social participation and a co-construction of knowledge through meaningful interactions and engagement with colleagues (Sarid & Levanon, 2022). The embedded roles of teacher leadership and agency in this solution provide opportunities for peer influence, the development of trusting relationships, and increased professional collaboration (Mudhar et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2019). York Bar and Duke (2004) suggest that opportunities for teacher leadership nurture excellence in school culture, school structures, teacher and principal leadership, and staff relationships. Collectively, creating CoPs support staff agency, time, and opportunity to get deeply involved in school priorities and pedagogical decisions through teacher collaboration (Kennedy, 2014; Loughland & Nguyen 2020).

### ***Required Resources and Ethical Considerations for Solution 1***

As prior knowledge of CoPs and current shared leadership structures could support this solution, the time, human, and fiscal resources required for this option are relatively low, making it attractive. However, from an ethical perspective, this solution does raise some points of concern. While a CoP structure at BES could prove to be a positive, proactive professional capacity building tool, potential for extant collective wisdom and/or dominant members' voices

shaping the groups' learning (Kennedy, 2014) raises ethical concerns due to the implicit deficit orientations currently within the school. Issues of power in CoPs create tension between the importance of staff autonomy in this structure alongside possibilities of uncritically perpetuating inequitable, dominant discourses around the rationale for opportunity gaps (Kennedy, 2014), potentially working at cross-purposes to the goals within this DiP. Ethical considerations around teacher leadership also surface. Alberta's code of professional conduct for teachers and teacher leaders provides explicit guidelines around responsibilities to colleagues and the profession regarding teacher competence. Further, teacher leaders may experience stress and discomfort when leading colleagues (Nguyen et al., 2019), while simultaneously seeking to avoid devolvement into comfortable, collegial norms for the CoP (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

### **Solution 2: Coaching for Equity Professional Learning Model**

The district is currently drafting a document outlining the role of the learning support teacher to be shared across MSD. In it, expectations around collaboration, co-teaching, and coaching feature prominently, shifting away from a more traditional special education model of learning support, providing opportunistic merit as a potential solution. While the research base for coaching is relatively new (Blazar & Kraft, 2015), it is gaining attention as a high-quality professional development opportunity (Desimone, 2009) particularly compared to school workshops and more traditional PL experiences (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Johnson, 2019; Yoon et al., 2007). Joyce and Showers (1980) were the first to propose peer coaching, building on Greenleaf's (1977) conceptions of servant leadership. While fewer than 5% of teachers understand or implement new strategies presented at traditional PL (Showers & Joyce, 2002), effective coaching practices employing descriptive feedback increases capacity building opportunities dramatically (Knight, 2007), tapping into SCT's efficacy and agency theories.

Coaching for equity involves the creation of partnerships to bridge from current reality to aspired, equitable futures through conversation, connection, and shared learning (Aguilar, 2020). Designed to achieve transformative results, the goals of coaching for equity adhere to an explicit, articulated coaching model to increase teachers' emotional resilience, strengthen reflective abilities, and foster effective skills for teaching and learning (Aguilar, 2020) in service of improved student opportunities and outcomes (Aguilar, 2020; Desimone, 2009; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Knight, 2007). Typically organized in a one-to-one setting, coaching is intentionally designed to occur within the context of the classroom (Kennedy, 2014), and can involve teaming dimensions as well. Thoughtfully supported by school leadership, coaching models nurture the creation of shared goals and actions for future success (Senge, 2000). They also find potential in people and processes to reflect, grow, and refine practice through using new tools and engaging in new pedagogical approaches (Aguilar, 2020). The job-embedded and differentiated aspects of coaching for capacity building employ aspects of effective PL, including observation, practice, feedback, and collaboration opportunities (Loughland & Nguyen, 2019), supporting potential efficacy for this solution.

### ***Required Resources and Ethical Considerations for Solution 2***

Serendipitous timing on behalf of the division's proposed redefinition of the role of learning support teachers, coupled with BES's well-received shift to the term "learning coach" over the traditional label of "learning support teacher" thoughtfully promotes this proposed solution. Time for this role will be supported via the district's shift to a coaching, co-teaching, and consultative role for learning coaches, alongside the roll out of PL that is designed to accompany this change. However, due to the draft nature of the job description and slower pace of district bureaucracy, this may present some timeline challenges for this DiP.



While external coaching costs would be prohibitive (Allen et al., 2011; Johnson, 2019; Rice et al., 2023), an in-school role may mediate fiscal considerations depending on how the school district proposes to realign job responsibilities and/or allocations to school-based LST funding. Coaching positions are reported to have steep learning curves (Aguilar, 2020; Kraft et al., 2018), tend to require a transition period in school landscapes (Comstock & Margolis, 2021), and require considerable time with each teacher due to the depth and nature of coaching supports (Johnson, 2019). These each greatly increase human resourcing costs in this possible solution.

Ethical considerations around this solution involve the social-emotional toll of coaching (Rice et al., 2023), particularly when supporting both a large school site and one characterized by implicit bias. Concepts of soft (informal and voluntary) and hard (imposed and assigned) coaching practices (McKenna & Walpole, 2013) raise ethic of care considerations for both coaches and teachers to be coached (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2022). Relational ethics, related to ethics of the profession, suggest that teachers may feel pressure to change their practices, while coaches may feel uncomfortable with interactions around how best to support shifting towards equity-based mindsets (Aguilar, 2013; Brown, 2021). However, these ethical challenges can be mediated by goal transparency in coaching between school leaders and coaches, and between coaches and prospective teachers seeking support (Aguilar, 2020; Kennedy, 2014; Zhao, 2018).

### **Solution 3: Action Research Professional Learning Model**

The gap between current and aspired realities at BES is both vast and complex, necessitating collective professional capacity building that harnesses the power of the collective staff. Action research can be described as the study of a phenomenon “involving the participants themselves as researchers with a view to improving the quality of action within it” (Somekh, 1988, as cited in Day, 1999, p. 34). Bridging the research-to-practice continuum, action research

supports a democratic approach that ensures greater participation and potential for transformative action (Fullan, 2022; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Kennedy, 2014; Shields, 2022; Weiner, 2002). This solution proposes a networked, school-wide approach to action research, whereby the collective staff works to increase student engagement, belongingness, and opportunity to achieve success while honouring the various contextual landscapes across grade ranges within the school.

In this plan, BES's principal team, LST team, the child development advisor, and the student leadership mentor would join forces with each grade team to engage in action research using a flexible yet coherent (Fullan, 2022; Fullan & Quinn, 2016) instructional design. Using equity-based data sources such as comprehensive learner profiles (Fullan, 2021), this action research model would monitor instructional efficacy of pedagogical strategies in each grade teams' selected focus areas. Instructional designs would be co-created for each grade team to refine pedagogical efficacy and learner engagement (Halbert & Kaser, 2022; Richardson & Díaz Maggioli, 2018).

This action research would be driven by formative continuous learning (Fullan, 2021) to close the gap between how the school is currently operating and how it could be structured to support high levels of learning for all students (Mehta & Datnow, 2020). Building capacity of teachers and support staff, while also building the capacity and awareness of the school's learning support and leadership teams, will allow everyone to improve within and across roles as system players (Fullan, 2022; Senge et al., 2019b). In building the collective capacity of school staff by honouring their diverse perspectives, acknowledging their agency and expertise, and learning together will nurture shared vision, collective efficacy, and committed responsibility through action research cycles of continuous improvement (Díaz Maggioli, 2017; Fullan, 2022; Halbert & Kaser, 2022; Hattie & Smith, 2021; Kennedy, 2016).

### ***Required Resources and Ethical Considerations for Solution 3***

For this solution, time and fiscal resources would be necessary to support regular collaboration opportunities to plan and organize action research instructional designs, serving as ongoing requirements to support this continuous initiative. Fortunately, BES has already created comprehensive learner profiles that could be used for data collection purposes, reducing further resource expenditures in this area. Necessary human resources would be high due to the school-wide and episodic nature of this proposed solution, yet would likely be refined with time and practice, scaffolded by prior experiences in action research by small staff cohorts.

From an ethical standpoint, this action research solution must ensure a focus on improvement over evaluation (Fullan, 2021). Additionally, it will require that collaborative learning practices are based upon transparency, precision, shared support, and non-judgment rather than competitive positioning (Fullan, 2021). Ethically, this solution would require a shared acknowledgement that learning is a social process and one that must prioritize learning, learners, and children over any other construct (Safir, 2019; Sarid & Levanon, 2022). Most powerfully, an ethical systems thinking perspective necessitates an understanding by school leadership that this PoP is a result of current and legacy leadership practices (Kennedy, 2014; Senge et al., 2019b; Stroh, 2015), ameliorated only by leaders accepting responsibility for working alongside frontline teachers and support staff to change opportunities.

### **Proposed Solutions Evaluation**

A comparison of the required resources across the three proposed solutions finds that solution 1 requires the least time, fiscal, and human resources, followed by solution 3, and lastly by solution 2. However, all three solutions are neither time nor cost prohibitive, with marginal differences between them (see [Appendix M](#)). An analysis of the ethical implications embedded in

each solution across Shapiro and Stefkovich's (2022) ethical paradigms of justice, critique, care, community, and profession suggests that the most equity-achieving solution impacting the largest number of school actors is solution 3's action research PL model (see [Appendix N](#)).

Each solution is based on a model of CPD as a collaborative endeavour to support transformative practices (Kennedy, 2014), demonstrating powerful alignment with the nature of change in this PoP. In an analysis of the spectrum of CPD models, Kennedy (2014) identified, compared, and organized nine key CPD models according to their capacity for nurturing transformative practice with increasing transformative potential across a continuum. The proposed DiP solutions place both the CoP and coaching models as having transitional purpose of CPD, whereas the action research model is placed at the transformative purpose level (Kennedy, 2014), demonstrating higher potential for transformative change (see [Appendix O](#)).

To address this PoP, the focus must involve the transformative actions of all BES staff. Staff professional learning must be ongoing, based on solid theory and comprehensive research, while also being vetted through classroom-verified pedagogical approaches that support equity, belonging, strength-based understandings, and high levels of learning for all learners, students and staff, alike (Díaz Maggioli, 2020; Fullan, 2021; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Richardson and Díaz Maggioli (2018), proponents of CPD, use an INSPIRE tool to evaluate the efficacy of various CPD models. Analysis of each proposed solution through the INSPIRE tool highlights solution 3's action research approach due to the comprehensive inclusion of sustained, collaborative, job-embedded learning to support increased student opportunities (Díaz Maggioli, 2018; see [Appendix P](#)). These multifaceted analyses of each proposed solution consider requisite resources and ethical considerations, as well as scholarly research around PL, including Kennedy's (2014) CPD transformative framework continuum and Díaz Maggioli's (2018) efficacy-oriented

INSPIRE tool. Collectively, solution 3's educative action research approach has been selected, complimenting the educative nature of TL (Shields, 2010), the combination of high expectations and high support of CL, and the active efficacy nurturing approaches of SCT to construct agentic environments for change.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter prioritizes a transformative, compassionate leadership approach to change alongside social cognitive theory's concepts of efficacy and agency to address a growing opportunity gap. The CPM, supplemented by the 4SLSC model, is outlined as a strong yet flexible framework to support cultural change at BES. Organizational change readiness and ethical considerations have been explored to determine efficacious pathways towards change in this elementary school context. Moving forward, the following chapter will frame the change implementation, communication, and monitoring and evaluation plans using the selected action research continuous professional development solution to address this PoP.

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

In this chapter, the overarching plan to create high quality, equitable learning experiences for students will be outlined. First, a change implementation plan is provided. This plan lays out the key successive events designed to address deficit thinking, grow equitable practices, and increase staff efficacy and agency. Next, a strategic, reciprocal communication plan is shared, highlighting key features designed to address the diverse communication needs of the various school actor groups. Then, an overview of transformative monitoring and evaluation strategies in this change plan is described. Finally, next steps and future considerations are explored.

#### **Change Implementation Plan**

Addressing BES's opportunity gap through increasingly effective pedagogical responses and a growing, collective responsibility for all learners will require thoughtful engagement across our entire school community (Safir, 2017; Stroh, 2015). This change implementation plan (CIP) will challenge BES's entire staff to come together in service of marginalized students in agentic, transformative, and compassionate ways. The plan proposes that school staff gather authentic feedback and engage in meaningful dialogue with students, parents, and community members on an ongoing basis, with a particular focus on those historically silent, absent, or silenced (Shields & Hesbol, 2020). The CIP is based upon key understandings of social cognitive theory alongside transformative and compassionate leadership theories. The overarching goals of this CIP involve building staff's individual and collective awareness and capacity, nurturing staff efficacy and agency, and countering deficit thinking predispositions through the development of shared responsibility.

This school-based plan has been intentionally aligned with the district's overall strategic plans and educational goals, appropriate in light of the role of school principal as change leader.

MSD’s strategic plan highlights improved student learning, increased community connections, and workforce strengthening (MSD, 2023b), as well as district goals involving connection, belonging, learning, and success (MSD, 2023a). Strategically, this CIP coordinates many key timelines, accountabilities, and deliverables with those expected from schools by the district, opportunistically prioritizing time and focus for this critical equity work. Additionally, this intentional “bundling” of mandated district structures alongside targeted capacity building for equity garners district support and approval via this thoughtful combination (Berkovich, 2020; Winton & Pollock, 2013). This CIP also upholds our provincial responsibilities around learning, inclusion, and professional practice (ABEd, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c).

As outlined in Chapter 2, the CIP follows the linear yet flexible structure of the CPM (Deszca et al., 2020), buttressed by the Stroh’s (2015) 4SLSC’s explicit focus on scaffolding social change to create a multi-tiered structure to support transformative, equity-driven improvements. However, despite the sequential presentation of both the change model and following table, change plan actions and events are both fluid and iterative in nature. [Table 1](#) provides a brief, overarching snapshot of key events within this plan. Each key action listed in the chart will be explored in further detail to clarify the plan’s goals and priorities, strategic alignments, change management considerations, and challenging issues that may arise.

### **Key School Actor Engagement Series**

The first engagement in this CIP involves bringing together members across the school community, including staff, students, families, and school partners. Nurturing a school’s cultural transformation is a lofty task, particularly when addressing issues of equity (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Safir, 2017, Shields, 2022). Requiring brave, vulnerable dialogue from participating school community members, particular attention will be given to soliciting feedback from those

adversely impacted by BES’s opportunity gap. Groupings for these engagements will include various structured settings, including one-on-one conversations, small group conversations, and larger dialogue settings with staff, parents, and/or students. These consultations, organized and facilitated by the principal team, will be intentionally designed to gather candid feedback about what is working well, what is problematic, and what possibilities can be explored for further improvement. BES staff will work together to personally invite students, parents, and community members to these engagements, seeking to engage with a variety of people, including those who may have felt underserved by our school or who rarely attend school connection opportunities.

**Table 1**

*Change Implementation Plan Key Actions*

Event	Actions	Goals	School Actor Involvement	Resources	Timeline
<b>Key School Actor Engagement Series</b>	Engage groups individually and collectively regarding the status quo, successes, and areas for growth/exploration.	Building: - Awareness - Trust	- Principal team - Teachers - Support staff - School council members - School fundraising members - Student groupings	- Time - School data - Feedback collection tools	- Ongoing - Annually - First in March
<b>School Engagement Feedback Analysis Deep Dive</b>	Collaborate on key observations/trends/patterns to determine possible options forward to address opportunity gap.	Building: - Awareness - Trust - Relationship - Collaborative capacity	- Principal team - Learning support team - Grade team groupings of teachers/support staff - District learning specialist(s)	- Release time - Sub coverage - Collated feedback data	- May - Annually
<b>School Education Plan Retreat Sessions</b>	Use ongoing school actor feedback, learner profile data, district, and provincial data to plan and review key priority areas to target opportunity gap area(s).	Building: - Awareness - Trust - Relationship - Individual/ collaborative capacity	- Principal team - Learning support team - Teachers - Support staff - District learning specialist(s)	- Time - School PL days - Data tracking tools and reports	Every: - August - November - January - March - May
<b>Collaborative Response Grade Team Inquiry for Equity Experiences</b>	Focussed on target opportunity gap area(s), each grade team will develop an action research plan to improve instructional efficacy and pedagogical strategies using data, research, expertise, and collaborative leveraging.	Building: - Awareness - Trust - Relationship - Individual/ collaborative capacity - Individual/collective efficacy	- Principal team (all sessions) - Learning support team (all sessions) - Grade team groupings of teachers/support staff (at respective grade team sessions, 6 times per school year) - District specialist(s) as needed/appropriate	- Release time - Sub coverage - Data tracking tools and reports - Qualitative observations and learning artifacts	- Ongoing; every 6 instructional weeks

Led by the principal team, with support from the school’s learning support team, these engagements will “kick off” this change plan yet will also be woven into the landscape of



ongoing school communications. Staff members will be provided time to both participate in and take on a facilitative role during this series. This affords staff opportunities to share themselves as participants, as well as to learn while actively listening to contributions of students, parents, and partners. Voices of various school actors will serve as vital sources of data (Safir, 2017).

Led with an explicit agenda to ensure participants feel safe, valued, and empowered to express their ideas and experiences authentically (Deal & Peterson, 2016), these structured conversations will require a thoughtful, dialogic approach (Adams et al., 2023). During these engagements, we must move from telling to asking, from teaching to learning, and from talking to listening deeply (Safir, 2019). Trust and respect for our students, parents, and partners must be fostered through listening with open minds, hearts, and wills by our staff team (Scharmer, 2018). If “conversation is the essence of school life” (Adams et al., 2023, p. 410), the intent of these engagements is for school staff to see that “listening is at the heart of school transformation” (Safir, 2017, p. 17). Ensuring staff engagement in this aspect of the CIP will be vital, as staff members play a crucial role in shaping change (Safir, 2017; Safir & Dugan, 2021). Given the complexity in undertaking transformative change, these meetings are intended to be a trusting, relational, and collective endeavor, connecting across racial, cultural, socio-economic, and school actor role differences, thereby serving as a pivotal initial step towards addressing equity and opportunity gaps at BES (Adams et al., 2023; Datnow et al., 2023; Safir, 2019).

Possible challenges in this activity include the careful structuring of conversations across various school actor groups and social registers (Adams et al., 2023), ensuring adequate participation from underserved persons, and managing emergent reactions to charged or difficult conversation topics (Shields, 2022). Thoughtful groupings in terms of size and perspectives, alongside strategic facilitation, tone, and placement of the principal team and LST team serve as

important considerations. Deep listening, paying attention to non-verbal cues, modeling affirmation and care, and expressing empathy and appreciation will be key (Safir, 2019).

### **School Engagement Feedback Deep Dive**

As feedback is collected and collated from the school actor engagement series by the principal team, attention will turn to building collective staff awareness and collaborative capacity to gain a big-picture understanding of triangulated school data sources. This key action spans the awakening to the mobilization steps of the change model, focused on growing school staff's capacity to think systematically, engaging in difficult conversations around gathered feedback, and accepting shared responsibility for our current reality (Senge et al., 2019; Stroh, 2015). A thoughtful commitment to a culture of data use at BES will be emphasized in this data deep dive. While more formalized data sources will be included, intentional use of informal "street level" data sources will be prioritized (Safir & Dugan, 2021).

Gathered in grade team cohorts, the principal team and LSTs will share these data and pose reflective questions (Safir, 2019) to staff during each deep dive session. Deep listening during these sessions is intended to help school staff reimagine data, bringing student and family voices into the equation and harnessing their perspectives as a lens for staff to adopt when considering these findings (Capper, 2019; Safir, 2019; Shields, 2022). For staff, these engagements will require listening with a dual purpose to uncover common values while simultaneously gaining an understanding of the diversity of perspective across school actor roles. For the principal team and LSTs, a commitment to compassion and humanity is very important in these settings, ensuring a caring, supportive, and judgment-free stance with staff (Aguilar, 2020).

Together, staff will engage in a robust analysis of our equity challenges, with a learning orientation in mind (Capper, 2019; Safir, 2019). Through this, staff will work collaboratively to

develop a shared, local, equity-driven vision for BES, scaffolded by inclusive values and the hopes, narratives, and voices of our community (Safir, 2017). Addressing inequity at BES will involve an exploration of our own biases and actions, pedagogically and otherwise (Benson & Fiarman, 2020). Leading for equity is inherently emotional work (Safir, 2019), at times causing feelings of guilt, shame, and emotional strain (Aguilar, 2020). Recognizing this challenging aspect of cultural change, the smaller, intentional grade team meeting structure has been selected to encourage grade team members to openly share any discomfort or vulnerabilities in a safe, caring, and intimate space among familiar colleagues (Berkovich, 2020; Safir, 2017).

These deep dive experiences seek to build staff awareness for transformative learning around deficit thinking to support individual and collective capacity building (Stroh, 2015). This uniquely adult form of metacognitive reasoning describes learning that “transforms problematic frames of references - sets of fixed assumptions and experiences - to make them more inclusive, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change” (Mezirow, 2003, p. 58). Asking authentic questions about BES practice and leading with humility (Safir, 2017), a school principal and learning support teacher will join each grade team meeting to champion an equity-driven leadership stance based on a clear vision of success to mobilize positive change at BES.

### **School Education Plan Retreat Sessions**

Bimonthly whole-staff retreat sessions will intermesh the school education plan (SEP) structure with BES’s commitment towards social justice, equity, and reversing the school’s opportunity gap. Capitalizing on both the change model’s and the district mandated SEP’s linear presentations, these complementary frameworks will reduce distractions and sustain requisite focus (Katz & Dack, 2013) yet permit flexibility across this iterative professional learning journey (Deszca et al., 2020). Leveraging the comprehensive data sourcing from the previous

events, the rich feedback from diverse voices will remind leaders and staff to stay true to school values and new, equity-oriented learnings (Halbert & Kaser, 2022; Safir, 2017; Shields, 2019).

The SEP process will introduce the entire school staff to our spirals of inquiry for equity and quality action research cycle (Halbert & Kaser, 2022, see [Appendix Q](#)) that will operate at a high, longer-term level for our SEP structure. Aligning goals with both change voices and system priorities, our SEP targets will be collaboratively created based on rich, multi-level compiled data sources (Blasé and Blasé, 2000), including a focus on academics, belonging, and opportunity (Shields, 2019). At the start of the year, inquiry questions, appropriate performance indicators, current levels of achievement, and long and short-term targets will be set. At each subsequent retreat session, BES staff will gather to review targets, achievement levels, and performance progress of the SEP. Shifts can be made to adjust goals' appropriateness and efficacy for equity at these times. Celebrations of growth, in terms of individual and collective efficacy of staff, as well as by way of improved student response, will be designed to nurture optimism, efficacy, and increased pedagogical imperative in BES staff. In turn, this will scaffold motivation throughout the change journey (Benson & Fiarman, 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021).

Adopting a school-wide professional growth model, including high expectations for staff in pedagogical effectiveness and cultural responsiveness (Khalifa et al., 2016) is critical for the achievement of students from all backgrounds (Honig & Rainey, 2020). These ongoing PL experiences are designed to support the development of praxis, combining theory, research, evidence, and practice to achieve increasing equity-minded awareness and effective pedagogical practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Fullan, 2011; Halbert & Kaser, 2022; Stroh, 2015). These retreat sessions will help change leaders to understand the macro- and micro-contextual

influences of this shared work, serving to help gain a better understanding of school operations to optimize this change implementation (Aas, 2017). However, this higher-level plan must be accompanied by a specific bias towards action and learning (Safir, 2019) in each classroom, using a teaching and learning approach for continuous professional development (Díaz Maggioli, 2017) brought to life through grade team action research inquiry cycles, described next.

### **Collaborative Grade Team Inquiry for Equity Experiences**

This plan sees each grade team meet every six instructional weeks throughout the year, including grade-based teachers and support staff, alongside the principal team and LSTs. Using a variety of multi-level data sources, including staff-created comprehensive learner profiles, each team will set a learning goal specific to their students, including current performance levels and selected assessment tools. Collectively, each team will collaborate to determine required resources, such as PL requirements, professional and/or student learning materials, and human supports. The principal team and LSTs will “push in” to classes to assist in these iterative, six-week action research inquiries, providing assistance in accordance with plans made by the grade team during the planning session. Using this educative teaching, learning, and nested support approach, grade teams are given agency to create learning opportunities for themselves, pursuing them on the job as a part of the instructional day, while also tapping into instructional leadership supports (Fullan, 2023; Honig & Rainey, 2020; Robinson et al., 2009), shared motivation, and collaborative teaching practices (Deal & Peterson, 2016; Zhang et al., 2021). Working to empower one another in support of the change vision serves to mobilize the learning community and accelerate learning (Deszca et al., 2020) while actively taking steps to continuously assess and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Leveraging BES’s collective strengths to address areas for growth (Honig & Rainey, 2020; Yates & Hirsh, 2022) serves to build both

individual and collective efficacy and agency (Bandura, 2000, 2006). This will scaffold BES staff's commitment to the change vision (Durrant, 2019), using collective agency to catalyze the drive towards achieving equity-oriented change (Bandura, 2006).

Seeking change, transformative learning begins with people adopting new ways of acting and seeing (Dweck, 2007; Gardner, 2006). First, this will require the unraveling of a patterned way of being and thinking (Rohr, 2020), arguably the key challenge in this school change plan. Embracing new, hopeful possibilities towards educational equity (Honig & Rainey, 2020) will require BES staff to shift their epistemological perspectives to challenge problematic actions, decisions, and assumptions (Mezirow, 2008) that do not serve all BES students. BES staff must continually consider the school's equity challenges. This includes sharing responsibility for the school's opportunity gap (Park, 2018; Safir, 2019) and being active, responsible partners in this learning process (Roohani & Haghparast, 2020).

Staff will be challenged to ensure that all learners have access to rigorous standards and are supported to become expert learners in each classroom (Bowman et al., 2022), embracing support from colleagues and new learnings from each successive spiral of inquiry cycle. School leadership must serve as warm demanders, compassionately holding high expectations for BES staff while providing high support to convince staff of their growing efficacy and agency (Bandura, 2006; Johnson, 2019; Safir, 2019).

This collective change implementation plan will require a strong commitment to our shared, aspirational vision to address the school's opportunity gap. The expectations of staff, including the change leaders, are high. While setbacks and challenges throughout the CIP are likely inevitable (Alexander, 2016, Deszca, 2020; Stroh, 2015), they also provide the richest possibilities for learning and growth. Change leaders will be challenged to ensure staff feel safe

to make mistakes throughout this transformative learning experience. Staff agency, scaffolded by increasing perceived levels of collective efficacy, can serve to foster group motivational commitment and resiliency to adversity as setbacks occur (Bandura, 2006). Belief in the vision, strong trust in one another, a targeted focus on goals, and embracing missteps as learning opportunities will support BES staff to reach their highest potential (Bandura, 2000).

### **Communication Plan**

Thoughtfully aligned with the change framework and change implementation plan (Deszca et al., 2020), this overarching communication plan has also been designed to honour the critical epistemological underpinnings and transformative, compassionate leadership approach of this DiP. The narrative of change at BES requires that those involved subscribe to the conception of leadership as a process, rather than a person or a position (Honig & Rainey, 2020; Ryan & Rottman, 2007), calling numerous school actors up to the challenge of championing and prioritizing diverse students' needs through increased collaboration, action research, and leveraged agency (Durrant, 2019; Safir & Dugan, 2021; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). A carefully constructed and responsive communication plan holds potential to positively influence school actor involvement and change plan outcomes in multiple ways (Deszca, 2020; Lewis, 2019).

### **School Actor Understanding and Analysis**

Change implementation is fundamentally a social and communicative process replete with intricate social dynamics (Lewis, 2019). As such, an in-depth understanding of the various perspectives and interests of those involved in the change process is imperative (Deszca et al., 2020; Lewis, 2019). Blueridge Elementary School is a busy hub of ongoing activity with complex sources of knowledge and information within and beyond its walls. This CIP will require the involvement of numerous school actor groups. Lewis (2019) posits that change

processes -- both those taken up in support of and in opposition to the change plan -- are rooted in and enacted through communication. Thus, understanding and analyzing various school actor groups' perspectives on change and their degree of influence over change implementation serves as an important, ongoing aspect in designing and actualizing a strategic communication plan at BES. [Appendix R](#) lists key school actor groups involved in the change, provides the key values and interests of each group, suggests their fit with the change, and describes the influences and interdependencies between the various groups in the current school context.

Deszca et al. (2020) highlight the importance of a widely shared, accessible vision for change, a clearly articulated understanding of the impacts of change for those involved, and an ongoing commitment to sharing progress updates during the change process. Mapping out how school actors will serve in this change process, from potential ally to rival, will support the creation of a realistic communication plan (Lewis, 2019). The principal, assistant principal, and learning support teachers will serve as key change agents, communicators, and decision makers throughout this plan. As change leaders and planners, instructional supporters, and key influencers (Lewis et al., 2006), this team will be charged with maintaining ongoing interactions and actively listening, seeking to learn and understand the thoughts and feelings of staff, students, and others throughout the change stages. As trusted team players spanning multiple social locations, the LST team is strategically positioned to collect feedback from district specialists, school staff, students, and families, serving an important bridging role in learning and understanding factors influencing change implementation (Branson et al., 2016).

Teachers, support staff, and students will also serve as vital members of the change, communication, and knowledge mobilization (KMb) teams, with classrooms serving as the hub of the action research engagements to determine efficacious pedagogical approaches for diverse



learning needs and interests. Teachers, support staff, and students are also in ongoing, regular communication with parents and district personnel, thus holding influential power over informal messaging and correspondence, including those that may be at odds with formal change communication messaging. Student voice regarding their sense of belonging, efficacy, and agency as learners and their responses to instruction provide key data points for both communicative and monitoring purposes (Safir & Dugan, 2019). Ensuring that communication strategies effectively solicit regular, candid feedback from students, parents, and district specialists will be instrumental in challenging any deficit framing staff possess. Ongoing, interactive engagement with students, families, partners, and district staff will also be integral, providing feedback and input to share diverse perspectives and support transformative thinking (Halbert & Kaser, 2022).

### **Overarching Communication Strategies**

Alongside attendance to the events delineated across the CIP, communication planning will also follow three key activity tracks to manage the change communication process. Managing meaning (what is going on in the change process), managing networks (monitoring and participating in shaping relationships amongst school actors), and managing practice (supporting praxis in the implementation of new pedagogical strategies, approaches, and tasks) will comprise the key communication approach (Lewis, 2019) in this DiP.

Communications during the change journey will also be framed by three integral influencing and awareness building strategies (Dezsca et al., 2020). First, education and communication strategies will be employed to help school actors understand the change, the requirements of those involved in the change implementation, and the rationale for these shifts. Second, throughout the entire process, school actor involvement and participation will be

prioritized, serving to garner wide sources of feedback, empower voice and agency, and flatten organizational leadership sources (Aguilar, 2020; Safir & Dugan, 2021). Third, through the collaborative action research cycles, facilitation and support will nurture new ways of thinking about, working with, and seeing students' diverse learning needs. This careful support by the lead change team is designed to assist key school actors in adapting to refinements in pedagogical practices and increasingly equitable mindsets (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Halbert & Kaser, 2022; Safir, 2017).

In keeping with the transformative, compassionate leadership approach governing this change, face-to-face interactive communications will be prioritized. While time intensive, this form of communication is highly effective, allowing for personalized, two-way conversation and shared sensemaking (Deszca, 2020; Lewis, 2019; Safir, 2019; Shields, 2022). The principal team, LST team, grade teams, and school leadership team MRPs already meet on an ongoing basis. Time on each agenda will be allocated to discuss these change plans, wonders, and emergent issues, allowing responsivity and clarity to flow from these collaboration sessions to other staff members, nurturing trust and scaffolding transparency throughout change (Aguilar, 2020). Messages will be shared using multiple data and information sources (Safir & Dugan, 2021; Stoll & Temperley, 2009) through multiple means and ways to appeal to various school audiences. These include infographics, charts, action summaries, and school actor narratives to clearly demonstrate and personalize how changes are increasing quality learning and inclusion at BES. Effective, efficient, and engaging communications, with embedded redundancy for message clarity and optimized retention, will be used to ensure understanding across school actor groups (Deszca et al., 2020).

### **Short Term Phase Communications**

Prior to initiating the change process, an overview of the change plan will be shared with specific district staff, with an intentional focus on those with authority, as well as those who have power to be influential in supporting desired change (Deszca et al., 2019). The intentional interweaving of the CIP with district plans and priorities will be highlighted to leverage support (Winton & Pollock, 2013). In developing an understanding of the need for change during the awakening step, people across the school community will be invited to attend one of the school actor engagement series events. Various data will be shared to communicate a clear rationale for action to address the growing opportunity gap at BES, blending formalized data delineating school diversity with thoughtful personalized narratives to appeal to the emotional aspects supporting shared imperative (Aguilar, 2020; Deszca et al. 2020; Safir & Dugan, 2021). Participants in these engagements will be encouraged to share their own stories, concerns, wonders, hopes, and fears to add contextual layers and considerations towards change (Shields, 2022).

Overall, these engagements have been designed to achieve a core set of goals. First, these engagements must awaken an understanding of the need for change through managing the meaning and plans for change. Second, they have been designed to grow and manage networks to share the change vision. Third, a critical goal of these engagements is to utilize practices that feature and prioritize historically disadvantaged voices in the change conversation (Deszca, 2020; Fullan & Quinn, 2020; Lewis, 2019).

### **Medium Term Phase Communications**

As the CIP moves into the mobilization and acceleration steps, communication strategies can serve as an essential driver in maintaining momentum and commitment along the change path (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). Ongoing face-to-face communications throughout

these steps by virtue of the lead change teams' participation in the grade team inquiry cycles will help these leaders to maintain continuous, interactive collaborations within and across grade teams, supporting midstream changes, milestone communications, and celebrations of growth (Deszca et al., 2020; Halbert & Kaser, 2022; Lewis, 2019). This daily involvement will also support the lead change team to “keep their fingers on the pulse of change,” managing meaning, networks, and practices (Fullan, 2023). This up close and personal involvement also serves to provide powerful understandings of blossoming change to infuse in wider strategic communications throughout the school community (Aguilar, 2020).

Internal communications include team teaching collaborations, staff meetings (including grade team, priority area leadership team, learning support team, and whole staff meetings), daily student announcements, and weekly information bulletin updates. External communications include ongoing engagement series events, weekly school newsletters, milestone and celebratory social media postings, student portfolio postings, monthly school council meetings, student lunchbox talks to district staff and families, and formal celebrations of learning. Sharing narratives of success, empowerment, and learning provide opportunities to celebrate how this change is positively impacting people on both individual and collective levels. Again, managing communications during this change will include soliciting input from school actors across all three activity tracks, addressing hesitation, concerns, negativity, and backchannel communications as required. As issues are uncovered through such reciprocal communications, determining root causes of concerns and challenges will promote shifts in CIP and communication plan events to be responsive to school actor feedback (Deszca et al., 2020; Lewis, 2019; Safir, 2017).

### **Long Term Phase Communications**

In the transition from the acceleration to the institutionalization step, celebrating ongoing learning, growth, and success will include community-wide events. Celebrations of professional and student learning will chart our shifting counternarrative as BES steps up towards equity-supporting pedagogical practices and deep, shared responsibility for the success of all students. In addition to these events, thoughtful communication of progress will include video narratives, infographics in newsletters and social media, and incorporation into BES's SEP documentation. Personalized letters of thanks will also be sent to involved school actors to express our gratitude and to encourage recipients' ongoing, candid engagement to support our change efforts.

While this CIP rollout has been described as a process spanning just over a school year, in reality, it is an iterative, cyclical spiral (Halbert & Kaser, 2022; Safir & Dugan, 2021). Preparation for continued growth and development, as well as attending to unfinished work, will continue, requiring interactive, ongoing communications across the management of enriched meanings, strengthened networks, and enhanced practices (Aguilar, 2020; Deszca et al., 2020; Lewis, 2019). Capitalizing on the ongoing learning and shifting mindsets highlight the critical role of knowledge mobilization in the communication and change process.

### **Knowledge Mobilization Plan**

David Kilpatrick (2020) cites a minimum 20-year gap between educational research and implementation as classroom practice, suggesting that even "successful" attempts at knowledge transfer have limited success. Schools are experiencing increasing pressure to engage in data-informed practices (Farrell, 2015; Malik, 2020), yet attempts to implement such practices often include pressures to adopt hierarchical, top-down, and politically oriented strategies (Datnow, 2000; Malik, 2020). Alternatively, transformative research paradigms are grounded in knowledge mobilization processes that prioritize close collaboration between researchers and school actors

as joint inquirers (Anderson & McLachlan, 2016). In this transformative DiP, the mobilization of knowledge will be co-created by a wide range of school actors through participatory action research that “valorizes multiple ways of knowing” for progressive social transformation (Anderson & McLachlan, 2016, p. 297). Bridging the gap between our current and aspired realities requires that BES staff, alongside students and families, learn together through honest and vulnerable conversation and connection (Aguilar, 2020). Collective analysis of student evidence of learning and explorations of practices that lead to greater student learning lies at the heart of continuous improvement and empowered KMb (Fullan, 2016, 2023).

This KMb plan commences at the very start of the CIP, engaging in KMb processes that give voice to school actors typically marginalized in the knowledge transfer process, with a targeted focus on students and families with diverse and complex backgrounds (Anderson & McLachlan, 2016). Hattie and Smith (2021) position teachers, followed by school leaders, as having the greatest impact on student learning. As such, those school staff closest to the students will have a key role in the KMb process. Each iterative action research cycle increases both knowledge and capacity for action (Anderson & McLachlan, 2016). Over time, high-yield strategies grow in precision as they are constantly being interpreted and refined, while ineffective and inequitable approaches are discarded (Fullan, 2016; Halbert & Kaser, 2022). These iterative cycles create a spiral that emerges from and builds upon the last, increasing capacity for learning, action, and transformation (Anderson & McLachlan, 2016; Halbert & Kaser, 2022).

This DiP employs a flexible approach to KMb that allows multiple voices to contribute to the knowledge collection and mobilization process (Malik, 2020, further details of the KMb plan are located in [Appendix S](#)). Key knowledge transfer messaging includes the thoughtful, strategic alignment between the CIP and district priorities (Lavis et al., 2003), the fundamental inclusion

of marginalized voices to guide the change plan (Anderson & McLachlan, 2016), and the thoughtful, collaborative solution of iterative action research cycles that embeds knowledge generation across key school actor groups (Fullan, 2011, 2023). A transformative approach has been employed across the messenger-audience continuum, employing school staff in both key roles, building credibility and sharing responsibilities (Lavis et al., 2003) to empower those school actors who are best positioned to act on this knowledge (Malik, 2020; Signy, 2022). Other target audiences, including parents, community partners, and district staff, will receive messages using multiple audience-specific strategies and shared communications that describe the unfolding narratives, milestones, and next steps in our change process (Lavis et al., 2003; Malik, 2020). Ongoing, interactive communications will serve as the key strategy for knowledge transfer, supplemented by individualized feedback opportunities, weekly newsletters, social media, websites, and milestone celebration presentations. The KMb plan goals involve ensuring that teaching and learning experiences at BES increase in efficacy and equity, thereby increasing the knowledge, skills, mindsets, and agency of school staff while challenging conceptions of deficit thinking to increase collective responsibility and belongingness in our school.

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

Responsive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) planning aids decision making, action, and communication during change implementation. Through this plan, the need for change can be clearly framed (Deszca et al., 2020), serving as the means to learn what works best for intended beneficiaries (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). This section provides an overview of M&E considerations specific to this DiP, followed by a review of proposed approaches, measures, and tools to determine progress and assess change for evaluative purposes. Consideration will also be given to managing emergent refinements alongside equity and social justice commitments.

Monitoring and evaluation serve a unified purpose within the change process, drawing from similar and complementary data sources. Ongoing, day to day monitoring allows change participants to track progress, manage change processes, adjust strategies, and optimize conditions for learning (Deszca et al., 2020). Monitoring data sources include both quantitative and qualitative performance considerations (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016) spanning the duration of the CIP. Evaluation serves a longer term, periodic purpose that can attend to formative and summative ends extending beyond the scope of monitoring (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Evaluation seeks to clarify the impact and summarize the learning that has resulted from the change plan, reporting on change outcomes through systematic, planned, and purposeful activities using a collection of data. Developing understanding, creating knowledge, and supporting learning through evaluation serves to enhance organizations (Neumann et al., 2018).

### **A Transformative Approach to Monitoring and Evaluation**

Consistent with the overarching approach of this DiP, M&E practices will draw from a transformative paradigm, with an explicit focus on social justice and equity (Greene, 2005; Mertens, 2010). As such, multiple school actor voices must feature prominently in these M&E practices, reflecting data sources that honour difference and diversity with a particular focus on perspectives from marginalized groups to ensure BES staff learn a complete and accurate school narrative to encourage equity-oriented change (Mertens, 2019; Safir & Dugan, 2021). Deep, active listening to students and families will serve as a prioritized evidence source (Halbert & Kaser, 2022) in M&E data, employing tools that honour the pedagogy of voice (Safir & Dugan, 2021).

These priorities take on additional importance for two key reasons. First, due to the interweaving of this CIP with the district's overarching SEP structure, methodological constraints



imposed by the structural functionalist bias of the district highlights quantitative, formalized data sources that may reinforce the status quo and current hegemonic perspectives about diverse students. Second, BES staff's positionalities of privilege may erroneously honour deficit thinking patterns when monitoring for impacts towards equity (Pasque & alexander, 2023). Acknowledging and confronting bias will require resilience when listening to thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of those traditionally on the margins of the school landscape (Aguilar, 2020). Through a lens of compassion (Safir, 2017), engaging in difficult conversations that require reflection and humility must also be included in data analysis conversations and meaning making to support high expectations around equity and to serve the evaluative goals of this DiP.

A mixed methods cyclical design will be employed in this M&E plan, using data collected throughout the steps of the change cycle to inform decisions about next steps and potential refinements (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016; Mertens, 2019). While this change plan seeks to increase equity for students with diverse and complex learning needs, some evaluative measures reference district and provincially mandated accountability metrics through the interweaving of the change plan with the district's required school education plan process. Alberta's educational assurance framework has a robust prioritization of accountability measures, one growing increasingly evident at MSD, as well. For example, recent changes in MSD school budget allocations require school principal teams to justify dollars spent for inclusive learning needs, particularly when overspending in this area.

However, the inclusion of an equity-centered agenda in BES's SEP evaluative metrics effectively influences the direction, content, and outcomes towards socially just, transformative measures (Deszca et al., 2020). Therefore, the evaluation design and collection process will include an intentional mix of data sources. These include satellite data (broad quantitative

measures, such as standardized assessments, attendance rates), map data (learning and cultural trends, such as literacy levels and numbers of multilingual students), and street data (the lived experiences of school actors, such as what can be observed and heard from an asset-based lens). Intentionally including the richness that emerges from map and street data sources seeks to remove barriers through a value-engaged evaluative approach (Greene, 2005).

### **Uncovering the Counternarrative: A Monitoring and Evaluation Plan**

Evaluative questions in this M&E plan include four key queries. First, in what ways does the participatory action research spiral of inquiry for equity process address staff professional needs and marginalized students' needs at BES? Second, how do increasingly collaborative school processes serve students' diverse needs? Third, how well are BES staff implementing inclusive pedagogical practices to support diverse learning needs? Lastly, to what extent are BES's marginalized students experiencing increased opportunities and success?

### ***Monitoring Activities Spanning Awakening and Mobilization Steps***

The key school actor engagement series simultaneously launches the implementation, communication, and M&E plans in the awakening step of the change framework. From the start, ensuring that all school actors recognize a commitment to the inclusion of all actor groups and the explicit equity agenda of this engagement series is paramount (Greene, 2005; Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016; Mertens, 2019). These collaborative engagements will be established as a place for genuine inquiry and candid sharing (Datnow & Park, 2018) in a series of listening campaigns to better understand how to serve the needs of all students at BES (Halbert & Kaser, 2022). These gatherings seek to garner feedback from those present by asking curious questions to unpack the status quo at the school (Halbert & Kaser, 2022). Prompts will revolve around three key areas of inquiry, including the following (adjusted for student respondents, where required):

- Share a bright spot in your experience of our school. What should we learn from this?
- Reflect on an experience of inequity or exclusion that you have had in our school. How did that experience impact you/your student/our school?
- Imagine you could wave a magic wand to strengthen equity, relationships, and learning at our school. What would you change and why? (adapted from Safir & Dugan, 2021)

The use of a structured prompting guide serves to provide focus, without constraining the depth and emotion of responses (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Feedback gathered through these engagements provides rich possibilities to use data for equity purposes (Datnow & Park, 2018). Using these data, change leaders can frame the need for and implications of the change vision (Deszca et al., 2020). Thoughtful inclusion of various school actors as participants at these events support the gathering of evidence that is widely accessible to all school actors, and school staff, in particular (Halbert & Kaser, 2022). Many staff will have the opportunity to serve as both participants and facilitators over the course of a school year. This ensures that staff are not only able to share their thoughts and feelings, but also to actively listen and understand the thoughts and feelings of other school actor groups. Collectively, the data garnered from ongoing actor engagements will be brought to BES staff to review, explore, and organize, as described below.

Spanning across the awakening and mobilization steps, the school engagement deep dive analyses will yield key observations, trends, and patterns that may cause discomfort and/or emotional responses from staff (Aguilar, 2020). Approached with curiosity and a growth mindset, this process will involve reviewing collected data from engagement events and follow up family surveys by all BES staff, requiring skilled facilitation by the lead change team (Halbert & Kaser, 2022). These deep dive experiences seek to invite BES staff to uncover and explore diverse perspectives around the school's longstanding, privileged status quo (Safir & Dugan,

2021). This also allows key change agents to monitor staff progress towards their willingness to reimagine a new, equitable “status quo” that inclusively honours all students’ learning needs and appreciates diversity as a strength across our student body. Thoughtful monitoring by the principal team and LSTs at this key juncture scaffolds careful management of change processes and strategy adjustments to optimize conditions for staff learning (Deszca et al., 2020).

Monitoring sources during these deep dive engagements will include change team observations and a review of staff’s verbal and written reflections following each deep dive session (Halbert & Kaser, 2022). Monitoring practices during these engagements in the awakening and mobilizing steps of the change framework seek to gather evidence that BES staff members are beginning to recognize how much was not known about the lives of their students, evoking a sense of what Brown (2018) defines as “ferocious humility.”

In building momentum for equity through this deep dive process, the inclusion of humanizing data allows barriers in thinking about student opportunity and success to be revealed (Safir and Dugan, 2021). This deep dive experience has been designed to highlight the critical role that educators play in determining what counts as data and how and why data are used in schools (Coburn & Turner, 2012; Park, 2018) while surfacing the current reality of the landscape at BES (Stroh, 2015). Elmore (2005) argues that external accountability will be elusive without strong internal accountability -- when educational staff take on professional, personal, and collective responsibility for continuous improvement of all students (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012). This reflection provoking learning activity must be supported with shared humility, vulnerability, and compassion by school leadership (Safir & Dugan, 2021), as all staff, including formal leaders, are complicit in creating our current reality (Senge et al., 2019b).

### ***Monitoring Activities Spanning Mobilization and Acceleration Steps***

With the mobilization step well underway, SEP retreat sessions will commence the thoughtful collation of multiple forms of data to bridge our current reality towards our aspired future. Borrowing from Aguilar's (2020) transformational coaching phases, surfacing BES's current reality and recognizing the impacts of the status quo will involve an exploration of staff emotions, including anxiety, frustration, denial, humility, vulnerability, and even hope. The lead change team must practice strategic listening coupled with an equity-centered approach to leadership (Safir, 2019), where all staff are held to high expectations in a compassionate manner (Aguilar, 2020; Halbert & Kaser, 2022; Safir, 2017) while encouraging each staff member to reimagine practices to ensure that they support all students' needs.

These retreat sessions span across the school year, charting the annual SEP planning, monitoring, and evaluating processes. Aguilar's (2020) three step data discussion protocol will be used, including observation, interpretation, and conclusion phases. First, staff will look for key facts and patterns in the data, restricted to descriptive (versus evaluative) judgments. Next, staff will collaborate to make sense of the data via multiple interpretations. The lead change team will probe with questions designed to surface underlying beliefs about teaching, learning, and students as a key monitoring strategy. Third, conversation will revolve around what such data suggest must be done/done differently, with lead change team members encouraging generative thinking and diverse ideas. Use of an iceberg metaphor may be appropriate to assist in looking beyond surface thoughts and reactions towards patterns, trends, structures, and mental models that result in different perspectives around data interpretation and use (Stroh, 2015; see [Appendix I](#)). Collectively, these retreats are designed to capture the complexity of equity at BES (Datnow & Park, 2018) and to nurture shared responsibility to engage in continuous improvement of staff and student learning. Engaging staff to promote motivation and activism (Mertens, 2019) will

benefit from bottom up and middle out change, with powerful ideas generated from school staff (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). According to transformative learning theory, developing awareness, knowledge, and perspective generates personal responsibility (Carillo, 2023) and agency (Safir & Dugan, 2021). Monitoring during these sessions involves looking for evidence of increasing staff accountability for providing students with increased opportunities for success and belonging (Bandura, 2000; Datnow & Park, 2018).

Armed with growing understandings around equity and opportunity at BES, staff will co-create a draft SEP, including inquiry questions and goals across advancing student skills, building students' competencies, and creating belonging in the school environment, blending the change implementation vision with the district mandated structures. Measures in the SEP will be based on various satellite and map data, in addition to the street data carried forward from our school actor engagement series (Datnow & Park, 2019; Park, 2018; Safir & Dugan, 2021). Satellite data includes provincial and district assurance measures as well as demographic metrics, while map data will encompass student literacy and numeracy learner profile data and student learning factor measures, such as environmental, medical, and ecological factors. Performance indicators and measurement tools will be collaboratively selected, carefully positioned to increase student success while leveraging instructional improvements at a school-wide level.

### ***Monitoring Activities Spanning Acceleration and Institutionalization Steps***

Moving into the acceleration step, grade team action research inquiry for equity collaborations have been designed to hold BES staff accountable for the educational debt caused by lowered expectations for students with diverse and/or complex learning needs at our school (Datnow & Park, 2018). Staff investment via participatory action research brings staff and students together in partnerships to improve teaching and learning, premised on the belief that

BES students are valuable experts with high change making potential (Durrant, 2019; Safir & Dugan, 2021). While solutions to educational equity may appear elusive, agentic practices to uncover root causes and reimagine inclusive, engaging instructional strategies (Safir & Dugan, 2021) can be leveraged through spiral of inquiry for equity cycles (Halbert & Kaser, 2022).

Scanning for each inquiry cycle will launch with staff teams asking students to share the names of two school staff and why they are important to the student (Halbert & Kaser, 2022), as well as one or two questions targeting students' academic disposition regarding respective grade team inquiry topics. For example, students may be asked to share how reading adds value to their lives or why they feel math is important in everyday life. During school provided release time, these data, scaffolded with learner profile and academic metrics, will be organized within each grade team to determine each team's narrowed focus on a complex issue that will positively impact their students. Focusing inwards towards each grade team's practices, grade team members will examine their overarching practices, attitudes, and assumptions that may be contributing to the situation in both positive and problematic ways (Halbert & Kaser, 2022). Taking up this responsibility will then involve new learning and capacity building to inform next steps and new practices.

Grade teams will engage in collaborative team teaching, including teachers, support staff, school principals, LSTs, and, where possible, parents and community experts, engaging in new practices, building capacity, and monitoring student engagement and academic responses across each six-week inquiry cycle. Finally, monitoring for impact will involve grade teams assessing for differences and improvements that resulted from the process, before restarting the cycle again (Halbert & Kaser, 2022). Sharing amongst grade teams at staff meetings and at SEP retreats will mobilize new learning and knowledge, with the lead change team involving the entire staff in

celebrating each milestone, as well as broadcasting progress externally throughout the school community over the course of the school year.

### *Annual Evaluative Activities Spanning Across Change Framework Steps*

Broad school actor involvement complements and leverages evaluative learning, change, and impact for staff, students, and the BES school community (Markiewicz and Patrick, 2016). Across the CIP, the multiple inquiry processes embedded in the SEP design and action research inquiry spirals seek to provide ongoing sources of monitoring data. Given the transformative and participative design of the M&E plan, participant interviews, engagement series session studies, and retreat session feedback sources provide integral school actor voice in this mixed method M&E design (Mertens, 2019). With periodic evaluations biannually in November and March, the overarching annual evaluation will take place each May, employing various evaluative metrics.

Evaluation methods will include mandated district and provincial assurance metrics, final annual SEP goal performance results, and select student, parent, and staff survey tools, each of which will be buttressed by ongoing triangulated monitoring data sources over the course of the year. Tools specifically targeting the evaluative questions in this M&E plan will provide measures to determine impact of this CIP. Eman and Hendawy Al-Mahdy's (2022) inclusive school climate scale will be administered both prior to change implementation and at the end of the school year. This tool evaluates three key metrics of inclusive schools, including teacher prosocial motivation towards inclusive practices, inclusive leadership, and academic excellence, addressing each of the four evaluation questions in this M&E plan. Additionally, Carter and colleagues' (2012) student engagement instrument and Safir and Dugan's (2021) student agency survey will be conducted annually over a three-year period, seeking to evaluate the efficacy of pedagogical practices and increased student opportunities. Lastly, staff will collaborate to



determine an appropriate efficacy tool to measure growth. Possible evaluative instruments may include Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy's (2000) Teacher Collective Efficacy Instrument or Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2001) Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale.

### **Chapter Summary**

The final chapter of this DiP outlines how the vision for change will transition BES's current reality towards an aspired, equitable future defined by transformation, compassion, and agency. A detailed change implementation plan charts various engagements designed to shift mindsets towards an ethic of social justice, to awaken a sense of collective efficacy and responsibility, and to harness agentic initiative to close the opportunity gap at BES. To narrate this journey, a communication plan has been crafted to showcase the need for and development of a school culture in transition, reciprocally sharing within and beyond the school as momentum for equity and belonging is nurtured. Finally, a thoughtful monitoring and evaluation plan has been created to establish practices involving assessment for and as learning to improve inclusivity and equity-oriented action in our school.

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

Next steps in this improvement process involve putting the envisioned plan into lived action. This vulnerable yet brave shift will require mindful attention to ensure that adherence to the linear and cyclical processes in this organizational improvement plan does not interfere with the critical importance of leading equity-driven, status quo disrupting change (Durrant, 2019). School actors must understand that engaging in deep and, at times, uncomfortable learning can be best leveraged by strong collaboration and shared commitment to pursue authentic equity and quality learning for all students (Halbert & Kaser, 2022). On this learning journey, I have come to integrate equity work within pedagogical practice (Safir & Dugan, 2021). My leadership

vision will be achieved when every student receives whatever they need to reach their full potential, academically, socially, and emotionally, in an environment of care, compassion, and belonging (Aguilar, 2020). Alongside this, achievement of this vision will be realized when BES staff's relational and pedagogical practices offer rich evidence of this commitment to equity and high expectations of students across each classroom at Blueridge Elementary School.

A critical step towards this change will involve a socially just reconceptualization of the who, what, where, when, and why of data, steeped in an equity-oriented agenda. Akin to Simon Sinek's golden circle (2010), the why of data use must be to uncover a full picture of students (Datnow & Park, 2018), using context, intentionality, and street data evidence (Durrant, 2019; Safir & Dugan, 2019) to see their strengths and potential, individually and collectively. Prioritizing students' unique and shared humanity, rather than any challenges or differences they may bring, must be central to our work at BES (LaVenía & Lasater, 2023).

In listening and learning through shared practice, BES staff must choose to see our work as a source of learning, enjoyment, and inspiration, taking up individual and collective agency to stretch opportunities for increased influence and expanded capacities (Durrant, 2019; Safir & Dugan, 2021; Shields, 2022). As social cognitive theory adopts an agentic perspective to learning and change (Bandura, 2001), future steps will hopefully see BES staff constructing environments for both adult and student learners to flourish in our school. In the context of this PoP, future considerations around agency will ideally extend the development of agentic practices to the students, themselves. Staff and students working collaboratively to harness our elementary students' valued expertise as change makers in the quest for equity-oriented change (Safir & Dugan, 2021) will serve our school now, and our larger community for years to come.

Imagining and living the possibilities at BES will require this change implementation

plan to be the first iteration of many, as inclusion and equity are best conceptualized as a journey without end. As staff gain experience through this plan, the work will deepen, making wider challenges no longer feel so far out of reach (Halbert & Kaser, 2022). Borrowing from Apple (2009), the idea of researchers as storytellers will remind us to use rich, varied data sources to share the counternarrative of this change as a key communication strategy, reaching beyond our community to seek connection with other schools (Halbert & Kaser, 2022). Through this connection, a network of possibilities may be realized (Durrant, 2019). Mobilizing the knowledge of opportunity, possibility, and equity make the pedagogical strategically more political (Durrant, 2019) giving voice to values regarding inclusive change, starting at an elementary school level. Actively constructing environments to optimize our collective agency towards continuous improvements will bridge us from imagining possibilities to living them.

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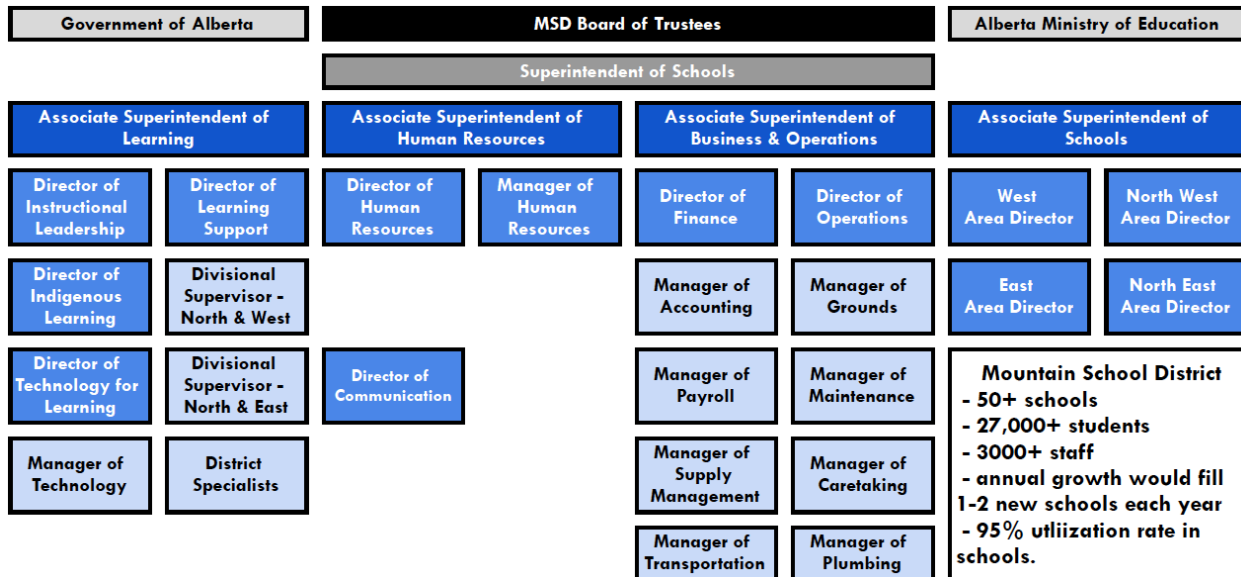


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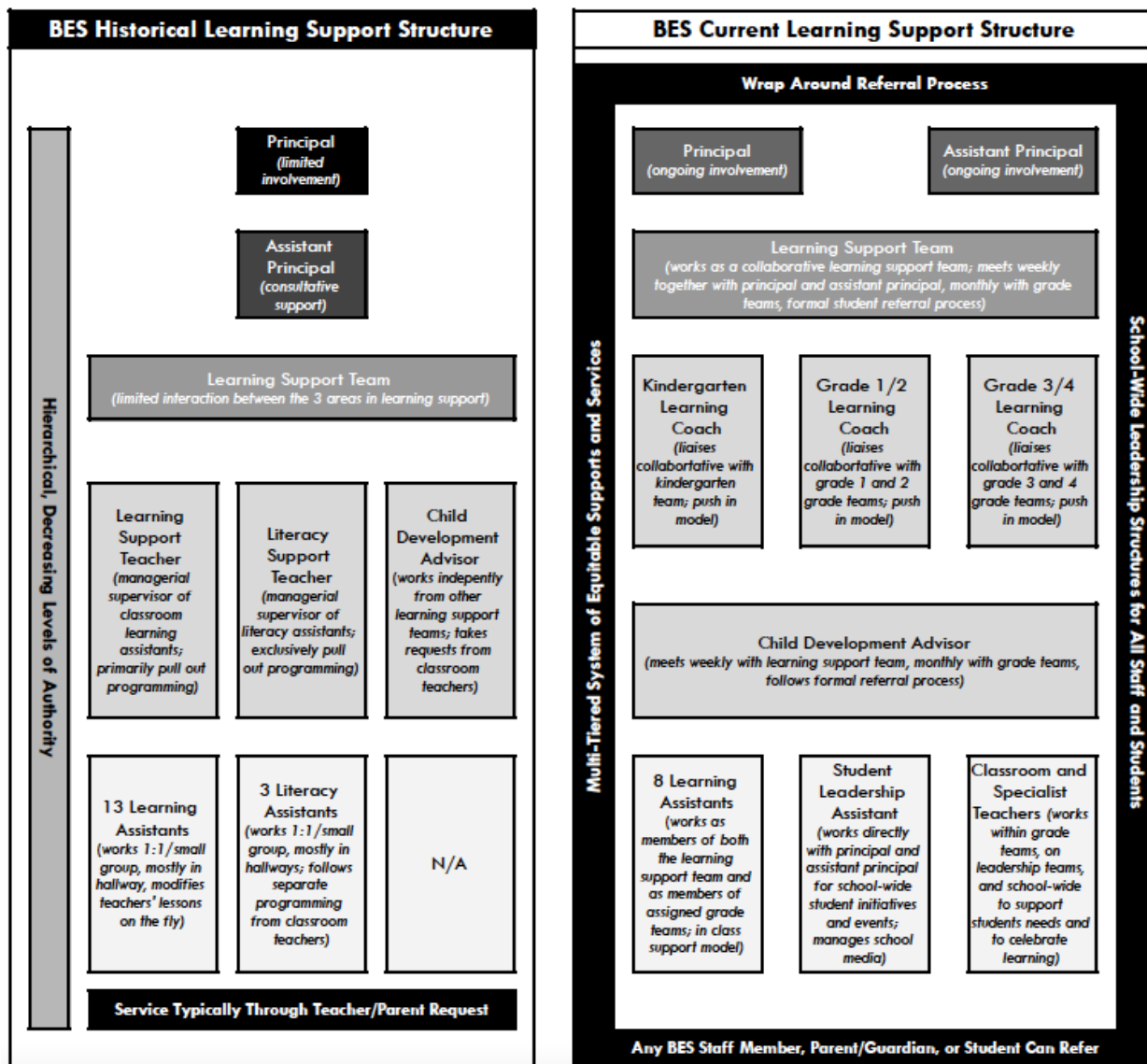
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### Appendix A: Mountain School District’s Organizational Structure



*Note.* Adapted from Mountain School District. (2023e). *Superintendent Delegation of Responsibilities* [Citation information withheld for anonymization purposes.]

Appendix B: Blueridge Elementary School’s Learning Support Transformation



*Note.* Since the change in school principals in 2020, a shift in learning support structures transitioned from the BES Historical Learning Support Structure on the left to the BES Current Learning Support Structure on the right.

Appendix C: Blueridge Elementary School’s Transformed Shared Leadership Model







**Grade/Role Based Leadership Team Organization**

Kindergarten Team	Grade 1 Team	Grade 2 Team	Grade 3 Team	Grade 4 Team	Specialist Team	Learning Support Team	Office Team
Kindergarten Classroom Teachers	Grade 1 Classroom Teachers	Grade 2 Classroom Teachers	Grade 3 Classroom Teachers	Grade 4 Classroom Teachers	Physical Education Teacher	Learning Coaches	Principal
Kindergarten Learning Assistants	Grade 1 Learning Assistants	Grade 2 Learning Assistants	Grade 1 Learning Assistants	Grade 4 Learning Assistants	Music Teacher	Child Development Advisor	Assistant Principal
						Student Leadership Lead	Secretary III
							Secretary II

Budget & Operations Team	Indigenous Learning Circle	Literacy and Numeracy Team	Positive Behaviour Support Team	Technology Learning Team	Emergent Leadership Teams	Staff Social Support Team	School Council & Fundraising Teams
Kinder Teacher	Kinder Teacher	Kinder Teacher	Kinder Teacher	Kinder Teacher	Principal Team	Secretary III	Council Chair
Grade 1 Teacher	Grade 1 Teacher	Grade 1 Teacher	Grade 1 Teacher	Grade 1 Teacher	Learning Support Team	Secretary II	Fundraising Chair
Grade 2 Teacher	Grade 2 Teacher	Grade 2 Teacher	Grade 2 Teacher	Grade 2 Teacher	Teachers	Classroom Teachers	Treasurer
Grade 3 Teacher	Grade 3 Teacher	Grade 3 Teacher	Grade 3 Teacher	Grade 3 Teacher	Office Team	Learning Assts	Secretary
Grade 4 Teacher	Grade 4 Teacher	Grade 4 Teacher	Grade 4 Teacher	Grade 4 Teacher	Parents	Assistant Principal	Principal
Learning Assistant	Learning Coach	Learning Coach	PE Teacher	Music Teacher	Students	Principal	Teacher
Assistant Principal	Assistant Principal	Assistant Principal	Assistant Principal	Assistant Principal	Community Partners	Learning Coach	Parents
Principal	Principal	Principal	Principal	Principal	District Staff	PE Teacher	Trustees

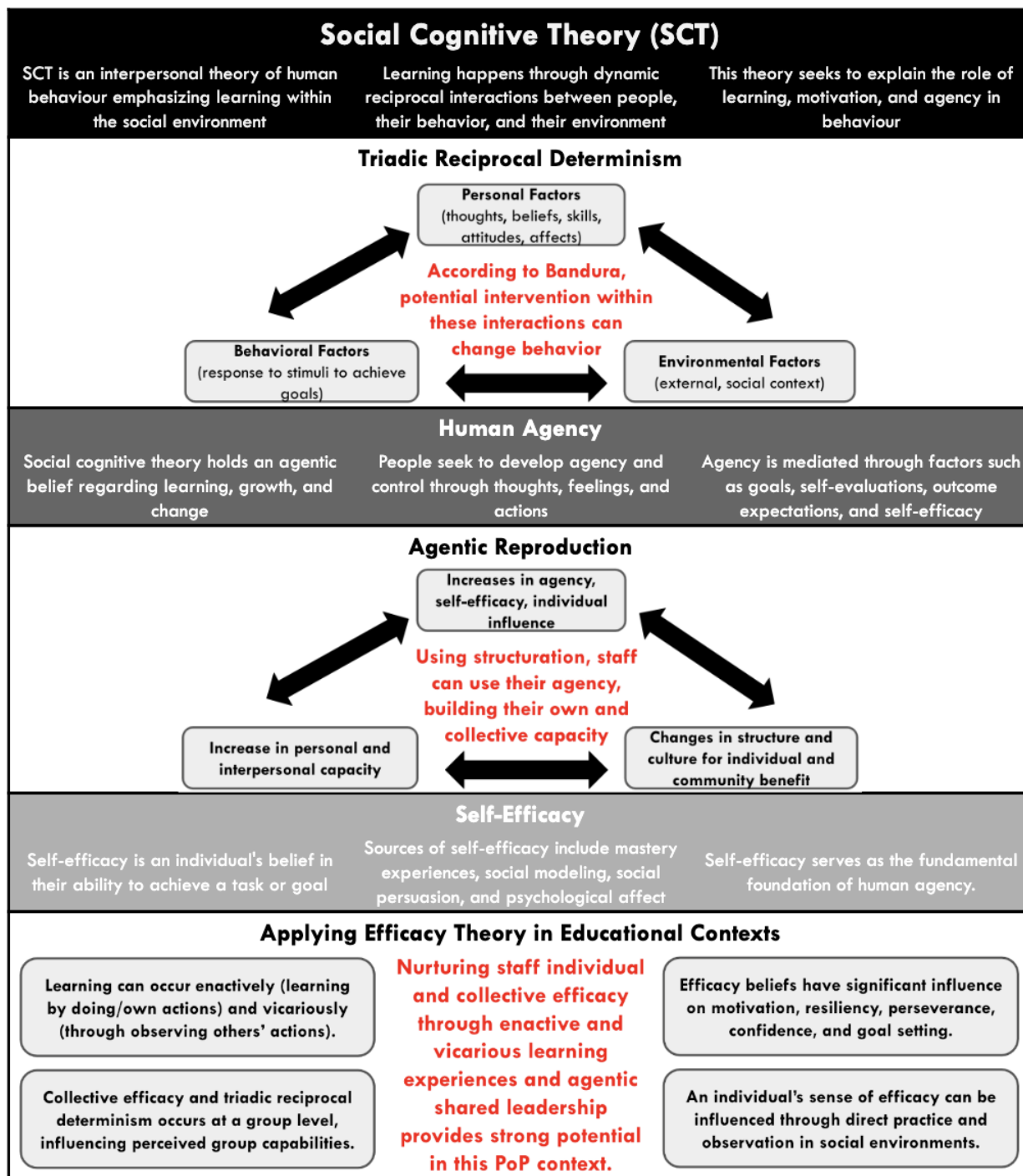
**Staff Selected Leadership Team Organization**

### Appendix D: Blueridge Elementary School PESTEL Analysis

<b>P</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>L</b>
					
<b>Political</b>	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Technological</b>	<b>Environmental</b>	<b>Legal</b>
Conservative provincial government	Provincial changes to funding structures and authority	Pandemic impacts still evident for learning loss and attendance	District shifts towards increased digitization for staff & parents	Board infrastructure challenges due to rapid growth	New curriculum roll out starting in 2022
Neo-conservative provincial landscape	Decreased provincial funding to districts & schools	High senior turnover at district	Low staff comfort with technology use	School over 100% capacity levels; school space challenges	Ministerial Order on Student Learning updated
Diverse perspectives at district level	Changing school based funding allocations by district	Minimal school staff turnover	Learning assistant had no tech access; iPads provided in 2021	Shifting learning locations from pull out to push in supports	Professional Practice Standards established in Alberta in 2019
All levels- structural functionalist epistemology	As student numbers and diversity increase, school funding by district decreases	Change in school principal - 2020	Substitution tech use according to SAMR for student learning	Pandemic practices change space utilization in school	Province creates standards for seclusion, restraints, time outs in 2019
Emerging parental concerns with increased school diversity/complexity	As student numbers and diversity increase, school funding by district decreases substantially as funds are redirected within division	Increasing student numbers, diversities, and complexities	Use of technology to create and monitor student data, learning factors, progress	Changing understanding of universal learning environments is emerging	Changing reporting process for Teacher Code of Conduct concerns and complaints in 2022

*Note.* This PESTEL analysis depicts the external factors driving the need for change at Blueridge Elementary School. The term and acronym was taken from Deszca, G., Ingols, C., & Cawsey, T. (2020). *Organizational change: An action-oriented toolkit* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

## Appendix E: Social Cognitive Theory, Agency, and Efficacy Overview

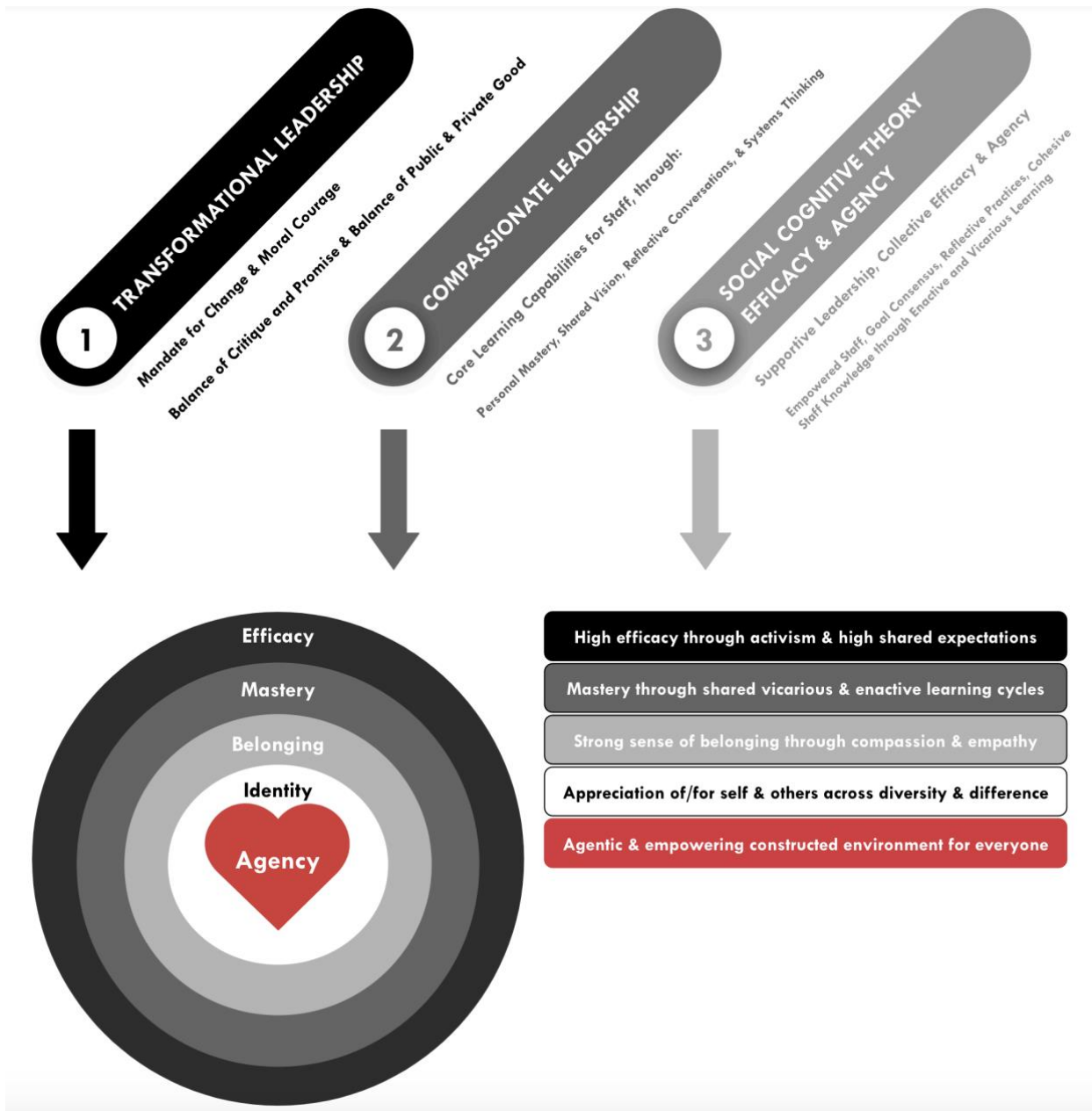


*Note.* This overview is adapted from Schunk, D. & Usher, E. (2019). Social cognitive theory and motivation. In R. M. Ryan (Ed.) *The Oxford handbook of human motivation* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). (pp.10-26).

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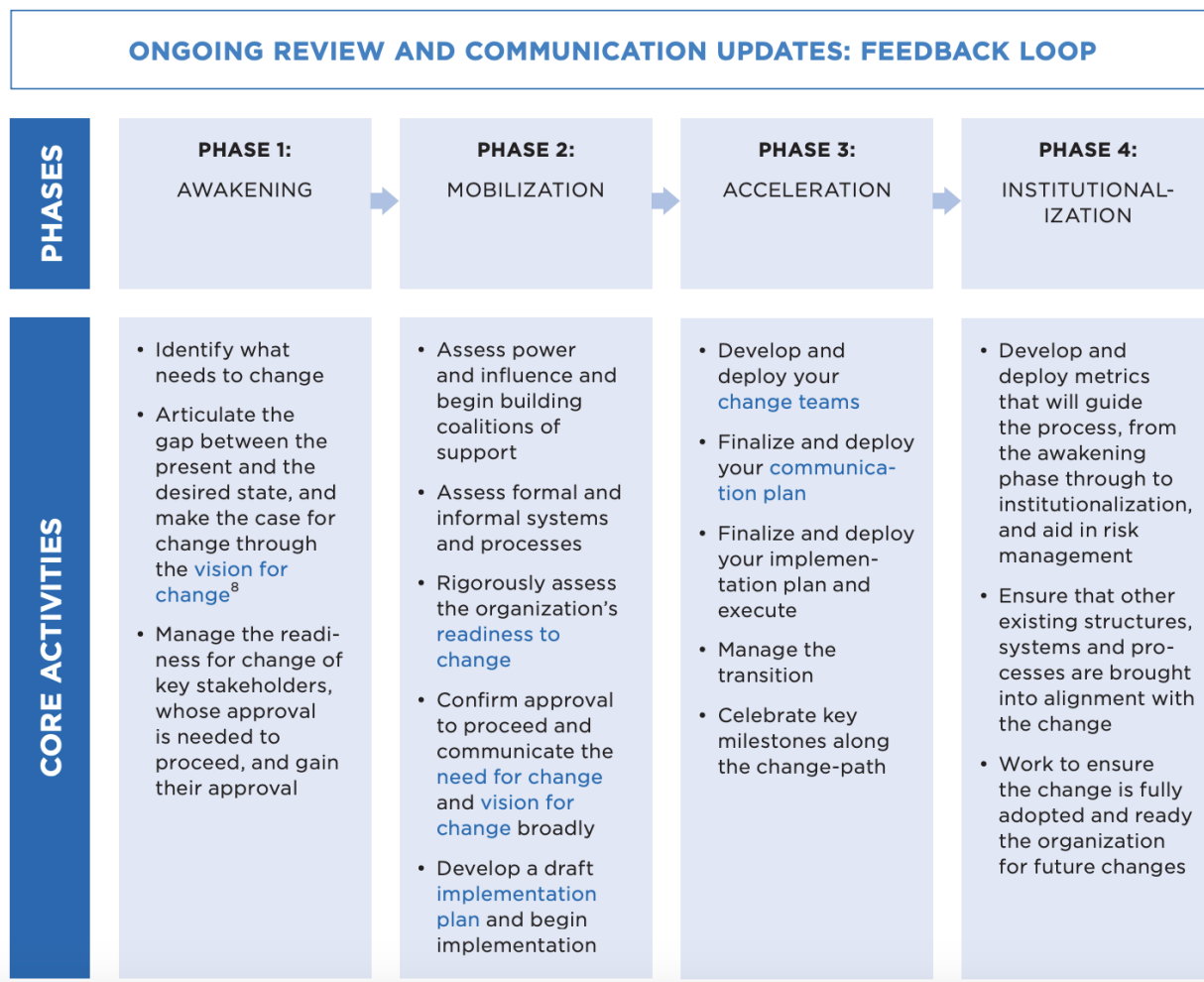


### Appendix F: Leadership Framework



*Note.* Agency graphic adapted from Safir, S., & Dugan, J. (2021). *Street data: A next-generation model for equity, pedagogy, and school transformation.* Corwin.

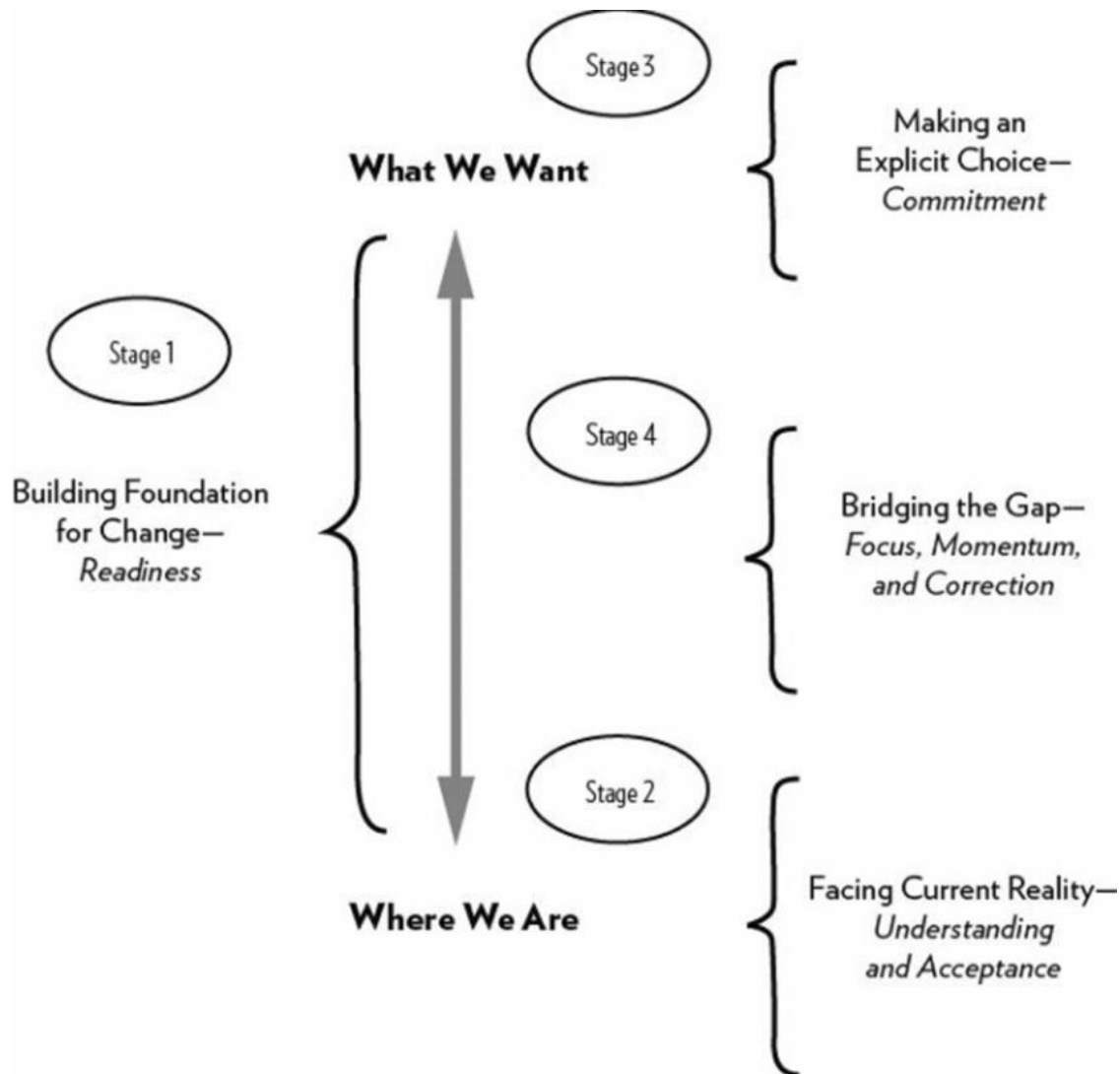
## Appendix G: The Four Phases (Steps) of the Change Path Model



*Note.* From Deszca, G. (2020). *Organizational change management: The change-path model for ensuring organizational sustainability*. Chartered Professional Accountants Canada.

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### Appendix H: Four Stage Leading Systemic Change Framework



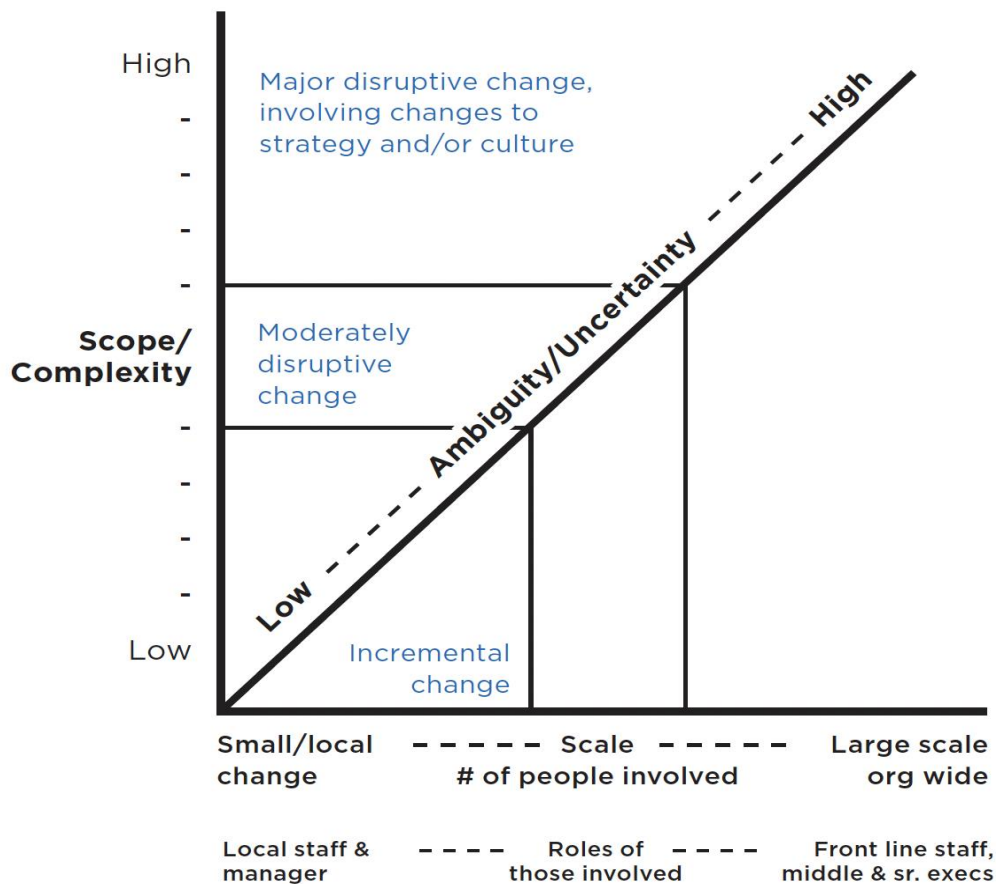
*Note.* From Stroh, D. P. (2015). *Systems thinking for social change: A practice guide to solving complex problems, avoiding unintended consequences, and achieving lasting results.* Chelsea Green Publishing.

Appendix I: Change Path Model + Creative Tension 4 Stage Change Process Framework

ONGOING FEEDBACK LOOPS - Communication Updates, Monitoring, Adjusting, Evaluating, Celebrating				
STEPS	Step 1: AWAKENING	Step 2: MOBILIZATION	Step 3: ACCELERATION	Step 4: INSTITUTIONALIZATION
<b>Goal</b>	Build an understanding of the status quo to support a foundation for change and to develop a collective readiness for change.	Help school actors make an explicit choice to consciously commit to their highest aspirations with full awareness of the costs, not just the benefits, of realizing them.	Help school actors bridge the gap between what they care deeply about, and where we are now, identifying leveraging points to increase success throughout the change implementation process.	Work with school actors to establish a process for continuous learning and expanded engagement, using each change project to support upcoming school goals and aspirations.
<b>Step Core Activities</b>	<b>Engage key school actors</b> Identify a range of school actor roles and design strategies to engage them individually and collectively regarding the status quo and the need for change	<b>Organize and analyze school actor feedback</b> Assess power and influence; assess formal and informal systems, structures, and processes	<b>Develop change teams</b> Prepare them for leading change	<b>Develop and deploy metrics</b> Use these tools to guide the change process, from awakening through to institutionalization; aid in risk management
	<b>Establish common ground of where we are NOW and what people want</b> Identify the case for status quo and create shared vision of ideal outcomes; create both/ & solutions that achieve the benefits of both or be willing to make hard trade-offs between them	<b>Rigorously assess the organization's readiness for change</b> How do different factors interact over time to support or undermine achievement of the vision?	<b>Finalize communication plan</b> Employ various school actors to review and provide feedback/voice in communication plan creation to increase shared ownership	<b>Propose and refine high-leverage interventions with community input</b> Increase awareness of how the system functions now; reinforce the chose prpose through updated goals, plans, metrics, structures and funding
	<b>Build collaborative capacity</b> Develop people's capacity to think systematically, converse about difficult issues, and take responsibility for current reality	<b>Make an explicit choice</b> Conform approval to proceed; communicate the need for change and vision for change broadly	<b>Finalize change implementation plan</b> Begin plan execution, managing the transition, responding thoughtful to expected and unexpected outcomes and barriers	<b>Achieve strategic alignment</b> Ensure that change is fully adopted and that existing structures, systems, and processes are brought into alignment with change
	<b>Manage the readiness for change</b> Collaborate with key stakeholders whose approval is needed to proceed; gain their approval	<b>Develop a draft implementation plan</b> Begin change implementation	<b>Celebrate milestones</b> Along the change path, communicate and celebrate meaningful progress across the school community	<b>Establish a process for continuous learning and outreach</b> Engage school actors, refine data to supprot new goals/metrics; evaluate/revise plans with school actor input
ONGOING FEEDBACK LOOPS - Communication Updates, Monitoring, Adjusting, Evaluating, Celebrating				

Note. Adapted from Deszca, G., Ingols, C., & Cawsey, T. (2020). *Organizational change: An action-oriented toolkit* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Sage Publications., and Stroh, D. P. (2015). *Systems thinking for social change: A practice guide to solving complex problems, avoiding unintended consequences, and achieving lasting results*. Chelsea Green Publishing.

**Appendix J: The Nature of Change**



*Note.* From Deszca, G. (2020). *Organizational change management: The change-path model for ensuring organizational sustainability*. Chartered Professional Accountants Canada.

<https://www.cpacanada.ca/en/business-and-accounting-resources/management-accounting/organizational-performance-measurement/publications/management-accounting-guidelines-mags/change-management/organizational-change-management/guideline>



**Appendix L: Shapiro and Stefkovich's (2022) Ethics of the Education Profession**



*Note.* From Shapiro, J. P., & Stefkovich, J.A. (2022). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education: Applying theoretical perspectives to complex dilemmas* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Routledge.



### Appendix M: Solution Evaluation – Time, Human, and Financial Resource Analysis

Required Resource Analysis				
Proposed Solution		Time Commitment	Human Commitment	Financial Commitment
1	PLC Development	Green	Yellow	Green
2	Coaching Supports	Red	Yellow	Red
3	Action Research Teams	Yellow	Red	Green

Required Resource Cost Key		
High	Moderate	Low
Red	Yellow	Green



### Appendix N: Solution Evaluation – Ethical Analysis

Educational Ethical Challenges Analysis						
Proposed Solution		Ethic of Care	Ethic of Justice	Ethic of Critique	Ethic of the Profession	Ethic of the Community
<b>Ethics Descriptions</b> →		Concerned with who will benefit and/or be hurt by decisions now and/or later	Concerned with the legal system, fairness, and freedom	Concerned with who has the power and who is being silenced	Concerned with professional and person code of ethics with students at the center	Concerned with involving shared decision making, including community members
1	PLC Development					
2	Coaching Supports					
3	Action Research Teams					

Educational Ethical Challenges Analysis Key		
High	Moderate	Low

*Note.* Adapted from Shapiro, J. P., & Stefkovich, J. A. (2022). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education: Applying theoretical perspectives to complex dilemmas* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.).

Routledge.

**Appendix O: Continuous Professional Development Learning Model Analysis**

Continuous Professional Develop Model Categorization								
Increasing Capacity for Professional Autonomy								
Transmission				Transitional			Transformative	
Training Model	Award-Bearing Model	Deficit Model	Cascade Model	Standards-Based Model	Coaching/Mentoring Model	Community of Practice Model	Action Research Model	Transformative Model
supports a skills-based, technocratic view of teaching to update skills and knowledge	externally validated, awards-bearing designed to standardize teaching practice	designed specifically to address a perceived deficit in teacher performance	individual teachers attend training, then cascading information to colleagues	adopting a standards and evidence based approach for demonstrable teaching practice	involving a 1:1 relationship to teacher's growing competency within the school context	based on an understanding of the added value of learning in communities for individuals and the collective	supports a collaborative alternative to passive PL models; process rather than product based, empowering CPD	a combination of CDP models using processes and conditions to support teacher-centred context-specific PL with a transformative agenda

Continuous Professional Development Proposed Solutions Key	
<b>Solution 1</b>	Community of Practice Model
<b>Solution 2</b>	Coaching/Mentoring Model
<b>Solution 3</b>	Action Research Model

Key Questions for CDP Category Analysis
1. What types of knowledge acquisition does the CDP support (procedural or propositional)?
2. Is the principle focus on individual or collective development?
3. To what extent is the CDP used as a form of accountability?
4. What capacity does the CDP allow for supporting professional autonomy?
5. Is the fundamental purpose of the CPD to provide a means of transmission or to facilitate transformative practice?

*Note.* Adapted from Kennedy, A. (2014). Models of continuing professional development: A framework for analysis, *Professional Development in Education*, 40(3), 336-351.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2014.929293> This chart shows how the continuum of increasing capacity for professional autonomy across nine continuous professional development models, highlighting the placement of each of the three proposed solutions for this PoP.

## Appendix P: INSPIRE Continuous Professional Development Analysis Framework

Core CPD Principles		Principle Descriptors	Solution 1 Communities of Practice Model	Solution 2 Coaching Model	Solution 3 Action Research
<b>I</b>	<b>Impactful</b>	An increase in students' (and teachers') overall learning is evident	Yellow	Green	Yellow
<b>N</b>	<b>Needs-Based</b>	Meets teachers needs and involves them in the decision-making process	Green	Yellow	Green
<b>S</b>	<b>Sustained</b>	Providing ongoing support and encouragement to implement new pedagogies	Green	Red	Green
<b>P</b>	<b>Peer Collaborative</b>	Provides exchanges among staff to co-construct new understandings	Yellow	Yellow	Green
<b>I</b>	<b>In Practice</b>	Involves a classroom-based focus on teaching practice, learning by doing	Yellow	Green	Green
<b>R</b>	<b>Reflective</b>	Comprehend differently, shifting to worldviews that supports student learning	Yellow	Green	Green
<b>E</b>	<b>Evaluated</b>	Supports a developing awareness of teaching's effects on student learning	Yellow	Yellow	Green

Evaluation Key	
Green	High Impact
Yellow	Moderate Impact
Red	Low Impact

Note. Adapted from Richardson, S., & Díaz Maggioli, G. (2018). *Effective professional development: Principles and best practice*. Part of the Cambridge Papers in ELT series. Cambridge University Press.

[https://www.cambridge.org/us/files/7515/7488/8530/CambridgePapersinELT\\_Teacher\\_Development\\_2018.pdf](https://www.cambridge.org/us/files/7515/7488/8530/CambridgePapersinELT_Teacher_Development_2018.pdf) This chart shows the core principles and accompanying descriptors used to evaluate continuous professional development models potential for efficacious and transformative capacity building.

## Appendix Q: The Spiral of Inquiry








*Note.* From Halbert, J., & Kaser, L. (2020). Introduction to the spring special edition on spirals of inquiry. *Transformative Educational Leadership Journal*, Spring 2020.

<https://telp.educ.ubc.ca/intro-to-spring-special-edition-on-spirals-of-inquiry/>

### Appendix R: Blueridge Elementary School's School Actor Analysis Chart

School Actor Role:	Key Values/Interests Relevant to Change:	Values Fit with Change:	Influences and Interdependencies:
Assistant Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- very concerned by opportunity gap</li> <li>- wants to shift BES's teaching and learning model</li> <li>- authentic care for students</li> </ul>	Good fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- works very closely with principal and learning support team members</li> <li>- new to BES this year</li> <li>- not yet "trusted" by teachers and parents yet due to new position</li> </ul>
Learning Support Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- very concerned by opportunity gap</li> <li>- wants to support low achieving students</li> <li>- authentic care for students</li> </ul>	Good fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- works very closely with principal team</li> <li>- 2 of 3 LSTs hired by principal</li> <li>- respected by teaching and support staff for expertise and kindness</li> <li>- trusted by students and parents</li> </ul>
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- varying levels of concern for opportunity gap</li> <li>- wants work/life balance</li> <li>- tight grade team dynamics</li> <li>- wants additional human supports for diverse learners</li> <li>- authentic care for students</li> </ul>	Mixed amongst various teams/teachers; mostly neutral to good fit; a few poor fits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- long-standing, close-knit groupings amongst various teachers/staff</li> <li>- history of limited administrative involvement in instructional practices</li> <li>- increased teacher leadership roles, involvement, and voice well received by several influential teachers</li> <li>- small group (2-3) of oppositional teachers with strong personalities and school history</li> </ul>
Support Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- concerned by opportunity gap yet nervous to be "worked out" of a job</li> <li>- has high autonomy in working with learners with complex needs</li> <li>- authentic care for students</li> </ul>	Mixed between neutral to good fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- various "cliques" in support staff group</li> <li>- mixed feelings about increased teacher involvement in programming for students with diverse and/or complex needs</li> <li>- varied interactions/relationships with teachers from close to distant/limited</li> </ul>
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- diverse, split student self-perception about self-efficacy as a student</li> <li>- enjoyment of school-wide engagement events</li> <li>- student recognition of academic programming differences</li> </ul>	Mixed between neutral to good fit depending on diversity and learning factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- almost every student has a close relationship with 1+ BES staff member</li> <li>- some students appreciate the "pull out" model of student services, while others do not want to leave their classrooms</li> <li>- students enjoy working with various school staff, including the principal and learning support teams and support staff</li> </ul>
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- varied parental engagement, limited involvement of parents of students with diverse needs</li> <li>- enjoyment of school-wide engagement events</li> </ul>	Mixed, ranging from good to neutral to poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- many actively involved families are single income families; frequent volunteerism</li> <li>- many parents actively network at drop off and pick up from BES and on social media</li> <li>- several strong parent/staff friendships</li> <li>- limited participation from families</li> </ul>

## Appendix S: Transformative Knowledge Mobilization Plan

Change Path Model's Timing and Communication Plan (Deszca et al., 2020)		Lavis et al.'s (2003) Framework for Knowledge Transfer				
		Knowledge Transfer Message(s)	Knowledge Transfer Messenger(s)	Knowledge Transfer Target Audience(s)	Knowledge Transfer & Communication Process(es)	Knowledge Transfer Effect(s) and Impact(s)
Awakening	Pre-Change					
	Developing the Need & Vision for Change	Share plans with select district staff members; demonstrate alignment with district strategic and educational plans	Principal Team	Area Director District Specialist Team Director of Learning Support	Sharing School Education Plan (SEP) data/metrics; sharing comprehensive learner profile data; draft change plan	Demonstrated strategic alignment between district priorities and CIP; demonstrated connection to research and evidence
Mobilization	Midstream Change and Milestone Communication	Communicate broad data/information regarding student achievement; solicit feedback from all school actor roles; begin to craft shared vision of current and aspired realities	<b>Key Messengers:</b> Principal Team Learning Support Team  <b>Supportive Facilitators:</b> Interested Staff Members	Teachers Support Staff Students Parents District Specialist Team	Interactive, face to face dialogue captured by facilitators; supplemental communications through video narrative, weekly information bulletin, weekly newsletters, staff meetings, student announcements, SEP	Internal and external school actors engage in the vision through moral imperative to meet the needs of all students; staff leadership, collaboration, and agency leverage motivation and innovative approaches.
		Organize engagement feedback to assess degrees of deficit thinking, influence change readiness; finalize implementation plan	<b>Key Messengers:</b> Principal Team Learning Support Team  <b>Subsequent Messengers:</b> Grade Team Most Responsible Persons (MRPs)	<b>Primary Target:</b> Teachers Support Staff  <b>Subsequent Target:</b> Students District Specialist Team	Engagement feedback feeds forward to student pedagogical engagement strategies; grade teams begin collaboration around how to use rich, triangulated data sources to brainstorm ideas for action research cycles	Teachers and support staff understand rationale around opportunity gap and own responsibility for increasing meaningful opportunities for underserved students; changing practices is accepted amongst grade teams/school staff
Acceleration	Midstream Change and Milestone Communication	Educative action research inquiry cycles initiated as capacity building approach; outline/organize resources; share cycle timelines	<b>Key Messengers:</b> Grade Teams (teachers and support staff) <b>Supportive Messengers:</b> Learning Support Team Principal Team	<b>Primary Target:</b> Underserved Students  <b>Peripheral Target:</b> Student Grade Cohort District Specialist Team	Collaborative response meetings kick off action research cycles; sharing within/ beyond grade teams regarding action research foci and leveraged resources/supports; student response to shifted practices shared in weekly communications, social media stories, conversations, meetings	Action research inquiry cycles are underway; grade teams feel supported by principal and learning support teams; student engagement/ learning increases evident; teacher collective efficacy increases; transformative, equity-oriented thinking culture begins
Institutionalization		Confirming and Celebrating the Change	School-wide monitoring of ongoing impacts of action research inquiry cycles; ongoing monitoring and sharing of impacts widely communicated; learning prompts refinements to pedagogical practices	Grade Teams (Teachers and Support Staff) Students Learning Support Team Principal Team	Parents Area Director Director of Learning Support District Specialists Community Partners School Community at large	Grade teams sharing internally at retreat sessions, showcasing learnings and student responses; School Education Plan updates and learning journey narrative videos storyboard unfolding school experience widely distributed; ongoing action research structure optimized for further use/development

Note. Adapted from Lavis, J. N., Robertson, D., Woodside, J. M., McLeod, C. B., Abelson, J., & Group, T. K. T. S. (2003). How can research organisations more effectively transfer research knowledge to decision makers? *The Milbank Quarterly*, 81(2), 221-248.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.t01-1-00052> and Deszca, G., Ingols, C., & Cawsey, T. (2020).

*Organizational change: An action-oriented toolkit* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Sage Publications., and Stroh, D. P. (2015). *Systems thinking for social change: A practice guide to solving complex problems, avoiding unintended consequences, and achieving lasting results*. Chelsea Green Publishing.

### Appendix T: Iceberg Model Metaphor



*Note.* From Stroh, D. P. (2015). *Systems thinking for social change: A practice guide to solving complex problems, avoiding unintended consequences, and achieving lasting results.* Chelsea Green Publishing.