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Leadership Connection Rubric

Advancing Equity and Justice in Schools

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Third Edition

Leadership Connection Rubric

Advancing Equity and Justice in Schools

Third Edition

**Lynda Tredway, Rebecca Cheung, Soraya Sablo Sutton, Viet Nguyen,
Daphannie Stephens, Linda Leader-Picone, Janette Hernandez**



**Berkeley School of Education
University of California, Berkeley**

Berkeley School of Education
University of California, Berkeley

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Preface

A Call to Action

The current context requires leaders who are savvy about local and national political tensions and strategic in their approach to creating a more just future for the students, families, and communities they serve.

The third edition of the *Leadership Connection Rubric* was developed amidst the increasingly polarized national context that has challenged our conception of equitable schooling and threatened our democracy. Holding steadfast to our commitment to preparing, inducting, and supporting inclusive, justice-oriented school leaders, in this edition, we aim to respond to the current climate that leaders must traverse. As our students and alumni grappled with crises at the site and systems levels, upheavals from the COVID pandemic, and reckonings around racial justice, we found ourselves testing the strength of our conceptual frameworks for social justice leadership. What does it mean to lead in this context? What skills and dispositions are needed for the current and future education landscape?

Rather than returning to “normal” operations, the current context requires leaders who are savvy about local and national political tensions and strategic in their approach to creating a more just future for the students, families, and communities they serve. This edition presents a more complex and nuanced approach to social justice leadership that serves as a call to action for aspiring and veteran leaders alike to use their positional authority in service of improving equitable outcomes for all students while disrupting the system’s tendency to replicate historical inequities.

Development of the Rubric

The Rubric was originally developed from 2008 to 2010 through a research-based, collaborative process. The Elements, Descriptors of Practice, and Indicators of Practice reflect particular attention to the race, class, and equity characteristics and concerns that are not always represented in leadership studies or rubrics.

A rubric is always a work in progress. The first draft underwent field tests which yielded feedback that was incorporated into the first edition (2011). The second edition of the Rubric, published in 2015, incorporated the collective input of our students, alumni, faculty, and field supervisors who used the original edition in their teaching, learning, or practice.

The Third Edition

The third edition benefits from our work over nine years in the Berkeley School of Education's Principal Leadership Institute and Leadership Support Program, as well as with the Leaders for Equity and Democracy EdD program and 21CSLA (21st Century California School Leadership Academy). This edition contains more inclusive language, a recognition of white supremacy, an awareness of the current political climate, and a call for leaders to attend to the social-emotional developmental needs of children and adults. In addition, the third version of the Rubric references concepts such as anti-racist leadership, the social construction of race, and the impact of bias and microaggressions on school culture and climate.

Berkeley School of Education Leadership Programs

Since its publication, the *Leadership Connection Rubric* has been instrumental in all areas of our work at UC Berkeley's Leadership Programs, which include the Principal Leadership Institute, a fourteen-month Master's + Preliminary Administrative Services Credential program; the Leadership Support Program, a two-year induction program that culminates with the issuance of the Professional Clear Administrative Services Credential; and Leaders for Equity and Democracy, a three-year educational doctorate program. Since 2020, Leadership Programs has also been the home base for the 21CSLA State Center and Bay Area Regional Academy.

Leadership Programs

- **Principal Leadership Institute (PLI)**
- **Leadership Support Program (LSP)**
- **Leaders for Equity and Democracy (LEAD)**
- **21CSLA State Center and Bay Area Regional Academy**
- **Educational Leadership Learning Accelerator (The Accelerator)**

21CSLA provides high-quality professional learning for teacher leaders, site-level leaders, and systems leaders throughout the state of California. In 2024, Leadership Programs launched the Educational Leadership Learning Accelerator to extend the program’s impact on education beyond degree and grant-funded programs.

Acknowledgments

The third edition (2024) of the *Leadership Connection Rubric* was revised by Soraya Sablo Sutton, Principal Leadership Institute (PLI) Program Director, and Viet Nguyen, Leadership Support Program (LSP) Coordinator, with substantial input from Jabari Mahiri, Leadership Programs Faculty Director, and Rebecca Cheung, Assistant Dean of Leadership Development. PLI instructors Travis Bristol, Tolani Britton, Luz Cazares, Jessica Evans, Özge Hacifazlıoğlu, Sonal Patel, Nives Wetzel de Cedié, and Woo Williams Zou supported the revision process by ensuring alignment of the Rubric with PLI course content and key leadership concepts. Lihi Rosenthal, Director of the Leaders for Equity and Democracy (LEAD) EdD program, provided critical feedback and input throughout the revision. Previous contributors include authors Lynda Tredway, Daphannie

Stephens, Linda Leader-Picone, and Janette Hernandez. The founding PLI faculty director, Norton Grubb, provided substantial input to the initial versions of the Rubric.

Our students, alumni, and staff are important collaborators in our work, providing insight into the daily operations of administrators, including the skills, dispositions, and competencies that leaders must possess in order to meet leadership challenges. Our leadership coaches generously offer their perspectives and feedback based on their firsthand experience as veteran school and district administrators, as well as their daily coaching interactions with our students.

Lastly, thank you to the *Leadership Connection Rubric* production team: Jen Burke, Becca Minkoff, Audra Puchalski, Mayra Reyes, and Shoshana Seid-Green.

A principal's effects are felt by potentially hundreds of students in a school year. Indeed, it is difficult to envision an investment with a higher ceiling on its potential return than improving principal leadership.

—Jason A. Grissom et al., 2021

We have to tell the stories of those who are most marginalized in our society and let those stories frame the narratives of what we focus on as equity-conscious leaders. —Jabari Mahiri, 2024

Rubric Overview

Rubric Elements

1 Presence and Attitude

2 Personal Identity and Relationships

3 Equity and Advocacy

4 Curriculum and Instruction

5 Organization and Systems

6 Change and Coherence

7 Continuous Improvement



The seven Rubric Elements are essential building blocks of effective leadership. Elements 1, 2, and 3 focus on personal and professional perspectives and attributes. Elements 4, 5, 6, and 7 center the operational practices of leadership.

Building Blocks of Effective Leadership

The *Leadership Connection Rubric* guides effective leadership preparation, induction, ongoing support, coaching, and supervision of school and district leaders. The seven Rubric Elements are essential building blocks of effective leadership. The Elements identify fundamental leadership competencies, which work in concert to create a model of effective, justice-oriented leadership. The Elements serve as umbrella leadership competencies that aspiring and practicing leaders should demonstrate. Descriptors of Practice provide concrete examples of the ways in which the Elements play out as administrators enact their leadership. Indicators of Practice offer even finer-tuned examples of discrete leadership moves that are evident when leaders successfully enact each competency.

Elements 1, 2, and 3 focus on essential personal and professional perspectives and attributes. Effective social justice leaders recognize the importance of interrogating their own personal identities and positionalities as a way to increase their self-awareness and deepen their understanding of social factors that impact their leadership. Elements 1, 2, and 3 invite this form of personal reflection while also prioritizing the leader developing their own vision of equity and advocacy on behalf of the communities they serve.

Elements 4, 5, 6, and 7 center the operational practices of leadership, including instructional leadership, organizational coherence, fiscal monitoring and management, attending to school culture, engagement in disciplinary and restorative practices, and fostering a climate of continuous improvement. Aspiring and practicing leaders learn the technical aspects of these competencies during leader preparation and induction while building on the foundational personal competencies located in Elements 1, 2, and 3. Effective leadership relies on the inter-relationship and continuous improvement of all seven Elements. Leaders committed to social justice and equity regularly engage in reflection on their knowledge, skills, and dispositions as they continue to deepen and broaden their effectiveness.

Rubric at a Glance

Element 1 Presence and Attitude

Element 2 Personal Identity and Relationships

Element 3 Equity and Advocacy

Element Summary

Communicate a compelling presence and a steadfast belief and hope in the power of the possible.

Demonstrate personal and professional self-awareness and nourish trusting relationships in a diverse learning organization.

Advocate for equitable academic, civic, and social-emotional outcomes for students who have been historically underserved by schools and society.

Descriptor of Practice

1.1 Professional Imprint

2.1 Self-Awareness

3.1 Personal Commitment

Indicators of Practice

- 1.1.1 Core Values
- 1.1.2 Vision
- 1.1.3 Critical Resilience

- 2.1.1 Identity
- 2.1.2 Power and Privilege
- 2.1.3 Equity Talk

- 3.1.1 Equity Framework
- 3.1.2 Justice Orientation
- 3.1.3 Equity Data

Descriptor of Practice

1.2 Flexibility

2.2 Integrity

3.2 Democratic Leadership

Indicators of Practice

- 1.2.1 Reframing
- 1.2.2 Buffering
- 1.2.3 Brokering

- 2.2.1 Discernment and Action
- 2.2.2 Decision-Making
- 2.2.3 Reflection

- 3.2.1 Civic Goal
- 3.2.2 Inclusive Structures: Adults
- 3.2.3 Inclusive Structures: Students

Descriptor of Practice

1.3 Demeanor

2.3 Interdependence

3.3 Advocacy

Indicators of Practice

- 1.3.1 Emotional Acuity
- 1.3.2 Cultural Awareness and Adaptation
- 1.3.3 Stance and Tone

- 2.3.1 Fostering Connection and Trust
- 2.3.2 Optimizing and Maintaining an Asset-Based Perspective
- 2.3.3 Culturally Sustaining and Inclusive Practices
- 2.3.4 Steadfast Engagement in Civic Discourse

- 3.3.1 Leader as Advocate
- 3.3.2 Community Asset Mapping
- 3.3.3 Collective Advocacy

Element 4
Curriculum and Instruction

Cultivate high expectations and ensure durable academic, civic, and social-emotional learning outcomes for students and adults so they can thrive.

4.1 Learning Environment

- 4.1.1 Expectations
- 4.1.2 Knowledge Base
- 4.1.3 Actionable Feedback

4.2 Standards, Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment

- 4.2.1 Core Content Standards
- 4.2.2 Opportunity to Learn Content Standards
- 4.2.3 Equitable Curricular Content
- 4.2.4 Evidence-Based Practice

4.3 Professional Learning

- 4.3.1 Adult Learning
- 4.3.2 Formative Feedback
- 4.3.3 Teacher Outcomes
- 4.3.4 Instructional Supervision and Evaluation

Element 5
Organization and Systems

Align systems, structures, and resources that sustain an environment that centers equitable student outcomes.

5.1 Organizational Perspective

- 5.1.1 Ecological Mapping
- 5.1.2 Organizational Capacity
- 5.1.3 Systems Leadership

5.2 Structures

- 5.2.1 Operations
- 5.2.2 Governance and Legal Structures
- 5.2.3 Resource Management
- 5.2.4 Discipline Systems
- 5.2.5 Intentional Inclusion of Family and Community

5.3 Monitoring

- 5.3.1 Organizational Identity
- 5.3.2 Information Flow
- 5.3.3 Prioritization

Element 6
Change and Coherence

Engage all constituents in change efforts that respond collectively and coherently to the assets and challenges in schools and communities.

6.1 Assessing Organizational Readiness

- 6.1.1 Preparation for Change
- 6.1.2 Approach to Learning
- 6.1.3 Building Capacity

6.2 Collaborative Goals and Actions

- 6.2.1 Inquiry-Based, Problem-Posing Stance
- 6.2.2 Maintaining Focus

6.3 Reframing Perspective

- 6.3.1 Optimizing Potential
- 6.3.2 Situational Awareness
- 6.3.3 Creativity, Nimbleness, and Persistence

Element 7
Continuous Improvement

Exhibit a persistent focus on teacher, staff, and student continuous learning and development by aligning and monitoring a holistic, equity-driven accountability system.

7.1 Critical Data Literacy

- 7.1.1 Policy-Aligned and Equity-Forward Approach
- 7.1.2 Holistic Assessment
- 7.1.3 Collaborative Analysis of Evidence

7.2 Building Capacity Through Infrastructure and Tools

- 7.2.1 Inclusive Data-Collection Processes
- 7.2.2 Supporting and Sustaining Digital Literacy
- 7.2.3 Using Evidence to Compel Equity Action

7.3 Collaborative Structures and Systems

- 7.3.1 Accountability for Learning
- 7.3.2 Strategic Planning for Improvement
- 7.3.3 Accountability for Improvement

Levels of Effective Practice

The levels in the Rubric include:

- **Emerging**, which typically signals an aspiring leader enrolled in a leadership preparation credential program and engaging in leadership activities through fieldwork and internships.
- ⊗ **Developing**, which encompasses an induction period that is commonly two to five years but could be longer depending on the leadership position of the individual.
- ⊗ **Practicing**, which is ongoing as the veteran leader engages in continuous learning and demonstrates growing leadership expertise.

Leaders at the Emerging level focus on increasing their awareness of equity issues, identify opportunities and levers for change, and constantly interrogate their impact on the organization through an analysis of their identities, positionality, and biases.

The Developing level centers a leader's ability to model justice-oriented practices and ensure that the work of the organization is aligned to the equity-centered mission and vision. Developing leaders deepen their understanding of their identities as leaders and build relationships that support change efforts. They design and facilitate collaborative processes that build capacity and promote learning and growth in individuals and across the organization.

The Practicing level focuses on the leader's ability to foster others' leadership across the organization and engage all constituents in equity-centered goals. Practicing leaders monitor and assess systems and structures to carry out the mission and vision of the organization, with the goal of working toward collective accountability, sustainable change, and continual growth for all members of the organization.

Right: Each level in the Rubric is characterized by leadership actions, signified by key verbs.

Emerging



Pre-service
administrators ...

recognize
articulate
identify
assess

Developing



Early-career
administrators ...

guide
model
embody
facilitate

Practicing



Post-induction
administrators ...

foster
empower
sustain
monitor

Over more than two decades of supporting leaders, we have determined that the process of leadership development is continual and nonlinear. Therefore, whether leaders are operating at an Emerging, Developing, or Practicing level, they can be effective without mastering every competency within each Indicator. Pre-service, novice, and veteran leaders alike should attend to how their everyday practice reflects the leadership competencies in the Rubric and always seek to improve their effectiveness in service of equity and social justice, throughout their entire careers.

Assumptions

Several assumptions are embedded in the Rubric:

- As a leader improves and develops levels of effective practice from Emerging to Developing to Practicing (from novice to more expert practice), they incorporate the prior level of learning. It is assumed that each layer of learning and development is apparent at the next level. To become a fully practicing and exemplary leader takes many years of focused reflection and continued refinement of leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Through experience at each level, a leader extends the prior learning and develops a more sophisticated, informed, and nuanced level of performance.
- Leadership development does not progress in a linear fashion from Emerging to Developing to Practicing in every Element, Descriptor, or Indicator. Thus, leaders may have certain areas of strong performance and may need to focus on some Elements or Descriptors of Practice more than others.
- Effective justice-oriented leaders center equity in everything they do. Although the Rubric includes a specific focus on Equity and Advocacy in Element 3, attention to equity, anti-racism, and transformative leadership is intentionally

To become a fully practicing and exemplary leader takes many years of focused reflection and continued refinement of leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

woven throughout all seven Elements of the Rubric. Leaders should constantly interrogate and seek to sharpen their equity lens.

- To the degree possible, the Rubric separates leadership actions from specific school contexts, and leaders working in organizations that are not school sites can use the Rubric to inform their work as well. However, since the context of the school both informs the leader's choices and is the direct result of the leader's actions, it is not possible to fully separate the self and the institution.
- There is an intentional overlap between and among Elements. In particular, in the areas of managing emotions, persons, resistance to change, and school culture, the leader's ability to navigate their identity, build their self-awareness, and maintain positive relationships for the benefit of all transcends the individual Elements.

Elements 4, 5, 6, and 7 provide substantial detail in the Indicators. This offers explicit language and direction for the leader in areas that are the typical (and sometimes technical) duties of the leader: supervising curriculum and instruction; managing the operations of the school for the benefit of the learning outcomes; facilitating and directing change and reform efforts; and maintaining focus on evidence and accountability. Often, without clear outcomes, the leader can revert to standard operating procedures and district bureaucratic direction. When the leader can reframe technical tasks with an intentional equity lens, there is greater possibility of success in distributed and transformative leadership, important change projects, and achievement outcomes.

All Rubric leadership Elements are supported by research, and references accompany this Rubric. Key terms are highlighted throughout the Rubric and are defined in the glossary.

How to Use the Rubric

Given the assumptions stated in the previous section, here is some guidance on how leaders might access and use the Rubric:

Understanding the Rubric

- Read and revisit the Rubric Overview. Even experienced users report that they glean something new about the structure and intentions of the Rubric each time they review the Overview.
 - Familiarize yourself with the structure and design of the Rubric—Elements, Descriptors of Practice, and Indicators. Consider how each level of competency contributes to your leadership development. Clear and accurate understanding of the difference between Descriptors of Practice (e.g., 1.1 Professional Imprint) and Indicators (e.g., 1.1.1 Core Values) from the very beginning will allow you to optimize the impact of the Rubric, both in your individual use and in cultivating a common language when you work with others.
 - Engage thought partners whenever possible. While the Rubric can be accessed individually, many leaders benefit from another's perspective in surfacing and understanding different aspects of the embedded concepts.
 - Unpack the language with thoughtfulness and reflection. Pause often to interrogate why a specific word was used, what the possible meanings are, and how it might apply to different leaders and contexts. Reflect on how the current educational, political, and social contexts impact the ways that leaders enact the competencies included in the Rubric. Continually strive to apply the Rubric language to your specific context.
- **Elements are essential building blocks of effective leadership.**
 - **Descriptors of Practice describe aspects of each Element that a leader will enact.**
 - **Indicators of Practice include bulleted lists of discrete actions that leaders take in order to demonstrate competency in a particular Descriptor of Practice.**

Within the text, a bolded or underlined term indicates its presence in the glossary. Each glossary entry lists the pages where the term can be found. In the digital version of the Rubric, terms and page numbers are crosslinked throughout for direct navigation.

- If you encounter an unfamiliar or confusing concept, please note the availability of the glossary. When you find the same term in multiple places, ask yourself, “What does this term mean here, specifically?” Contextualize it within the Rubric structure (Indicator → Descriptor → Element) to remind yourself of the conceptual framework wherein this term resides; this will guide you toward more specific denotations and connotations.
- Seek to understand how discrete concepts align within an Indicator. As you grow more familiar with the Rubric, find connections and overlaps across different Indicators/Descriptors/Elements.

Self-Assessment

- Locate yourself in the appropriate level (Emerging, Developing, Practicing) in order to engage in self-assessment.
- Assess yourself against the Rubric at the Indicator level, where you’ll find a list of leadership actions. Avoid the check-off approach (“I did that! Done!”), and instead lean into nuance and complexity (“I have had success in _____, but not yet when working with [group of constituents] . . .”). This will also deepen your understanding of the Rubric.
- Consider which Indicators require repeated experiences and practice to deepen your competency.
- Embrace reflection as part of your self-assessment. Be as honest and vulnerable as you can when applying these concepts to yourself, your leadership, and your context.

- The Rubric is meant for all leaders working in education. However, there will be times when it will be necessary for you to translate or adapt the language and concept to serve your particular needs.
- While the Rubric is linear, leadership development is not. In your assessment, you may find yourself located across multiple levels (Emerging, Developing, Practicing)—sometimes even within one Indicator.
- Take your time in your self-assessment. Do small sections and pause when you find yourself not able to dig deep in your reflection.
- Take notes along the way. The Rubric is quite dense and it's easy to feel overwhelmed. You don't want to forget all those hard-earned "aha" moments.

While the Rubric is linear, leadership development is not.

Leadership Growth

- Your self-assessment serves as the foundation for your leadership development. Determine where you have strengths to build on and gaps to address.
- Set goals, incorporating the specific Rubric language for the leadership competencies where you will focus.
- Identify opportunities to practice specific leadership competencies across the Elements/Descriptors/Indicators.
- Monitor and document your growth through your leadership actions, their impact, and continuous reflection and learning.

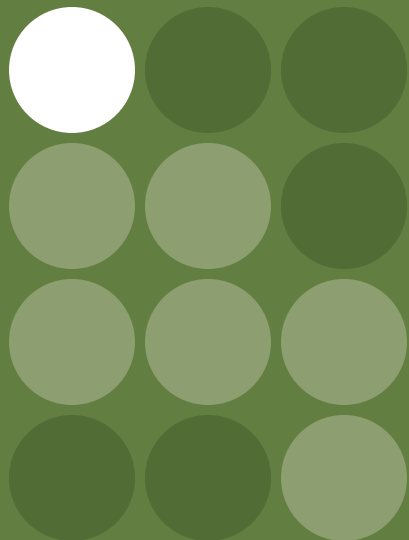
- Deepen and expand your use of the Rubric as you gain leadership experience. Revisit Indicators, and go back a level (e.g. Practicing to Developing) as needed; this may be especially beneficial when you change positions or contexts. Remember that your goal in using the Rubric is growth and improvement, not completion.
- Embody the Rubric competencies throughout your leadership work. Use them in reflection, to measure your growth. Embed them in your planning, to set your intentions and expectations. Ultimately, you'll want the Rubric concepts to be so integral to who you are as a leader that you'll be able to apply them in real time to any leadership situation and context, with nimbleness and automaticity.

Broad-scale organizational transformation demands that leaders nurture individual agency and build collective capacity to support fundamental change. Key in this regard is the leader's ability to inspire teachers, parents, school community leaders, and students around a common vision of reform. —Anthony Bryk et al., 2010

... school leaders must work with their staff, they must be collaborative in nature in order to be successful. They have to have a strong vision of social justice. And they have to have the ability to bring people along with that vision, which means not landing at a site thinking that you have all the answers. —Soraya Sablo Sutton, 2023

Element 1: Presence and Attitude

Communicate a compelling presence and a steadfast belief in the power of the possible



1

Presence and Attitude

Communicate a compelling presence and a steadfast belief in the power of the possible

School administrators operate in complex and dynamic organizations and contexts. How an administrator shows up as an individual impacts how other adults are able to establish and maintain trust, the foundational resource for school effectiveness. Effective school leaders display an optimizing and caring presence in the service of the teachers, staff, families, and children. At the same time, they are courageous and authoritative in advocating for and promoting critical hope in service of social justice and equity. While there is no prescriptive formula for a leader's presence, whatever the style, a leader is a key organizational actor who must lead with a trustworthy and courageous presence and support others in developing their leadership stance.

1.1 Professional Imprint

The presence of a leader, including their ability to communicate an authoritative, trustworthy, and courageous stance and tone, is a foundational requirement of leadership. Every person establishes their professional imprint in different ways, building upon their own assets and strengths. The combination of self-awareness, articulating a vision based on core values, and acting on that vision is the artistry of the individual leader. At the center is equity and social justice, and the leader uses that vision to act with assurance, exhibiting resilience in the face of challenges and modeling for teachers, staff, parents, students, and community both vulnerability and a steadfast commitment to transforming schools.

1.2 Flexibility

Schools and organizations are ever-changing, unpredictable environments. Leader flexibility is required in order to demonstrate responsiveness to the evolving needs of the organization. Leaders display flexibility by remaining nimble in the face of adversity, managing information flow, and pivoting as necessary. In times of crisis, leaders are called upon to demonstrate their flexibility by remaining attuned to and prioritizing the needs of the entire organization. They must navigate feelings within an organization, consistently **reframing** input and output to communicate the vision and values. **Buffering** requires decisions about what and how information is shared. The effective leader **brokers** resources in terms of people, time, materials, and goodwill for the benefit of the school's vision.

1.3 Demeanor

The leader's demeanor is evident in their stance and tone. Leaders must maintain high levels of cultural awareness and the ability to adapt to new contexts. Social awareness, self-awareness, and self-management are essential skills that leaders must practice for themselves and also cultivate in their school community. As the leader enacts the collective vision, they communicate authority while also practicing cultural awareness in terms of personal identity and how they interact with all constituents. A focus on interpersonal relations and community-building supports the development of an inclusive, fair, and democratic community. The leader develops and engages in self-reflection while seeking to establish and foster a collective presence and attitude that builds individual and organizational capacity and defines the organization.

1.1 Professional Imprint

The presence of a leader, including their ability to communicate an authoritative, trustworthy, and courageous stance and tone, is a foundational requirement of leadership. Every person establishes their professional imprint in different ways, building upon their own assets and strengths.

The combination of self-awareness, articulating a vision based on core values, and acting on that vision is the artistry of the individual leader. At the center is equity and social justice, and the leader uses that vision to act with assurance, exhibiting resilience in the face of challenges and modeling for teachers, staff, parents, students, and community both vulnerability and a steadfast commitment to transforming schools.

Emerging Indicators

● 1.1.1 Core Values

- Identify core values related to the purposes of education, particularly those centered on issues of equity, justice, and democracy
- Reflect on how to communicate core values to others
- Assess others' shared belief in core values and consider where alignment is necessary to move change efforts forward
- Take actions that reflect core values

● 1.1.2 Vision

- Articulate and communicate formally and informally a vision that reflects core values concerning equitable education
- Engender a view that holding high expectations for all constituent outcomes is not only possible but in service of equity

● 1.1.3 Critical Resilience

- Maintain a healthy balance of personal and professional roles. Intentionally invest time in leader well-being and actions that promote self-care
- Make choices that build stamina and maintain a positive stance
- Recognize how resilience is connected to a commitment to social justice principles
- Maintain productive relationships with like-minded educators
- View challenges as necessary catalysts for **continuous improvement** and growth
- Identify structural barriers to resilience for the leader and all members of the organization

Developing Indicators

⌘ 1.1.1 Core Values

- Communicate how actions align with core values
- Seek feedback to assess alignment
- Adjust and change actions as necessary to realign with core values
- Assess the degree to which change is sufficiently aligned with core values or is situational

⌘ 1.1.2 Vision

- Engage constituents in co-creating a shared vision based on common core values
- Discern the level of cohesion and determine when/if consensus is necessary and when to move forward in the face of dissent
- Build shared understanding and action that strengthens staff motivation and commitment
- Take leadership actions that align with the vision

⌘ 1.1.3 Critical Resilience

- Model resilience by making healthy and balanced personal and professional choices that prioritize leader well-being
- Maintain a resourceful and solution-oriented attitude by noting and learning from successes as well as mistakes
- Accept and give purposeful validation and intentional praise
- Encourage others to focus on positive responsiveness to resistance and challenges
- Articulate an equity- and justice-oriented agenda to support self and others in maintaining focus and motivation
- Seek to mitigate risk factors and ameliorate barriers to resilience that contribute to teacher and leader burnout

Practicing Indicators

⌘ 1.1.1 Core Values

- Recognize and support practices that manifest collective, school-wide core values
- When compromise is necessary, support constituents to use core values to guide decisions and actions

⌘ 1.1.2 Vision

- Take leadership actions that align the practices of all constituents with the vision and invite colleagues to share in those actions
- Ensure that the student outcomes reflect alignment to the vision
- Support the entire school community to work in concert with the vision as a singular focus

⌘ 1.1.3 Critical Resilience

- Co-develop systems that increase institutional support for maintaining well-being, stamina, and a healthy work-life balance for all constituents
- Engage in collective resilience by supporting staff to draw strength from each other
- Promote collective positive response systems that address school-wide challenges promptly
- Create and maintain productive professional networks
- Reflect on efforts to build resilience and their impact on accomplishing goals centered on equity and social justice
- Advocate for systemic changes that support leader resilience and mitigate against leader and teacher burnout

1.2 Flexibility

Schools and organizations are ever-changing, unpredictable environments. Leader flexibility is required in order to demonstrate responsiveness to the evolving needs of the organization. Leaders display flexibility by remaining nimble in the face of adversity, managing information flow, and pivoting as necessary. In times of crisis, leaders are called upon to demonstrate their flexibility by remaining attuned to and prioritizing the needs of the entire organization. They must navigate feelings within an organization, consistently reframing input and output to communicate the vision and values.

Buffering requires decisions about what and how information is shared. The effective leader brokers resources in terms of people, time, materials, and goodwill for the benefit of the school's vision.

Emerging Indicators

● 1.2.1 Reframing

- Identify and name the frames at play in a given situation, including which interests are being served by the frame
- Display a positive attitude in service of accomplishing substantive outcomes
- Examine discourse patterns and identify strategic and non-reactive responses to challenges
- Assess and reflect upon effective language use and register for the situation
- Notice how a leader's frame and **reframe** can shift the dynamic of a situation

● 1.2.2 Buffering

- Reflect on and filter multiple and possibly ambiguous inputs for self, colleagues, and constituents
- Articulate the ways in which organizations share information, highlighting issues of hierarchy, power, and privilege
- Practice an optimizing, non-blaming approach among and between constituents
- Maintain focus on important, mission-aligned work
- Assess level of transparency while also maintaining necessary confidentiality
- Identify systems-level **macroaggressions** that impact individuals in the organization

● 1.2.3 Brokering

- Identify and analyze personal areas of strength and learning, useful and not useful interactions and information, and individual contributions and needs
- Assess for **micro-political** dimensions and identify productive areas for using informal power structures and working with people
- Continually increase social awareness of racial and intersectional **microaggressions** at play that impact collegiality and inclusive culture
- Demonstrate willingness to act in the absence of complete information

Developing Indicators

⌘ 1.2.1 Reframing

- Seek to broaden understanding by **reframing** perspectives toward inclusive and justice-oriented goals
- Provide a **counter-narrative** to deficit perspectives by highlighting individual and organizational assets
- Navigate complex challenges and communicate an inquiry-based and solution-oriented stance with all constituents
- Embrace resistance as an opportunity to incorporate alternative points of view that contribute to a diverse and inclusive community
- Confront repeated attempts to undermine justice and equity efforts
- Model strategic use of language and register in alignment with the context and situation, with specific consideration for power dynamics related to race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and other identity markers

⌘ 1.2.2 Buffering

- Exercise agency and prioritize leadership actions based on unpredictable dynamics of the organization
- Investigate rationale(s) for policy decisions that affect the school/organization and **reframe** for constituents
- Surface intended and unintended consequences of information flow on relationships and organizational culture
- Model an optimizing, non-blaming approach that promotes **systems thinking**
- Exhibit transparency while maintaining confidentiality and keeping focus on vision and mission
- Analyze how systems-level **macroaggressions** work against equity initiatives

⌘ 1.2.3 Brokering

- Employ effective informal communication focused on achieving organization's goals
- Model adapting and adjusting to meet people's needs and to collaborate effectively
- Recognize and reflect upon the **micro-political** structures and the multiple communities and hierarchies in the school environment
- Model the use of **microaffirmations** as an antidote to racial and intersectional **microaggressions**
- Build **coherence** for constituents and support forward movement, even with incomplete information, when action is necessary

Practicing Indicators

⌘ 1.2.1 Reframing

- Act as a driving force for supporting others to engage in dialogue, reflection, and perspective-taking that supports **asset-based** and justice-forward approaches
- Empower constituents to independently and collectively engage in inquiry-based and solution-oriented approaches despite contextual, resource, policy, and **micro-political** challenges
- Embed practice of highlighting accomplishments and finding opportunities to remain engaged and forward-moving on multiple fronts

⌘ 1.2.2 Buffering

- Utilize agency when establishing and implementing a system for filtering information, including evaluating relevance to an equitable vision
- Consistently employ optimizing discourse that fosters a “both-and” approach
- Encourage constituents to focus on long-term and productive solutions and maintain transparency with one another in service of building **relational trust** and accomplishing equity-focused goals
- Promote opportunities for the organization to explicitly convey core beliefs through **macroaffirmations**

⌘ 1.2.3 Brokering

- Provide strategic support to individuals and groups to adapt and adjust given their individual and group potential contributions and needs
- Build on **micro-political** structures that support strategic outcomes
- Plan for and facilitate productive engagement, effective resource commitment, and continued forward movement toward goals
- Provide support and create space for constituents to surface racial and intersectional **microaggressions** and practice using **microaffirmations**
- Support others to advance equity goals, even in the absence of full information

1.3 Demeanor

The leader's demeanor is evident in their stance and tone. Leaders must maintain high levels of cultural awareness and the ability to adapt to new contexts. Social awareness, self-awareness, and self-management are essential skills that leaders must practice for themselves and also cultivate in their school community. As the leader enacts the collective vision, they communicate authority while also practicing cultural awareness in terms of personal identity and how they interact with all constituents. A focus on interpersonal relations and community-building supports the development of an inclusive, fair, and democratic community. The leader develops and engages in self-reflection while seeking to establish and foster a collective presence and attitude that builds individual and organizational capacity and defines the organization.

Emerging Indicators

● 1.3.1 Emotional Acuity

- Identify and analyze how emotions contribute to the social dynamic, including responses to successes, achievements, mistakes, disappointments, and setbacks
- Strive for a heightened state of self-awareness through identifying and analyzing others' responses and reactions
- Identify personal areas of growth, focusing on how to build connections with those in the community with different cultural backgrounds

● 1.3.2 Cultural Awareness and Adaptation

- Use **culturally responsive and affirming** nonverbal and verbal choices, in order to foster a sense of belonging
- Demonstrate the ability to identify and adjust to different cultural norms related to position/authority within the organization and community
- Strive to continually increase knowledge base about cultures that make up the community
- Identify forces that perpetuate power and privilege

● 1.3.3 Stance and Tone

With regard to tone (verbal, nonverbal, and written), dress, timeliness, and responsiveness to requests or deadlines:

- Assess the intersection of personal style/assets and leadership requirements
- Choose and practice effective use of personal assets in formal and informal communication
- Display **arrogant humility**, holding fast to a vision of equity while remaining open to deepening one's understanding of multiple perspectives
- Exhibit a willingness to accept feedback and alter actions
- Consider how multiple identities impact leadership stance and the resulting perception of the leader
- Tap into personal assets and **cultural competence** that uniquely connect with specific constituents and communities
- Maintain a steadfast belief in the power of the possible

Developing Indicators

1.3.1 Emotional Acuity

- Strategically display emotion in response to situations and create conditions for others to do the same
- Increase understanding of dimensions of situational awareness and modify behavior accordingly
- Collectively analyze individual and collective affective dispositions in building a positive, supportive, and **culturally responsive** community

1.3.2 Cultural Awareness and Adaptation

- Analyze the organizational context for cultural awareness, responsiveness, and belonging for all constituents
- Assume a learning stance in new situations and cultural contexts
- Surface and name **culturally responsive** choices and gaps across the organization
- Foster a school culture of intentional inclusiveness and respect for difference
- Model inclusive practices and perspectives in all domains of leadership
- Reflect upon and articulate the presence of white supremacy culture as it shows up in the daily interactions of the organization

1.3.3 Stance and Tone

With regard to tone (verbal, nonverbal, and written), dress, timeliness, and responsiveness to requests or deadlines:

- Reflect on personal style/assets
- Demonstrate ability to make adjustments and change register of tone to fit situation
- Maintain a stance of care and humility while encouraging others to believe in the power of the possible
- Exhibit a professional model that others want to emulate
- Seek feedback on demeanor, stance, and tone and develop additional skills and approaches to increase impact of communication

Practicing Indicators

1.3.1 Emotional Acuity

- Motivate, inspire, and encourage others to demonstrate an understanding of how individual emotions contribute to the group dynamic
- Support constituents in developing high degrees of situational awareness and engaging in authentic, productive responses
- Facilitate dialogue that supports analysis of individual and collective emotional contributions to the social dynamic

1.3.2 Cultural Awareness and Adaptation

- Foster a climate of naming persistence of white supremacy and assisting others in examining choices and making adjustments
- Support a leadership structure that amplifies voices from minoritized communities

1.3.3 Stance and Tone

With regard to tone (verbal, nonverbal, and written), dress, timeliness, and responsiveness to requests or deadlines:

- Adjust collective stance and tone in response to audience
- Institute feedback loop to assess and adjust communication style
- Support constituents to increase their awareness of how stance and tone impact their professionalism
- Support others to maintain motivation and forward movement in the face of adversity

A leader has many roles. One role is to hold the container that holds everybody else . . . and to tell the story. What does the . . . school stand for? We [leaders] can say, this is a place where everyone belongs and we organize around human dignity and I'm going to reflect that.

—john a. powell, 2024

Given the complexity of schools, principals cannot simply order their teachers to teach better. Instead, they must work indirectly by creating a culture of internal accountability in which teachers improve their teaching in concert with others. —Norton Grubb & Joseph Flessa, 2006

Element 2: Personal Identity and Relationships

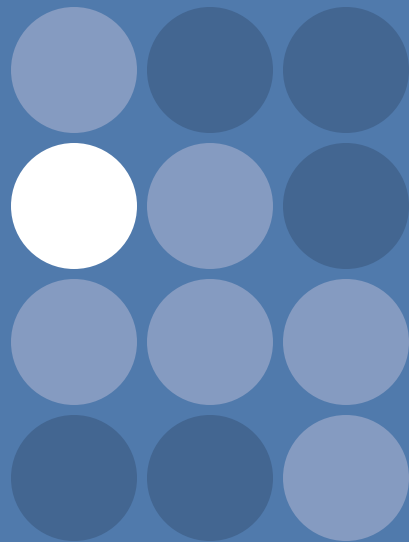
Demonstrate personal and professional self-awareness and nourish trusting relationships in a diverse learning organization

2

Personal Identity and Relationships

Demonstrate personal and professional self-awareness and nourish trusting relationships in a diverse learning organization

The leader deeply understands how social identities affect leadership stances and actions. They explore the roles that socially constructed identities—race, class, and gender particularly—play in how individuals experience and are perceived in the U.S. context and in the context of a learning organization. They speak critically and strategically about their social identities, with particular focus on intersectionality, in order to foster relational trust among all constituents and serve social justice goals. In response to historical and current impact of white supremacy and other oppressive systems, leaders cultivate a culture of interdependence and encourage constituents to understand the complexities of racial dynamics throughout the organization and in the larger socio-political context. The efficacious leader reflects on how they interact with others and the institution and projects personal and professional integrity. The leader continually interrogates dynamics of race, power, and privilege related to their positionality and identities and encourages constituents to do the same.



2.1 Self-Awareness

The efficacious leader embraces responsibility for personal growth. They examine and re-examine their identity to understand power dynamics that impact relationships among and between constituents. The leader understands the relationships between their identity and the relative privilege garnered by membership in groups. They name that power and privilege dynamic and hold conversations that are calibrated to the readiness and capability of their constituents. The leader takes initiative to foster, implement, sustain, and monitor the success of those conversations. The leader strives to continually increase their awareness of how they are perceived by their constituents and how closely their impact matches their intentions. They commit to deeply reflecting in order to better understand their own identities, thoughts, and feelings, and how those aspects of self impact their leadership.

2.2 Integrity

To lead with integrity involves discerning strategic equity- and justice-oriented action necessary to respond to a given situation, acting on the discernment, and standing behind the decision and action. In the process of discernment, the leader must **buffer** information and make decisions about what should be shared, with whom, and for what purpose. As the leader gains experience, they build their capacity to respond in ways that are aligned with core values of the organization. This decision-making process includes clarity about which decisions are the leader's individual responsibility and which decisions are collective. The integral leader views reflection as a cornerstone of practice and engages the entire school community in ongoing **reflection/action** processes.

2.3 Interdependence

Education is a human endeavor; therefore, leaders must strive to engage all members of the organization as a collective working toward shared justice-oriented goals. The leader's role in fostering a culture of **interdependence** where relationships are a critical component is vital. The leader models precisely the kind of stance and demeanor that they expect as a foundational ethic of relationships. Their modeling and consistent presence builds trust and connections across differences, which allows for engagement in productive dialogue, even when groups hold varying perspectives. By leading with an **asset-based** perspective, optimizing all situations, and demonstrating a deep understanding of the larger socio-political and racialized issues impacting the community, the leader engages dissension or difference as divergent and necessary components of a healthy organization. The leader institutes **culturally sustaining** rituals and celebrations that honor students' and families' cultural ways of being. These practices represent the daily, steady, and foundational acts that cultivate and sustain the most important resource in the organization: the relationships of the constituents.

2.1

Self-Awareness

The efficacious leader embraces responsibility for personal growth. They examine and re-examine their identity to understand power dynamics that impact relationships among and between constituents. The leader understands the relationships between their identity and the relative privilege garnered by membership in groups. They name that power and privilege dynamic and hold conversations that are calibrated to the readiness and capability of their constituents. The leader takes initiative to foster, implement, sustain, and monitor the success of those conversations. The leader strives to continually increase their awareness of how they are perceived by their constituents and how closely their impact matches their intentions. They commit to deeply reflecting in order to better understand their own identities, thoughts, and feelings, and how those aspects of self impact their leadership.

Emerging Indicators

2.1.1 Identity

- Consider how the historical **supremacy of whiteness** has contributed to the **social construction of race** in own exploration of identity
- Articulate and deconstruct multiple and intersecting aspects of personal and professional social identities with regard to race, ethno-cultural markers (language, religion, etc.), ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, gender, class, and other salient identity markers
- Identify elements of fluid and complex **micro-cultural identities** as assets in building relationships with others

2.1.2 Power and Privilege

- Understand how the **pillars of white supremacy** perpetuate oppressive systems of power and privilege
- Identify and discuss relative power and agency with respect to personal social identities
- Remain open to examining personal power and privilege in the context of education and society
- Recognize the ways in which white supremacy is enacted throughout the school and community, including how intersectional identities impact power and privilege dynamics

2.1.3 Equity Talk

- Recognize own gaps in understanding around issues of **systemic oppression** and seek to complexify notions of social identities
- Initiate conversations and reflect with others about personal and historical circumstances that influence role as an equity-oriented leader and educator

Developing Indicators

2.1.1 Identity

- Support others to understand how the historical **supremacy of whiteness** has contributed to the **social construction of race**
- Re-examine personal identity within new contexts
- Communicate personal identity informally to constituents (students, teachers, staff, parents/caregivers, and community)
- Institute practices that help others examine and share their **micro-cultural identities** in order to begin to complexify the concept of identity
- Model building relationships that support **bridging** and finding common ground across differences among diverse constituents

2.1.2 Power and Privilege

- Articulate how power and privilege are embedded within white supremacy and oppressive systems
- Seek feedback and reflect on holding and exercising power and privilege in different relationships, situations, and contexts
- Name and analyze the ways in which individual power and privilege contribute to or harm school and societal culture
- Seek ways to utilize identity-based privilege to advocate for equity and social justice
- Actively seek ways to disrupt white supremacy culture in the school and community

2.1.3 Equity Talk

- Facilitate individual and group conversations about race, class, and equity within the context of social identities and white supremacy culture
- Introduce larger socio-political, structural, and environmental factors that contribute to and limit opportunities for marginalized populations
- Successfully navigate social identities in a professional context
- Model using personal identity as an asset in interrogating current organizational structures and dynamics

Practicing Indicators

2.1.1 Identity

- Guide constituents to interrogate social identities toward a more complex and nuanced understanding
- Foster use of personal narrative as an authentic way to build relationships and connections across difference within the school community
- Build a culture of consistently examining and sharing social, **micro-cultural identities** within the school organization

2.1.2 Power and Privilege

- Invite constituents to examine how organizational systems are impacted by the prevalence of white supremacy culture and how to work at disrupting it
- Develop, implement, and monitor systems for regularly examining how to diminish the effects of power and privilege in the school culture
- Intentionally use identity-based privilege in service of achieving equity- and justice-oriented school goals
- Encourage others to identify and name the ways they are impacted by white supremacy culture in school and community

2.1.3 Equity Talk

- Ensure that efforts to examine, interrogate, and disrupt white supremacy culture are ongoing and occur among all constituents
- Support all constituents to broaden their perspectives around larger socio-political issues that impact marginalized populations
- Intervene and catalyze conversations as necessary when interrogations of white supremacy result in conflict or resistance
- Encourage others to employ an **asset-based** perspective and highlight **funds of knowledge** across the organizational context, particularly among marginalized groups

2.2 Integrity

To lead with integrity involves discerning strategic equity- and justice-oriented action necessary to respond to a given situation, acting on the discernment, and standing behind the decision and action. In the process of discernment, the leader must buffer information and make decisions about what should be shared, with whom, and for what purpose. As the leader gains experience, they build their capacity to respond in ways that are aligned with core values of the organization. This decision-making process includes clarity about which decisions are the leader's individual responsibility and which decisions are collective. The integral leader views reflection as a cornerstone of practice and engages the entire school community in ongoing reflection/action processes.

Emerging Indicators

● 2.2.1 Discernment and Action

- Critically question beliefs about identity, privilege, and ability
- Identify when and how to balance transparency and discretion: what to share in order to achieve the desired outcome
- Reflect carefully before taking action
- Articulate a willingness to hear other perspectives, to change, and to engage others
- Seek guidance from **critical friends** to expand perspectives and possible action steps

● 2.2.2 Decision-Making

- Articulate the processes of making decisions with integrity: discernment, publicly acting on decisions, and standing firm in beliefs
- Reflect on the difference between public decisions and private ideas, with a focus on understanding vertical and horizontal mechanisms of bureaucratic communication
- Identify opportunities to exercise agency in decision-making, particularly when dealing with matters related to equity and social justice

● 2.2.3 Reflection

- Interrogate preconceived notions about leadership approaches and how they may be impacted by oppressive systems
- Identify the most productive personal leadership type and style
- Engage others in providing feedback on leadership approach and actions
- Develop systems for reflective practice that include **reflection/action (praxis)** cycle
- Engage regularly in the practice of slowing down to consider how personal bias impacts leadership actions and unintended consequences of those actions

Developing Indicators

⌘ 2.2.1 Discernment and Action

- Lead by example and support others to engage in critically questioning beliefs
- Anticipate and examine intended and unintended consequences of actions
- Demonstrate willingness to be held accountable by others
- Practice discretion to achieve desired outcomes
- Take balanced actions, focusing on what can be reasonably accomplished rather than what may be fully desired

⌘ 2.2.2 Decision-Making

- Analyze decision-making and action according to processes of making integral decisions, with clarity about difference between espoused and enacted beliefs
- Model careful consideration about intended and unintended consequences and disparate impact, with a focus on equity
- Reflect on the collective and individual decisions required in a bureaucracy
- Enact **agentic leadership** in service of justice-oriented goals

⌘ 2.2.3 Reflection

- Identify how leadership actions and vision align with or diverge from those of constituents and the equity-centered organizational goals
- Reflect on the ways personal vision is compromised by bureaucratic and historical structures
- Critically analyze own biases and seek to broaden own perspective around issues such as inclusion (e.g., gender, religion, etc.)
- Develop systems for feedback and internalizing reflective practice
- Demonstrate ability to implement reflection as the impetus for **continuous improvement**
- Invite feedback on leadership practices from others and use feedback to reflect upon practice

Practicing Indicators

⌘ 2.2.1 Discernment and Action

- Create space for dialogue, with constant attention to thoughtfully and critically matching beliefs to actions
- Discern and articulate whether divergent opinions are useful or harmful to the community
- Assess practices against consequences or outcomes through ongoing feedback and accountability
- Communicate critically and supportively, understanding balance is needed to create a positive, supportive, action-oriented climate for achieving results

⌘ 2.2.2 Decision-Making

- Integrate the process of making integral decisions into the normative structure of the school community
- Communicate the types of decisions that are collective and individual
- Build and sustain systems that support clear structures of decision-making by leader, small group, or collective
- Empower others to exercise their agency when working to advance justice-oriented goals

⌘ 2.2.3 Reflection

- Regularly engage in reflection about the degree to which the vision of leadership and schooling is actualized in present context
- Build and sustain infrastructure that allows individuals and groups to continually reflect on personal biases that impact equity-centered organizational goals
- Invite regular and ongoing feedback on how leadership actions and organizational policies are in or out of sync with the equity-centered organizational goals

2.3

Interdependence

Education is a human endeavor; therefore, leaders must strive to engage all members of the organization as a collective working toward shared justice-oriented goals. The leader's role in fostering a culture of interdependence where relationships are a critical component is vital. The leader models precisely the kind of stance and demeanor that they expect as a foundational ethic of relationships. Their modeling and consistent presence builds trust and connections across differences, which allows for engagement in productive dialogue, even when groups hold varying perspectives. By leading with an asset-based perspective, optimizing all situations, and demonstrating a deep understanding of the larger socio-political and racialized issues impacting the community, the leader engages dissension or difference as divergent and necessary components of a healthy organization. The leader institutes culturally sustaining rituals and celebrations that honor students' and families' cultural ways of being. These practices represent the daily, steady, and foundational acts that cultivate and sustain the most important resource in the organization: the relationships of the constituents.

Emerging Indicators

● 2.3.1 Fostering Connection and Trust

- Maintain frequent contact with constituents across the organization
- Assess levels of effective visibility in school context
- Practice mediation and coaching as needed in order to build capacity of all constituents and promote reflective practice across the organization
- Articulate the importance of leaders making themselves available for ongoing consultation and support of teachers, staff, students, and families

● 2.3.2 Optimizing and Maintaining an Asset-Based Perspective

- Communicate a sense of confidence in the power of the possible
- Identify assets in self and in others, intentionally seeking to amplify historically marginalized voices
- Identify ways to support the successful work of others
- Identify allies who support the equity- and justice-focused vision of the organization

● 2.3.3 Culturally Sustaining and Inclusive Practices

- Investigate rituals, recognitions, and celebrations that contribute to positive organizational culture
- Develop ability to analyze rituals, celebrations, and curricula utilizing a **culturally sustaining** framework, as a means of achieving equitable outcomes in school curriculum and honoring historical and cultural contributions of all constituents
- Identify rituals, celebrations, and practices that minimize, essentialize, or otherwise detract from understanding and appreciating the complexity of cultures that make up the organization

continued ▼

Developing Indicators

⊗ 2.3.1 Fostering Connection and Trust

- Maintain visibility in the school and community
- Use informal check-ins with teachers and support staff to promote **interdependence**
- Initiate ongoing opportunities to engage with students, teachers, staff, and families
- Cultivate a presence in the larger community
- Increase capacity for mediation and coaching through ongoing practice and feedback
- Practice an open-door policy, encouraging constituents to present dilemmas and engage in thought-partnership

⊗ 2.3.2 Optimizing and Maintaining an Asset-Based Perspective

- Inspire teachers and staff to accomplish equity-centered organizational goals
- Frame individual and organizational assets as essential resources
- Portray a belief in the ability of teachers and staff to accomplish substantial outcomes
- Focus on those who are brought in, building their leadership capacity to mobilize and inspire others
- Seize opportunities to convey a steadfast belief in the justice-oriented vision of the organization

⊗ 2.3.3 Culturally Sustaining and Inclusive Practices

- Develop and maintain rituals that foster personal connection to the diverse cultures of the organization
- Recognize the contributions of all constituents and celebrate authentic successes in the school and community
- Seek to amplify marginalized voices and populations, intentionally highlighting the work of those who typically do not get celebrated
- Assess the level of cultural celebrations and curricula within the school context and identify how to make those meaningful and **culturally sustaining**
- Replace unproductive rituals, celebrations, and practices with ones that help to **bridge** connections across difference

continued ▼

Practicing Indicators

⊗ 2.3.1 Fostering Connection and Trust

- Regularly interact with students in classrooms and hallways to take the pulse of the school
- Engage all constituents (teachers, staff, parents/caregivers, community) in roles of promoting positive **interdependence**
- Maintain structures for collaboration and mutual support

⊗ 2.3.2 Optimizing and Maintaining an Asset-Based Perspective

- Use role as optimizer to strategically maintain high morale about important, equity-centered initiatives
- Raise questions of equity with the goal of keeping all constituents engaged in productive conversation
- Empower others to reaffirm the equity- and justice-focused narrative, confronting opposition as necessary

⊗ 2.3.3 Culturally Sustaining and Inclusive Practices

- Support students, teachers, and school in institutionalizing rituals and recognition that reinforce the organizational vision of inclusiveness and diversity
- Deepen level of connection and belonging by centering the contributions of marginalized members of the organization and community and focusing on inclusive cultural and curricular practices

continued ▼

2.3 Interdependence

continued

Emerging Indicators

▲ continued from previous

● 2.3.4 Steadfast Engagement in Civic Discourse

- Seek to understand complex politicized and racialized social issues impacting society at large and the local organizational context
- Engage in inquiry with the goal of deepening understanding of social issues
- Distinguish between resistance and difference of opinion by encouraging people to express diverse and divergent perspectives and analyzing those perspectives against collective, justice-oriented goals
- Articulate coaching strategies and conflict mediation techniques that ensure commitment to equity-centered organizational goals
- Practice engaging in dialogue with constituents who hold differing perspectives

Developing Indicators

▲ continued from previous

⊕ 2.3.4 Steadfast Engagement in Civic Discourse

- Investigate how various groups across the organization are impacted by complex politicized and racialized social issues
- Consider difference of opinion as a data source for purposeful problem-solving and building relationships
- Interrogate divergent perspectives and critically analyze information for relevance and accuracy
- Use coaching strategies and conflict mediation to surface common interests and values and to keep constituents engaged in and aligned with equity-centered organizational goals
- Seek opportunities to **sideline bias** in service of the equity-centered organizational goals
- Model for others how to engage in dialogue across difference, while holding fast to the collective vision of the organization

Practicing Indicators

▲ continued from previous

⊕ 2.3.4 Steadfast Engagement in Civic Discourse

- Support others to increase their knowledge of complex politicized and racialized social issues
- Actively engage in surfacing differing points of view as a positive approach to collaborative problem-solving and consensus-building
- Promote an environment where multiple, divergent perspectives are welcomed while encouraging all members of the organization to remain critical of misinformation and input that detracts from the equity-centered organizational goals
- Support others to engage in **sidelining bias** in service of the equity-centered organizational goals
- Anticipate conflicts and mitigate their impact by effectively engaging constituents in collaborative problem-solving

Education is the key to make opportunity less serendipitous and more systemic for all of us. True educational opportunity is the best path to the promised land where difference is not destiny and dreams are not coded by color or class. . . . School principals alone cannot tame the vipers and pythons of disadvantage. —Christopher Edley Jr., 2016

[The Principal Leadership Institute seeks to] radically transform the K-12 public education system so that it is equitable and socially just, so that over time one hundred percent of the children in their public education system have the opportunity to fulfill their potential, meet or exceed grade-level standards, and to graduate from high school with the ability to choose what they want to do next. —Tom Green, 2023

Element 3: Equity and Advocacy

Advocate for equitable academic, civic, and social-emotional outcomes for students who have been historically underserved by schools and society

3

Equity and Advocacy

Advocate for equitable academic, civic, and social-emotional outcomes for students who have been historically underserved by schools and society

A primary responsibility of social justice leaders is to deeply understand, consistently reflect on, and interrogate their own social identities in an ethn racially and culturally diverse education setting. Leaders strive to increase awareness of how they contribute to the perpetuation of oppression and/or liberation of historically underserved populations. Through purposeful leader preparation and development, the leader also learns to facilitate formal and informal conversations about a range of identity markers, including race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, and sexual orientation, in service of improving equitable academic, civic, and social-emotional outcomes. The leader recognizes the importance of civic goals of schooling in preparing students for participation in and maintenance of a democratic society. Because equity work is at the core of diminishing the historical and ethn racial predictability of learning outcomes, the leader practices the role of individual and collective advocate as a cornerstone of their commitment to equitable outcomes for *all* students.

3.1 Personal Commitment

Effective equity- and justice-oriented leadership is based on a deep personal commitment that includes developing an equity framework that involves a sophisticated understanding of the historic and systemic forces that perpetuate inequity, the need to address mindsets and pedagogical practice, and the importance of framing conversations from an **asset-based** perspective. Equity-oriented leaders orchestrate action that includes deliberate attention to equity and social justice and intentional use of data to frame equity conversations. The leader is responsible for recognizing, articulating, and maintaining a focus on equity in all conversations, decisions, actions, and outcomes. By integrating equity language in the daily work of school transformation, the leader assesses organizational readiness to engage in critical conversations about inequity, and models and authorizes perspectives that center equity and justice.

3.2 Democratic Leadership

The civic purpose of schooling is more critical than ever given the increasingly polarized nature of our country, including explicit attempts to erase the presence of historically marginalized groups such as the LGBTQIA+ community from TK–12 curricula. Preparing citizens to take part in democracy is a cornerstone of American educational history and schooling. To emphasize this goal of schooling, the leader bears the responsibility to develop and maintain inclusive structures for adults and students that serve to deepen their understanding and development of multiple critical perspectives and to provide avenues for engagement in school governance, professional learning, classroom dialogue, and discipline systems. In addition, democratic leaders must provide avenues for adults and students to become critical consumers of digital media who are skillful at identifying misinformation and analyzing varying, divergent perspectives. This includes anticipating conflicts and creating systems to address and respond to conflicts that emerge from engagement with diverse perspectives. Ultimately, the leader seeks to foster individual and collective responsibility for outcomes centered on democratic goals.

3.3 Advocacy

The primary role of leaders as advocates is to help educators navigate the system and remove or circumvent **institutional barriers** to student opportunity and achievement. Effective individual advocacy depends on a deep understanding of the context and role of all constituents through mapping the school and community. As the leader matures in the role, they engage in collective advocacy, promoting agency among all constituents for the dual purposes of providing necessary services to teachers, students, and families/ caregivers and empowering them in their own decisions for improving their communities through social and political action. The leader as an ally models courage, initiative, risk-taking, and coalition-building. As an advocate, the leader articulates conditions and systems that can be transformed in service of achieving a more equitable and just schooling system. Leaders as advocates also recognize when equity-focused initiatives are being undermined and work to re-engage constituents toward mission- and vision-aligned work whenever possible.

3.1

Personal Commitment

Effective equity- and justice-oriented leadership is based on a deep personal commitment that includes developing an equity framework that involves a sophisticated understanding of the historic and systemic forces that perpetuate inequity, the need to address mindsets and pedagogical practice, and the importance of framing conversations from an asset-based perspective. Equity-oriented leaders orchestrate action that includes deliberate attention to equity and social justice and intentional use of data to frame equity conversations. The leader is responsible for recognizing, articulating, and maintaining a focus on equity in all conversations, decisions, actions, and outcomes. By integrating equity language in the daily work of school transformation, the leader assesses organizational readiness to engage in critical conversations about inequity, and models and authorizes perspectives that center equity and justice.

Emerging Indicators

● 3.1.1 Equity Framework

- Articulate the differences between changing mindsets and changing practices in the organizational context
- Distinguish between mindsets and practices that represent diverse perspectives and those that work against the liberatory goals of the organization
- Intentionally frame conversations, perspectives, and language using an **asset-based**, justice-oriented lens

● 3.1.2 Justice Orientation

- Analyze the use of the language and systems of equity and inequity: social reproduction; structural, institutional, and systemic racism; the **supremacy of whiteness**; **intersectionality**; the difference between equity and equality; **sidelining bias**; discourses of power and privilege; recognizing and disrupting **microaggressions** and **equity traps**
- Practice identifying and responding to instances of deficit thinking and language
- Identify opportunities to amplify marginalized voices in the organization

● 3.1.3 Equity Data

- Identify the differences between achievement gap and **opportunity gap**
- Analyze student learning data and school culture through the lens of democratic schooling and **systemic oppression**
- Continually collect multiple data beyond traditional sources (test scores) to reveal holistic representations of student potential and progress
- Build **interdependence** and accountability among all constituents by using **equity audits**, asset-mapping tools, and community-mapping processes and protocols
- Assess constituent readiness for equity conversations

Developing Indicators

⊗ 3.1.1 Equity Framework

- Assess readiness of staff to promote equity-driven outcomes
- Support the implementation of changing practices in alignment with changing mindsets, adapting to the needs of the organization
- Develop ways of addressing staff practices and mindsets that are not consonant with a socially just organization and implement strategies to gauge effectiveness and impact
- Engage in conversations with staff based on an appraisal of the school's current assets and alignment with liberatory goals of the organization

⊗ 3.1.2 Justice Orientation

- Adapt, translate, and strategically use equity language and practices in context, demonstrating situational awareness to make judgments about the readiness of constituents
- Address deficit thinking and actions by modeling more productive/**asset-based** language and action. Practice **sidelining bias**—working toward equity goals in spite of existing deficit mindsets
- Engage constituents with a lens of curiosity and a desire to support their shift toward more equitable perspectives and actions
- Utilize **microaffirmations** as an antidote to individual and **systemic oppression**
- Model awareness of power and privilege dynamics and highlight perspectives of marginalized teachers, students, families, and staff

⊗ 3.1.3 Equity Data

- Analyze student learning and school culture data and communicate **opportunity gaps**
- Use data to support staff and programs to adjust practices
- Introduce alternative data sources as critical to understanding the full picture of student potential and progress
- Use equity data tools (audits, mapping, readiness of constituents) to establish a clear focus on equity as an organizational goal
- Model **asset-based** thinking and actions by embracing curiosity and avoiding blaming, shaming, or externalizing trends discovered during data analysis (e.g., underperformance of particular student groups)
- Use data to counter and combat deficit thinking and oppressive narratives

Practicing Indicators

⊗ 3.1.1 Equity Framework

- Analyze and provide feedback on the alignment of mindsets and practices
- Routinely engage constituents in fostering practices and mindsets that are consonant with a socially just organization
- Frame all conversations and actions based on a recurring appraisal of organizational assets and equity-focused areas of need
- Support others to initiate conversations based on an appraisal of the school's current assets and alignment with liberatory goals of the organization

⊗ 3.1.2 Justice Orientation

- Routinely engage constituents in systemic analysis of equity and inequity with respect to content, pedagogy, knowledge, and practice
- Focus on developing a more inclusive organizational culture, increasing family engagement, and deepening all constituents' knowledge base around critical issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging
- Address deficit thinking and develop systems for infusing **asset-based** language as a collective, school-wide responsibility; however, do not let the equity work be halted while waiting for mindsets to shift
- Promote inclusive organizational structures that offer significant opportunities for members of minoritized populations to take leadership roles and participate in decision-making processes

⊗ 3.1.3 Equity Data

- Routinely engage constituents in language and systemic thinking related to equity—identify root causes of inequity and seek complex solutions
- Monitor how others exhibit curiosity in examining and analyzing multiple alternative types of student data to triangulate information
- Correlate student outcomes, the readiness of staff, **equity audits**, and asset mapping with a long-term focus on student learning and parent engagement
- Engage others in the data analysis process using an **equity lens** at all times

3.2

Democratic Leadership

The civic purpose of schooling is more critical than ever given the increasingly polarized nature of our country, including explicit attempts to erase the presence of historically marginalized groups such as the LGBTQIA+ community from TK–12 curricula. Preparing citizens to take part in democracy is a cornerstone of American educational history and schooling. To emphasize this goal of schooling, the leader bears the responsibility to develop and maintain inclusive structures for adults and students that serve to deepen their understanding and development of multiple critical perspectives and to provide avenues for engagement in school governance, professional learning, classroom dialogue, and discipline systems. In addition, democratic leaders must provide avenues for adults and students to become critical consumers of digital media who are skillful at identifying misinformation and analyzing varying, divergent perspectives. This includes anticipating conflicts and creating systems to address and respond to conflicts that emerge from engagement with diverse perspectives. Ultimately, the leader seeks to foster individual and collective responsibility for outcomes centered on democratic goals.

Emerging Indicators

● 3.2.1 Civic Goal

- Analyze the relationship between achieving equity and social justice and the civic goal of education in developing citizens in a democracy
- Analyze the culture of the school for surfacing the dynamics of racism, implicit bias, discrimination, privilege, and economic oppression in schools and society
- Consider the role of the organization in supporting student engagement in democracy given the current polarized local and national political climate
- Practice engaging in **civic discourse**, including using competencies necessary to keep constituents engaged in difficult conversations

● 3.2.2 Inclusive Structures: Adults

- Analyze adult structures to determine how they facilitate and/or prevent the inclusion of multiple voices and perspectives, especially those from historically marginalized communities
- Investigate processes for providing differentiated professional learning, cultivating leadership opportunities, and celebrating staff's expertise, achievement, and cultural diversity

● 3.2.3 Inclusive Structures: Students

- Use data and research to analyze systems and spaces in schools (discipline, non-classroom student spaces, meetings, student organizations, etc.) to ensure **equitable participation** and outcomes
- Analyze school-based interventions that support students in classrooms and school community
- Identify resources necessary to build a culture of belonging among students and adults in the organization

Developing Indicators

⌘ 3.2.1 Civic Goal

- Articulate the relationship between achieving equity and social justice and the civic goal of education
- Collectively assess and determine practices that embed the civic goal in all school operations
- Assess discipline, attendance, and curricular/extracurricular participation to increase student voice, leadership, and engagement
- Analyze school culture to determine how to assist students and adults to surface and address the dynamics of racism, implicit bias, discrimination, privilege, and economic oppression in schools and society
- Support students and staff to critically analyze the political climate and make informed decisions that promote inclusion and liberation
- Model engagement in **civic discourse**, infusing critical perspectives related to equity and social justice, while attempting to keep all constituents engaged

⌘ 3.2.2 Inclusive Structures: Adults

- Use democratic and collaborative processes to initiate and sustain the inclusion of multiple adult voices and perspectives, especially those from historically marginalized communities
- Confront persistent efforts to exclude; dismantle structures that perpetuate inequity
- Provide differentiated professional learning to support adults in sharpening their **equity lens**
- Cultivate leadership opportunities for all adults and intentionally invite underrepresented staff and community members to consider leadership roles
- Celebrate the expertise, achievement, and cultural diversity of staff and community

⌘ 3.2.3 Inclusive Structures: Students

- Use data and research to analyze and adjust school-wide and classroom-based systems to ensure **equitable participation**, inclusion, and outcomes at every level
- Identify effective interventions to assess current systems and implement effective structures
- Seek alternatives (such as **restorative justice** practices and positive behavior incentives) to exclusionary disciplinary systems in order to elevate student voice and focus on repair and re-engagement over punishment
- Promote commitment to inclusive structures for students among all constituents in the organization

Practicing Indicators

⌘ 3.2.1 Civic Goal

- Build, assess, and adjust the capacity of all systems in the school to center equity and social justice as the civic goal of education
- Explicitly surface and teach students the culture of the school and provide students with experiences and content that assist them in critically analyzing systems that reproduce racism, discrimination, privilege, and economic oppression in schools and society
- Support others to engage in **civic discourse**, articulating their equity stance while also considering multiple, diverse perspectives

⌘ 3.2.2 Inclusive Structures: Adults

- Engage teams of adults in fostering and using equity-based, **culturally responsive**, and democratic structures across school and community meetings and projects
- Regularly monitor and assess the level to which adults are democratically participating in school structures and processes
- Intentionally amplify voices that are not represented in school leadership and collaborative processes

⌘ 3.2.3 Inclusive Structures: Students

- Implement and monitor student systems and structures that foster the principles of democratic schooling and equity
- Develop adult structures of collective responsibility for implementing and monitoring systems that promote democratic participation for students in and out of the classroom
- Ensure that adults are trained and supported to implement alternative disciplinary and support systems
- Monitor for evidence of belonging among students and adults in the organization

3.3

Advocacy

The primary role of leaders as advocates is to help educators navigate the system and remove or circumvent institutional barriers to student opportunity and achievement. Effective individual advocacy depends on a deep understanding of the context and role of all constituents through mapping the school and community. As the leader matures in the role, they engage in collective advocacy, promoting agency among all constituents for the dual purposes of providing necessary services to teachers, students, and families/caregivers and empowering them in their own decisions for improving their communities through social and political action. The leader as an ally models courage, initiative, risk-taking, and coalition-building. As an advocate, the leader articulates conditions and systems that can be transformed in service of achieving a more equitable and just schooling system. Leaders as advocates also recognize when equity-focused initiatives are being undermined and work to re-engage constituents toward mission- and vision-aligned work whenever possible.

Emerging Indicators

3.3.1 Leader as Advocate

- Analyze situations for opportunities to engage in risk-taking and to practice supportive, **hard conversations** that push constituents to self-reflect and potentially shift mindsets and actions toward more just outcomes
- Analyze the root causes of **systemic oppression** in schools and society with the intention of uncovering complexity rather than jumping to solutions
- Examine the role of the leader as public advocate for justice in the community
- Reflect on when advocacy should be enacted by elevating marginalized voices rather than amplifying the leader's voice

3.3.2 Community Asset Mapping

- Engage in understanding community assets and needs with curiosity and a learner stance
- Determine the assets and needs of the organization with a focus on building on strengths and improving learning conditions for students
- Pose problems for social action
- Investigate the assets and **funds of knowledge** present in the local community and consider ways to leverage those assets and to contribute to the community, creating a mutually beneficial relationship

3.3.3 Collective Advocacy

- Identify school, district, and public policy initiatives that affect students and families/caregivers
- Analyze the methods and effectiveness of collective action in schools and communities with regard to managing policies and bureaucracy, speaking on behalf of students and families/caregivers, and serving the needs of constituents
- Investigate community resources to support the needs of students and families/caregivers and to connect students and families with community agencies

Developing Indicators

⌘ 3.3.1 Leader as Advocate

- Take risks and model courage to staff and the school community, particularly when there is an opportunity to explicitly advocate on behalf of underserved and under-resourced populations
- Lead conversations to collectively surface and communicate root causes and complexity of issues affecting schools and communities
- Practice the role of public advocate for justice in school and community forums
- Amplify marginalized voices in the school and community
- Model high levels of self-awareness about **positionality**, power, and privilege as they relate to advocacy

⌘ 3.3.2 Community Asset Mapping

- Identify resources inside and outside the organization and establish community partnerships that correspond to organizational goals and needs
- Pose problems and carry out social-action inquiry projects that deepen community-school connections
- Amplify community assets and voices within the context of the organization

⌘ 3.3.3 Collective Advocacy

- Cultivate a collective strength and responsibility for addressing issues for students and families/caregivers
- Remain attentive to and **reframe** key school, district, and public policy initiatives that affect students and families/caregivers
- Employ and manage effective community resources to support students and families and to connect students and families with essential community agencies

Practicing Indicators

⌘ 3.3.1 Leader as Advocate

- Set the tone for a climate and culture in which the views of students and families/caregivers who have been historically underserved and misrepresented are centered and amplified
- Provide opportunities for others to lead and become advocates
- Advocate for equity and justice in forums inside and outside the school to influence policy decisions and the allocation of resources

⌘ 3.3.2 Community Asset Mapping

- Coalesce and coordinate community services, district resources, and school-site assets for the benefit of improving learning conditions for students, instructional practice of teachers, and engagement of families/caregivers
- Make public the assets of the surrounding community as a critical **counter-narrative** to deficit perceptions
- Promote the importance of **community asset mapping** across the organization and invite constituents across a variety of roles and responsibilities to participate in the process

⌘ 3.3.3 Collective Advocacy

- Build coalitions that foster systemic advocacy and maintain a collective voice and action in the school and community
- Ensure that school, district, and public policy initiatives support equitable outcomes for students
- Foster a community school design in which services and advocacy are linked to student and family/caregiver needs and in which students and families have active and instrumental design, decision-making, and facilitation roles

Leadership is second only to teaching when it comes to helping a student thrive. If leaders don't have the capacity to develop and identify talent—to be able to help build a sense of efficacy among teachers, school psychologists, and others who are working in the school—then we're not going to see a truly thriving organization. —Michelle Young, 2023

A pedagogy of trust provides a powerful undercurrent of intentional practices that promote relational trust as an ongoing process, not a destination—embedding ways of being in a community that underline the value of democratic participation. —Lynda Tredway et al., 2025

Element 4: Curriculum and Instruction

Cultivate high expectations and ensure durable academic, civic, and social-emotional learning outcomes for students and adults so they can thrive

4

Curriculum and Instruction

Cultivate high expectations and ensure durable academic, civic, and social-emotional learning outcomes for students and adults so they can thrive

The leader focuses on the multiple and interrelated learning outcomes and ensures that all adult constituents act in concert to support student learning. The leader as head learner needs a foundational knowledge of standards, curriculum, and instruction in order to adequately support and push educator practice to the next level. The leader cultivates a culture of high expectations and a focus on the instructional core—the relationship between the teacher, the content, and the student. They utilize the design principles of the science of learning and development: building positive relationships; centering belonging and safety; providing relevant, rigorous learning experiences; working to develop skills, habits, and mindsets; and providing necessary integrated support systems to ensure that adults and children can meet their continuous learning goals. Leaders recognize that environments, experiences, and relationships are key drivers in helping students reach their potential, and they are committed to fostering and sustaining durable learning and continuous improvement for all constituents.

4.1 Learning Environment

The leader communicates high expectations for rigor, creativity, and joy in teaching and learning. They nurture a positive school culture, promote safety and belonging, and create inclusive learning spaces in which diverse perspectives and learning styles are honored and viewed as necessary assets for a democratic schooling. They support adults to prioritize building relationships with students as a prerequisite to learning academic content. The leader fosters the use of holistic, integrated, and differentiated curriculum and instruction in order to ensure the needs of the whole child are attended to. The leader articulates the importance of curricular integration across the content areas and advocates for intentional inclusion of the arts and **transformative social and emotional learning**. The leader models technology use that amplifies student learning.

4.2 Standards, Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment

The knowledge and implementation of the core content standards is a given. Social justice-oriented leaders concurrently focus on the opportunity to learn standards and on **culturally sustaining** curriculum and pedagogical practices. Leaders support teachers to design instruction that is inquiry- and problem-based, and that requires young people to practice engaging in collaborative learning that infuses opportunities for reflection and criticality. This approach intentionally honors and amplifies the experiences of historically underserved students and continually strengthens the relevance and rigor of curricular content. Leaders leverage the full range of qualitative and quantitative data needed to implement and refine **evidence-based practice**. Leaders also ensure that content and pedagogy are aligned with assessments that accurately represent student learning and result in responsive teaching and support structures to ensure student growth.

4.3 Professional Learning

The leader's primary responsibility is student outcomes, and they partner with teachers and other educators in this endeavor. In a learning organization, all educators must keep current on the latest research related to curricular content and evidence-based instructional practices. Thus, the leader's role in the continual professional learning of all staff cannot be underestimated. Aligned with the principles of **adult learning theory** and the **science of learning and development**, leaders cultivate a growth mindset across the organization and strive to provide professional learning that is job-embedded, relevant to teacher practice, and sustained over time in order to promote ongoing reflection. The leader emphasizes formal and informal adult learning opportunities, provides formative feedback and coaching to teachers and staff, and uses the evaluation process of supervision, observation, and support to impact teaching and learning school-wide. In the process, they build the capacity of the entire community of educators to plan, implement, and engage in collaborative professional learning.

4.1 Learning Environment

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Emerging Indicators

● 4.1.1 Expectations

- Articulate norms of high expectations and rigor for each learner and learning environment
- Identify leadership actions to support instruction
- Devote significant time to instructional supervision (observation and instructional conversations)
- Articulate expectations for a curriculum that meets the full scope of student learning, including academic, civic, **social-emotional**, arts, and **cultural consciousness**

● 4.1.2 Knowledge Base

- Develop a deep understanding of the principles of the **instructional core**
- Articulate a knowledge base that supports whole-child learning and emphasizes developmental learning theory, specifically the importance of experiences, environment, and relationships to the learning process
- Continuously build knowledge of standards, curriculum, and **evidence-based practices** in the full range of learning necessary for academic, civic, and **transformative social-emotional learning**
- Engage in analysis of balanced curricula and assessments and of a variety of content-based instruction and inclusive learning strategies
- Develop and incorporate linguistically and **culturally sustaining** pedagogical practices
- Engage in reflection, inquiry, and innovation. Adopt a lead learner stance
- Continually seek out and develop competence with the latest instructional technology applications. Use technology to enhance teaching and learning

● 4.1.3 Actionable Feedback

- Assess teacher practice for strengths and areas of improvement
- Reflect on the impact of adult actions on relationships with students, student engagement, and academic achievement, with a specific focus on minoritized student populations
- Assess the level of readiness for individual teachers and groups of educators to engage in critical, reflective instructional conversations
- Reflect on and recognize personal implicit bias
- Practice and reflect on having **hard conversations** about teaching and learning, using coaching questions to address issues such as implicit bias

Developing Indicators

⊗ 4.1.1 Expectations

- Consistently communicate examples of high expectations and rigorous academic work for each student and classroom
- Assess how expectations of instruction and practices align with the collective instructional vision and liberatory goals of the organization
- Collaborate with colleagues to develop a collective instructional vision that includes leadership actions to support instruction
- Continue to build capacity around instructional supervision and identify instructional successes and challenges to use as a springboard for whole-school improvement
- Assess the degree to which the current curriculum meets the full scope of student and adult learning, including academic, civic, **social-emotional**, arts, and **cultural consciousness**

⊗ 4.1.2 Knowledge Base

- Support teachers to understand and articulate the importance of the relationship between the **instructional core**: teacher, content, and students
- Maintain focus on the importance of experiences, environment, and relationships in attending to the learning needs of the whole child
- Identify the knowledge base that supports the connection of learning theory, standards, and pedagogy
- Communicate, model, and share examples of **evidence-based practices** and support the development of teacher capacity
- Identify high-leverage intervention strategies
- Observe and provide feedback on innovations in practice
- Encourage a climate of intellectual inquiry and use of research for changing practice
- Assess the level of technology integration in order to meet instructional needs
- Determine teacher professional learning needs around technology use

⊗ 4.1.3 Actionable Feedback

- Engage with teachers as they work to deepen their understanding of curriculum, unit/lesson design, and intervention strategies and provide regular, specific feedback on teacher performance
- Reflect on the quality of student-teacher and teacher-leader interactions and the degree to which they support opportunities for building safe, positive relationships
- Engage in conversations about values and beliefs, patterns of interactions, student engagement, and responsiveness to students with a specific focus on minoritized student populations
- Engage in and facilitate **hard conversations** about instructional practice for the benefit of student outcomes and adult learning across the school staff

Practicing Indicators

⊗ 4.1.1 Expectations

- Prioritize and protect time to engage in **instructional leadership** activities
- Create and maintain structures that support a collaborative culture of high expectations and rigorous academic work for each student and classroom
- Continuously examine and monitor to ensure that the collective instructional vision and practices are achieving the desired outcomes
- Create and implement structures that are responsive to instructional trends that emerge from looking at individual and group assets and challenges
- Advocate for curricular changes in order to meet the full scope of student and adult learning, including academic, civic, **social-emotional**, arts, and **cultural consciousness**

⊗ 4.1.2 Knowledge Base

- Monitor for and support implementation of curricular practice based on an understanding of the **instructional core** and attending to the needs of the whole child
- Build structures and feedback loops to ensure that the knowledge base informs the content, curriculum, and pedagogical practices of the school
- Stay current with new research and learning
- Systematically connect all teaching and learning for students and adults to research
- Incentivize teacher leadership and engagement in professional peer-to-peer learning around curricular innovations
- Advocate for intentional integration of technology and provide professional learning opportunities for teachers to continually grow their practice

⊗ 4.1.3 Actionable Feedback

- Empower others to lead instructionally focused conversations centered on the performance and well-being of minoritized student populations in the school culture
- Encourage and support peer-to-peer teacher observation and feedback cycles
- Create and sustain a school culture that embodies intentional teacher-student relationship building, particularly for historically marginalized students
- Support opportunities for risk-taking and innovation in instructional practice
- Ensure instructional conversations and feedback result in authentic reflection and positive change in instructional practice

4.2

Standards, Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment

The knowledge and implementation of the core content standards is a given. Social justice-oriented leaders concurrently focus on the opportunity to learn standards and on culturally sustaining curriculum and pedagogical practices. Leaders support teachers to design instruction that is inquiry- and problem-based, and that requires young people to practice engaging in collaborative learning that infuses opportunities for reflection and criticality. This approach intentionally honors and amplifies the experiences of historically underserved students and continually strengthens the relevance and rigor of curricular content. Leaders leverage the full range of qualitative and quantitative data needed to implement and refine evidence-based practice. Leaders also ensure that content and pedagogy are aligned with assessments that accurately represent student learning and result in responsive teaching and support structures to ensure student growth.

Emerging Indicators

● 4.2.1 Core Content Standards

- Articulate the standards for each grade level and content area
- Conduct audits of curricular materials to determine alignment to core standards and relevance to school population
- Relate implementation of standards to **deeper learning**, including the infusion of inquiry- and problem-based pedagogies
- Articulate how arts, technology, and critical consciousness are key components for learning

● 4.2.2 Opportunity to Learn Content Standards

- Articulate and identify equitable academic content, instructional practices, and instructional minutes that support rigor for all students, especially neurodivergent learners and emergent bilingual students
- Examine school programs and structures to assess how they support equitable academic, civic, and **transformative social-emotional** learning outcomes
- Assess for and identify inequitable and harmful instructional practices

● 4.2.3 Equitable Curricular Content

- Advocate for a rigorous, **culturally sustaining** curriculum for classrooms, professional learning, and all school activities that includes the contributions and perspectives of diverse cultural traditions
- Provide examples of the range of curricular options, moving toward a curriculum that supports social action and critical consciousness

● 4.2.4 Evidence-Based Practice

- Identify and analyze quantitative and qualitative, formal and informal, and summative and formative data to inform needs of individual teachers and school-wide professional learning needs
- Conduct regular classroom observations to collect and analyze evidence for use in individual and collective teacher practice
- Engage teachers in instructional conversations that deprivatize the teaching practice
- Cultivate a culture of continuous adult learning that includes regular discussions focused on improving teaching and learning

Developing Indicators

⊗ 4.2.1 Core Content Standards

- Support deeper engagement with and understanding of standards by constituents across the school
- Use observation of teachers to support implementation of grade level-aligned and standards-aligned instruction
- Monitor use of grade level-aligned curricular materials and support teachers to design cognitively challenging tasks for students
- Purposefully supplement curricular content to ensure standards-based grade-level and **culturally sustaining** learning
- Advocate for arts, technology, and critical consciousness as key components for learning

⊗ 4.2.2 Opportunity to Learn Content Standards

- Facilitate conversations and professional learning that address the implementation of standards and pedagogical practices and that support the highest level of cognitive development and access to learning for all students, especially neurodivergent students and emergent bilingual students
- Provide feedback to teachers about how to optimize learning time and address the learning needs of all students
- Identify and interrupt inequitable and harmful instructional practices

⊗ 4.2.3 Equitable Curricular Content

- Implement a rigorous, **culturally sustaining** curriculum for classrooms, professional learning, and school activities that includes the contributions and the perspectives of diverse cultural traditions
- Provide space for both students and educators to connect personal experiences and perspectives to the curriculum
- Encourage constructivist and project-based learning in classrooms that supports social action and critical consciousness

⊗ 4.2.4 Evidence-Based Practice

- Use quantitative and qualitative, formal and informal, and summative and formative data to inform daily teacher adjustments and ongoing school-wide professional learning needs
- Design and implement structures for regular classroom observations and collaboration among staff
- Use evidence to assess individual and collective teacher practice, including through peer conversations and actionable feedback about teaching and learning

Practicing Indicators

⊗ 4.2.1 Core Content Standards

- Build and monitor structures that allow for **vertical and horizontal articulation** and development of standards-based lessons
- Ensure implementation of curricular materials that support core standards and assessments
- Enhance classroom practice by spiraling curriculum, standards, and instruction, and by implementing technology that emphasizes cognitive complexity and **deeper learning**
- Share effective examples of integration of arts, technology, and critical consciousness among staff members

⊗ 4.2.2 Opportunity to Learn Content Standards

- Communicate a clear expectation about the shared responsibility for ensuring equitable access to rigorous, **culturally sustaining** academic content, instructional practices, and a robust academic program that includes civic and **transformative social-emotional** learning outcomes for all students
- Regularly observe instruction and provide feedback and effective professional learning
- Build and monitor systemic supports for equitable access to adult and student learning

⊗ 4.2.3 Equitable Curricular Content

- Co-construct, implement, and support a rigorous, **culturally sustaining** curriculum for classrooms, professional learning, and school activities that includes the contributions of diverse cultural traditions
- Make explicit the value of integrating student and staff historical and cultural perspectives into the curriculum
- Model and sustain the role of social action and critical consciousness in curriculum and instruction

⊗ 4.2.4 Evidence-Based Practice

- Collaboratively and continuously use data to make decisions about academic, civic, and **social-emotional** outcomes for students by identifying assets and learning needs of teachers
- Make collective professional learning decisions based on evidence
- Collectively identify leverage points for actions and set measurable goals for improving teacher practice

4.3

Professional Learning

The leader's primary responsibility is student outcomes, and they partner with teachers and other educators in this endeavor. In a learning organization, all educators must keep current on the latest research related to curricular content and evidence-based instructional practices. Thus, the leader's role in the continual professional learning of all staff cannot be underestimated. Aligned with the principles of adult learning theory and the science of learning and development, leaders cultivate a growth mindset across the organization and strive to provide professional learning that is job-embedded, relevant to teacher practice, and sustained over time in order to promote ongoing reflection. The leader emphasizes formal and informal adult learning opportunities, provides formative feedback and coaching to teachers and staff, and uses the evaluation process of supervision, observation, and support to impact teaching and learning school-wide. In the process, they build the capacity of the entire community of educators to plan, implement, and engage in collaborative professional learning.

Emerging Indicators

● 4.3.1 Adult Learning

- Assess the organizational structure and disposition toward formal and informal professional learning of all adults who interact with students
- Articulate and analyze leadership structures that foster a productive, collaborative, and systematic learning environment that values formal and informal professional learning structures
- Model and practice effective facilitation and pedagogy for adult learning
- Develop understanding of career cycles of teachers and considerations for support

● 4.3.2 Formative Feedback

- Develop awareness of systems of formal and informal formative feedback that supports adult learning
- Examine, recognize, and implement effective informal communication for engaging in instructional conversations
- Develop a set of coaching practices that encourage teachers to engage in reflective instructional conversations and equity-centered feedback cycles
- Examine the role of the leader in building **coherence** across school-wide instructional initiatives, ideas, and practices

● 4.3.3 Teacher Outcomes

- Analyze individual teacher developmental trajectories to ensure professional growth for each teacher through formal and informal equity-focused instructional conversations
- Analyze and articulate the need for instructional observations, coaching, and conferencing strategies aligned to the needs of individuals, groups, or situations
- View individual and collective assets of teachers through a social justice-based and **asset-based** lens and explicitly name teacher assets

continued ▼

Developing Indicators

⊗ 4.3.1 Adult Learning

- Facilitate and enhance an organizational structure that supports formal and informal professional learning that meets the diverse needs of all adults who interact with students
- Co-develop systems to allocate time and resources to address professional learning needs
- Provide opportunities for formal learning for individuals, grade/department/team levels, parents, staff, and whole-school development and informal structures for peer-to-peer learning
- Design professional learning that is purposeful, responsive to teachers' context, and allows teachers to take responsibility for their own learning

⊗ 4.3.2 Formative Feedback

- Intentionally plan for effective informal and formal feedback about teaching and learning
- Demonstrate strategic use of feedback specific to processes, contexts, and constituents: informal instructional conversations, walkthroughs, small-group or school-wide meetings, etc.
- Use coaching practices that support teachers to be reflective about their practice and engage in continuous learning
- Assess the personal impact in building **coherence** of instructional ideas and practices in order to cultivate **interdependence**

⊗ 4.3.3 Teacher Outcomes

- Engage teachers in implementing an instructional program using a collaborative and recursive analysis to ensure professional growth resulting in equitable student outcomes
- Employ instructional observations, coaching, and conferencing strategies aligned to the needs of individuals, groups, or the situation
- Build leader capacity to improve observation, data collection, and analysis of instructional practices
- Develop systems for sharing and discussing a range of teaching practices aligned with a social justice lens
- Regularly highlight teacher practice based on evidence collected during observations
- Use observation evidence as content for professional learning

continued ▼

Practicing Indicators

⊗ 4.3.1 Adult Learning

- Fully implement collaborative learning community structures that are premised on **distributed leadership** and shared facilitation
- Collaboratively design and implement short- and long-term plans based on identified adult learning needs
- Support teacher-leaders to facilitate adult learning that is relevant and job-embedded, and that acknowledges the experience and expertise of teachers
- Solicit feedback and monitor structures to assess effectiveness of professional learning implementation

⊗ 4.3.2 Formative Feedback

- Institute and monitor a system in which formal and informal feedback from peer teachers, coaches, and students is viewed as supportive, productive, and instructive by all educators at the site
- Actively model effective informal instructional conversations and communication of specific, actionable feedback
- **Reframe** all discussions of teaching and learning to center an equity- and justice-oriented focus
- Model effective coaching practices that support teachers to independently engage in collaborative **critical friends** protocols and invite feedback from peers to inform their practice

⊗ 4.3.3 Teacher Outcomes

- Support each teacher to use **evidence-based practices** and a social justice lens to develop and implement a cohesive and outcome-based instructional program
- Monitor the intentional use of observation, coaching, and conferencing strategies that contribute to individual or collective growth and result in positive changes in teacher practice
- Articulate school-wide data patterns that emerge from walkthroughs, observations, and coaching to support staff professional learning

continued ▼

4.3 Professional Learning

continued

Emerging Indicators

▲ continued from previous

● 4.3.4 Instructional Supervision and Evaluation

- Articulate the teaching standards and expectations for teacher practice and performance
- Assess capacity for growth in each teacher and staff member
- Identify a variety of observation tools and evaluation systems utilized to assess teaching/practice
- Articulate the components of an effective evaluation system
- Identify different feedback methods and coaching stances to engage in conversations with teachers about pedagogy and classroom learning environment
- Identify ways in which feedback is used to increase teacher/staff motivation, inspiration, and participation in process of **continuous improvement**

Developing Indicators

▲ continued from previous

⊗ 4.3.4 Instructional Supervision and Evaluation

- Distinguish between the supports and feedback needed for teachers based on assessment of teacher data
- Collectively determine effective observation tools to support teachers/staff in deepening their understanding of their practice
- Observe teaching practice, identifying teacher capacity, strengths, and areas of growth
- Engage teachers/staff in the collaborative identification of types of support, including induction and district support systems for coaching
- Provide instructional feedback that is specific and relevant to teacher goals, is aligned to state standards for teaching practice, and identifies multiple venues of support beyond the evaluation system
- Use changes in teacher/staff practice and leadership as evidence of learning and development
- Skillfully engage in conversations that help teachers/staff choose the appropriate pathway, whether that is to improved practice or a transition to a different career
- Utilize ongoing supervision and formal evaluation processes to document and address poor instructional performance

Practicing Indicators

▲ continued from previous

⊗ 4.3.4 Instructional Supervision and Evaluation

- Calibrate effectiveness of feedback with fellow administrators/supervisors to ensure a consistent focus on teacher/staff support, effective instruction, and student learning
- Use an evaluation and support system to provide differentiated support and professional learning for teachers/staff
- Ensure that the evaluation system allows opportunities for teachers/staff to self-assess, analyze successful professional learning, and set personal goals
- Assess school-wide patterns of teacher/staff strengths and design professional learning to address growth areas
- Collaborate and calibrate with fellow supervisors to ensure consistency and care in holding conversations with teachers/staff about career pathways

The U.S. is a place that really focuses on individualism. . . . Individualism only goes so far when we think about how individuals ultimately do influence each other and it's through institutions that we see that. So for me, public education is critically important to thinking about the future of our country, and how we want to live out our democratic ideals because it's one of the few places where we actually do engage in systems, processes, and ways of learning from people who are different than us and also how we learn to influence and govern each other, how we learn to live as a group. —Rebecca Cheung, 2023

Changes are highly dependent on the social learning that happens across networks of schools, bureaucracies, and local organizations. School leaders play a key role in facilitating and shaping social learning not just with their schools but also with their communities. —Jose Eos Trinidad, 2025

Element 5: Organization and Systems

Align systems, structures, and resources that sustain an environment that centers equitable student outcomes

5

Organization and Systems

Align systems, structures, and resources that sustain an environment that centers equitable student outcomes

A leader maintains a focus on equitable student learning outcomes by creating, revising, and aligning systems and operations that foster a productive, collaborative, and culturally responsive culture. The school as a learning organization has processes for internal self-analysis and exhibits the ability to continually monitor and improve policies, procedures, and systems. The school is viewed as a community center that acknowledges and employs the assets and resources of parents, caregivers, and community partners in the service of substantial and durable academic, civic, social-emotional, and life outcomes for students.



5.1 Organizational Perspective

Leaders must manage all systems in service of student and adult learning outcomes. Recognizing that change is constant, the leadership, which includes a collective and representative leadership team, models an optimizing perspective and **buffers** external demands so that the organization's community can maintain a focus on the goals that have been internally chosen. The leader uses ongoing **ecological mapping** of the school's systems and structures for regularly assessing the capacity of individuals and the organization. By relying on **distributed leadership** and fostering **adaptive leadership**, systems leaders can work toward substantial outcomes.

5.2 Structures

Leaders recognize that structures are instruments for organizing the work of schools. Designing, aligning, implementing, and continuously improving operations are prime responsibilities of the leader and their administrative team, including support staff. The governance systems, disciplinary policy and processes, fiscal management, and legal and personnel policies are essential structures that support the school goals or cause difficulties that interrupt teaching and learning. Family and community engagement are critical for a well-functioning organization and have a significant impact on student outcomes; therefore, leaders must find ways to intentionally and authentically integrate families into organizational structures.

5.3 Monitoring

Leaders continuously monitor the implementation of systems across the organization. This includes maintaining the organizational identity, attending to information flow, and setting clear expectations about organizational priorities. When decisions are made, the collective leadership should consider the organizational values and vision and employ a justice-oriented approach. Since information is a source of organizational cohesion, the leader needs to maintain open dialogue and address any barriers that restrict the flow of information, particularly from and to historically underrepresented groups. Prioritizing important long-term goals while attending to day-to-day urgencies is difficult for individuals and organizations. Therefore, it is critical that the leader promotes and nurtures an organization that keeps its collective focus on student outcomes through careful monitoring and management of the organization and its systems.

5.1

Organizational Perspective

Leaders must manage all systems in service of student and adult learning outcomes. Recognizing that change is constant, the leadership, which includes a collective and representative leadership team, models an optimizing perspective and buffers external demands so that the organization's community can maintain a focus on the goals that have been internally chosen. The leader uses ongoing ecological mapping of the school's systems and structures for regularly assessing the capacity of individuals and the organization. By relying on distributed leadership and fostering adaptive leadership, systems leaders can work toward substantial outcomes.

Emerging Indicators

● 5.1.1 Ecological Mapping

- Articulate clear understanding of what practices and actions need to be observed in an effectively operating system
- Determine whether leader priorities are aligned to system-wide equity goals
- Identify formal and informal organization-wide systems that contribute to a common purpose and reflect core values of equity, justice, inclusion, and belonging
- Examine and evaluate the existing **interdependence** and interrelationships within the system that influence results
- Articulate how school systems contribute to and/or hinder the achievement of student outcomes with a specific focus on marginalized and **historically resilient** populations

● 5.1.2 Organizational Capacity

- Assess the will, skill, knowledge, and capacity of the organization to function optimally in the service of fostering and sustaining a shared vision and productive action in service of equitable outcomes
- Assess the level of constituent access to information, professional learning opportunities, and organizational actors

● 5.1.3 Systems Leadership

- Use an analysis of the school's systems and organizational readiness to determine leadership response(s)
- Analyze the organization through the lens of a **distributed leadership** model
- Reflect on the interrelated components of the system and invest the time to fully understand how the system impacts various constituents
- Practice using **systems thinking** to determine where to focus leadership efforts

Developing Indicators

⌘ 5.1.1 Ecological Mapping

- Support others to deepen their understanding of high-leverage practices and the complexity of the system
- Revise leader priorities to ensure equity goals are centered
- Engage constituents in analyzing how individual and collective roles and responsibilities impact school-wide systems and contribute to a common purpose
- Analyze formal and informal systems, their interrelationships, and **interdependence** to assess effective and ineffective operational structures and systems as well as their impact on issues of equity, justice, inclusion, and belonging
- Determine support and resources needed to achieve organizational vision

⌘ 5.1.2 Organizational Capacity

- Build the capacity of constituents to identify the practices and actions that need to be observed in an effective system
- Engage the community in assessing the will, skill, knowledge, and capacity of the organization to function optimally in the service of a coherent and shared vision and increasing capacity for key equity- and justice-focused outcomes
- Use the assessment to determine changes that need to be made
- Assess the organization's capacity to make changes and the types of information, professional learning, and capacity-building needed by all organizational actors
- Determine whether the identified changes in the system support movement toward a coherent and shared vision

⌘ 5.1.3 Systems Leadership

- Support representative and **distributed leadership** practices by positioning informal leaders in ways that allow them to explore complex leadership dilemmas and utilize their strengths toward school improvement efforts
- Embrace cognitive and systemic **disequilibrium** as an essential component of systems change, promote experimentation and innovation, and hold each other accountable
- Identify and confront systemic and **institutional barriers**, including inequitable impact of policies
- Foster **adaptive leadership** in self and others
- Use **systems thinking** to engage others in determining the focus of leadership efforts given the complexity of the system
- Articulate potential actions/choices and identify ramifications and trade-offs given the complexity of the system

Practicing Indicators

⌘ 5.1.1 Ecological Mapping

- Create regular opportunities to collectively review what has been learned about the formal and informal systems, their interconnections, and effectiveness at reaching goals of equity, justice, inclusion, and belonging
- Provide resources and processes that support the analytical review
- Use systems-level analysis to make necessary adjustments to enhance the function and operation of systems that support the organizational vision

⌘ 5.1.2 Organizational Capacity

- Develop an iterative process of periodic assessment of the organization's ability to adjust and adapt systems as needed
- Provide scaffolding and resources to make necessary adjustments
- Ensure that the system is primed for change
- Work with the leadership team to determine whether the implemented changes in the system resulted in furthering a coherent and shared vision
- Continually analyze the impact of changes on the most **historically resilient** populations of the school

⌘ 5.1.3 Systems Leadership

- Model **adaptive leadership** and **systems thinking** by using an understanding of context, including **interdependence**, action and reaction, unintended consequences, and ramifications and trade-offs
- Make decisions about which actions to take and which to strategically abandon
- Enact **distributed leadership** through the use of informal and formal leadership to determine areas of focus and foster interdependent, collaborative learning
- Model and support a shift in thinking by focusing on **systems thinking** at the whole-school and district level to create and maintain systemic equilibrium that serves all constituents

5.2 Structures

Leaders recognize that structures are instruments for organizing the work of schools. Designing, aligning, implementing, and continuously improving operations are prime responsibilities of the leader and their administrative team, including support staff. The governance systems, disciplinary policy and processes, fiscal management, and legal and personnel policies are essential structures that support the school goals or cause difficulties that interrupt teaching and learning. Family and community engagement are critical for a well-functioning organization and have a significant impact on student outcomes; therefore, leaders must find ways to intentionally and authentically integrate families into organizational structures.

Emerging Indicators

● 5.2.1 Operations

- Use inventories and **equity audits** to assess the school climate and culture and the efficacy of school operations
- Identify key operations and systems that support effectively functioning schools and organizations
- Analyze systems that ensure smooth, safe, and positive day-to-day operations that align the legal, fiscal, policy, and personnel structures to optimize student learning

● 5.2.2 Governance and Legal Structures

- Articulate the types and processes of decision-making bodies
- Distinguish between types of decisions that require sole choice of administrator or consensus of constituents
- Promote **equitable participation** of all constituents, including parents/caregivers, in decision-making bodies
- Articulate the ways in which policy becomes part of practice and how leaders can leverage policy toward equity goals
- Identify key governance areas that are in alignment with mandated legal requirements and policies (i.e., facilities, Special Education, ELL, discipline, intervention, contracts, policy mandates)
- Examine legal structures in relation to policy

● 5.2.3 Resource Management

- Identify how to align fiscal, human, time, and material resources to support optimal learning and equitable outcomes for all students and educators
- Identify data and evidence needed to inform and support resource allocation
- Articulate different types of school, district, and community resources and how those resources can be reallocated to mitigate inequity

continued ▼

Developing Indicators

⚙️ 5.2.1 Operations

- Invite all adults who interact with children at the school site to analyze results of inventories and **equity audits** to assess school climate and culture and to consider opportunities for improvement
- Ensure that key operations (attendance, fiscal, personnel, governance, legal, day-to-day systems, culture and climate) are in place and working effectively
- Establish school structures and processes that engage all constituents in taking ownership of effective operations
- Ensure smooth, safe, and positive day-to-day operations that align the legal, fiscal, policy, and personnel structures to optimize student learning

⚙️ 5.2.2 Governance and Legal Structures

- Assess the decision-making bodies for level of function and **equitable participation**, ensuring meaningful participation of historically underrepresented groups
- Utilize decision-making authority to foster **transformative leadership** throughout the school
- Align and implement site plan goals and actions in ways that foster school **coherence** and adhere to policy and legal mandates while ensuring focus on equity initiatives
- Communicate to all constituents key legal rights and responsibilities of administrators, teachers, support staff, family/caregivers, and students
- Develop district/organization contacts to assist with making decisions with regard to legal and policy issues
- Stay up to date on current policy mandates and Education Code laws in order to protect student and staff rights and mitigate efforts to subvert equity initiatives

⚙️ 5.2.3 Resource Management

- Acquire, create, and align fiscal, human, time, and material resources to support optimal learning and equitable outcomes with a specific focus on the most marginalized and **historically resilient** students and educators
- Collect and analyze multi-year data to serve as evidence in support of resource allocation
- Be creative in seeking out additional resources to supplement limited budgets and address the needs of historically underserved populations
- Engage others in assessing the effective use of resources to achieve equitable goals
- Regularly assess the ways in which resources diminish inequity and are aligned to equity goals of the school

continued ▼

Practicing Indicators

⚙️ 5.2.1 Operations

- Create a system to regularly review implementation and effectiveness of operations in supporting the vision
- Seek engagement from a diverse and representative group of constituents regarding how to improve operations, with a focus on efficiency, equity, and inclusion, and invite those constituents to co-design school structures and procedures
- Ensure that the operational systems advance the achievement of optimal student academic, civic, and **social-emotional** outcomes

⚙️ 5.2.2 Governance and Legal Structures

- Maintain systems for periodic monitoring and review of adherence to policy, implementation of action plan(s), and participation in decision-making on key issues
- Utilize decision-making and authority in a manner that builds the capacity and **transformative leadership** of others while maintaining **coherence**, consistency, and systemic efficacy
- Monitor site plan goals and actions for adherence to policy, legal mandates, and focus on equity initiatives
- Remain updated and current in terms of policy and legal requirements for all constituents and facilities
- Leverage alignments in legal and policy requirements to support equity-focused initiatives

⚙️ 5.2.3 Resource Management

- Ensure that fiscal, human, time, and material resource decisions are transparent, reviewed, supported, and monitored, and that they result in optimal learning and equitable outcomes with specific focus on the most marginalized and **historically resilient** students and educators
- Engage constituents in deepening their understanding of evidence that supports resource allocation
- Collectively cultivate new partnerships that can provide resources to meet the needs of historically underserved populations, including identifying and applying for grants
- Create and maintain systems that allow for periodic, collaborative review and redesign of resource alignment with organizational goals

continued ▼

5.2 Structures

continued

Emerging Indicators

▲ continued from previous

● 5.2.4 Discipline Systems

- Identify the legal dimensions and leader responsibilities related to discipline
- Learn about, participate in, and analyze various site- and district-level disciplinary actions and processes
- Engage in personal reflection of biases that impact how discipline systems are enacted, particularly with regard to marginalized populations such as students with disabilities and those who have been disproportionately impacted by discipline systems
- Build knowledge around the rights of students with disabilities
- Use culture and climate **equity audits** to assess and analyze the effectiveness of discipline systems
- Investigate **restorative justice** and alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices to create a more equitable response to students and families/caregivers

● 5.2.5 Intentional Inclusion of Family and Community

- Analyze effective family and community involvement processes, viewpoints, policies, and practices, including governance structures
- Investigate processes for parent/caregiver contributions, concerns, and involvement in school and classroom decision-making processes
- Interrogate policy, research, and practices for coordinating services and supports for under-resourced schools and communities
- Identify how families, students, and caregivers can be most effectively engaged in developing agency for problem-solving and participation in schools and communities

Developing Indicators

▲ continued from previous

⊗ 5.2.4 Discipline Systems

- Maintain balance between the dual role of student advocate and teacher advocate
- Inform teachers of rights and responsibilities with respect to disciplinary practices, including latest Education Code policies
- Ensure that students, staff, and families understand the policies and procedures connected to discipline, including how to raise concerns/appeals about the disciplinary process and how to protect the rights of students with disabilities and those students who are disproportionately impacted by the discipline system
- Encourage teachers and staff to increase self-awareness of biases they hold that contribute to disproportionate disciplinary practices
- Collect and analyze discipline data for patterns of disproportionality and responsiveness to student and family needs
- Seek out current research on effective alternative discipline systems that support a **culturally responsive** climate for students, such as **restorative practices**
- Develop and implement alternative discipline practices that are both proactive (build healthy school culture, focus on belonging and safety, diminish **chronic absenteeism**, and decrease the number of referrals and suspensions) and responsive (to repair harm done to the school community)
- Analyze the ways in which administrative discipline responses detract from or support teaching and learning and students' sense of belonging
- Develop systems for connecting classroom observations to discipline oversight

⊗ 5.2.5 Intentional Inclusion of Family and Community

- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for connecting all persons and organizations serving students and families/caregivers to vision and goals
- Redefine and broaden conceptions of parent/caregiver involvement
- Intentionally invite families and caregivers to participate in school and classroom decision-making processes, with a specific focus on those voices that are representative of the community
- Develop and implement systems for assessing service-provider connection with school goals and parent input
- Cultivate effective relationships with on-site staff related to after-school programs and family services
- Develop policies and procedures for all adults working with students on the school campus
- Investigate and implement strategies to promote belonging and to address conflicts that arise among constituents

Practicing Indicators

▲ continued from previous

⊗ 5.2.4 Discipline Systems

- Monitor and ensure that discipline systems and practices comply with Education Code policies
- Establish and maintain systems that ensure that the rights of students with disabilities are upheld
- Monitor and promote in others an increased self-awareness of the existence of bias and work at **sidelining bias** to create equitable disciplinary systems
- Share disaggregated discipline data and reports on effectiveness of discipline systems, as well as efforts to decrease disproportionality of exclusionary discipline of minoritized student groups
- Conduct annual audits/surveys of students and families in terms of school safety, climate, and discipline practices, to improve structures that support student access to the curriculum and a sense of belonging
- Collaboratively evaluate and redesign disciplinary systems and structures with staff, students, and families/caregivers
- Provide professional learning opportunities for staff and families about alternative discipline systems designed to increase student belonging and improve culture and climate

⊗ 5.2.5 Intentional Inclusion of Family and Community

- Monitor and alter the plan for connecting all persons and organizations serving students and families/caregivers to ensure equitable access for all constituents
- Assess the parent/caregiver community for strong advocates who can act as agents for change at the school and community level
- Develop and implement processes and rituals for individual and organizational contributions to achieving school goals
- Develop, implement, and monitor effective program evaluation of all organizations and programs at the school site

5.3 Monitoring

Leaders continuously monitor the implementation of systems across the organization. This includes maintaining the organizational identity, attending to information flow, and setting clear expectations about organizational priorities. When decisions are made, the collective leadership should consider the organizational values and vision and employ a justice-oriented approach. Since information is a source of organizational cohesion, the leader needs to maintain open dialogue and address any barriers that restrict the flow of information, particularly from and to historically underrepresented groups. Prioritizing important long-term goals while attending to day-to-day urgencies is difficult for individuals and organizations. Therefore, it is critical that the leader promotes and nurtures an organization that keeps its collective focus on student outcomes through careful monitoring and management of the organization and its systems.

Emerging Indicators

5.3.1 Organizational Identity

- Identify the vision and a shared sense of purpose in the articulation and implementation of the school's systems
- Analyze how organizational structures and systems reinforce the collective sense of purpose
- Analyze and critique inequities in systemic structures and organizational practices, particularly those that have historically resulted in inequitable outcomes for marginalized populations

5.3.2 Information Flow

- Identify the elements of high-functioning communication systems, including advocacy, transparency, discernment, and public relations
- Analyze organizational systems to determine how they foster an information-rich environment that allows constituents to engage in complex understanding of key issues
- Analyze how the way information travels through the many levels of the organization contributes to informal and formal power dynamics

5.3.3 Prioritization

- Identify effective use of time for leaders using the **urgent/important framework** and articulate how to balance day-to-day tasks with long-term goals
- Identify strategies and structures that support people working together quickly, effectively, and productively with a spirit of collegiality
- Identify ways to recognize and affirm constituent contributions to the organization for the purpose of increasing organizational connectedness and achieving equity-focused goals

Developing Indicators

5.3.1 Organizational Identity

- Engage others in continuous review of the core values and vision as evidenced in the school's systems
- Interrogate how the vision is being enacted in daily organizational practices and be willing to shift longstanding practices that are misaligned with the vision
- Establish routine processes for dialogue to reinforce and refine the school's systems
- Align practices and processes with an equity mission that is embedded in a vision
- Design and implement formal and informal public-relations plans and messaging to support organizational assets

5.3.2 Information Flow

- Utilize effective elements of high-functioning communication systems, including advocacy, transparency, discernment, and public relations
- Encourage others to offer feedback on the impact of information flow, including noticing when information contributes to or detracts from organizational effectiveness
- Utilize formal and informal processes that support discussions across the organization and lead to the possibility of cultivating new levels of understanding, prioritizing the flow from and to historically underrepresented groups
- Identify the impact of the current system, including that on the organizational culture and the feeling of belonging for individuals or groups

5.3.3 Prioritization

- Engage constituents in identifying and analyzing effective use of time using the **urgent/important framework**, balancing accomplishing day-to-day tasks with progress toward important and long-term goals
- Identify and determine how to respectfully engage the complex network of constituents who contribute to the organization
- Optimize synergies by focusing on organizational relationships and assets
- Create processes and structures that routinely honor diverse and representative voices and contributions to the organization
- Strengthen individual and collective management skills by strategically supporting constituents to clarify individual and collective work, navigate systems, and collaborate to attain goals

Practicing Indicators

5.3.1 Organizational Identity

- Model collective decision-making processes that incorporate the values articulated in the organizational vision for high-leverage, justice-oriented outcomes
- Collectively determine and implement organizational actions that are consistent with the vision
- Be explicit about and monitor practices that enhance the systems in the service of equitable student outcomes
- Continually calibrate around organizational identity with key constituents
- Maintain consistency with respect to purpose and organizational messaging in the public arena

5.3.2 Information Flow

- Communicate the value of consistent, timely, transparent information as a primary source of organizational nourishment and the leader's responsibility to disseminate information in a way that optimizes organizational effectiveness
- Ensure effective information flow, including communication with all constituents that facilitates efficacy, collaboration, collegiality, and cohesion
- Support constituents in surfacing and discussing unsettling, uncomfortable, and disconfirming information, especially around issues of racial justice and inequities
- Engage constituents in the dialogue needed to achieve the desired results
- Develop tools for regular and comprehensive feedback from all constituents

5.3.3 Prioritization

- Operate an organization in which day-to-day tasks flow smoothly, urgent needs are addressed effectively, and progress toward school-wide goals is visible and consistent
- Leverage formal and informal relationships to support the school's systems and identify how those relationships can be directed toward accomplishing equity-focused goals
- Actively seek out and facilitate constituent access to additional relationships that can contribute to organizational effectiveness and **continuous improvement**
- Review school-wide relationships and collegiality as a part of the evaluation of organizational health

Teachers leave their principals, not their students. Given the central role of principals in creating organizational conditions that can enable teacher thriving, it is critical that we think systematically about preparing and developing aspiring school building leaders. —Travis Bristol, 2025

There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the “practice of freedom,” the means by which men and women . . . discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. —Richard Shaull, 1970

Element 6: Change and Coherence

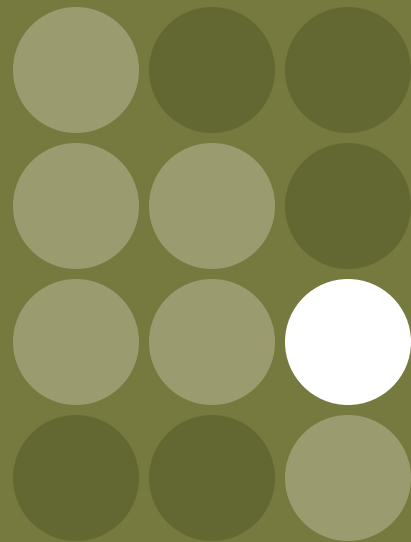
**Engage all constituents in change efforts that
respond collectively and coherently to the assets and
challenges in schools and communities**

6

Change and Coherence

Engage all constituents in change efforts that respond collectively and coherently to the assets and challenges in schools and communities

The level of readiness of each school's constituents and context determines the components and pace of change and transformation; the leader must be able to critically assess both assets and challenges in their context. They focus on the formal and informal processes, choosing evidence that indicates progress toward desired changes, and strategically celebrating effort and outcomes. The leader guides the organization through inevitable difficulties and responds with creativity and resilience as they reframe resistance as opportunities for growth, learning, and building cohesion. As the leader develops organizational systems of authentic shared leadership, the responsibility for change becomes more collaborative.



6.1

Assessing Organizational Readiness

Similar to assessing organizational readiness in the systems arena, the ability to assess individual and collective assets is a crucial first step in choosing goals and actions. By assessing the current level of cohesion in the school and maintaining an inquiry stance, the leader models how to engage in school transformation efforts. As the school constituents gain agency over change efforts, they build capacity to analyze and use data and evidence, to review and revise their collective approaches to school transformation, and to make substantive change.

6.2

Collaborative Goals and Actions

Building on an organization's assets, the leader poses **problems of practice** in order to engage in transformation; these problems of practice are explicitly linked to goals determined by the organization's constituents. The leader grounds the **continuous improvement** efforts in a collective vision for social justice and liberation. They frame their inquiry and analysis of root causes through an **equity lens**, and they develop and implement processes, structures, and actions with an unfailing commitment to students' academic, **social-emotional**, and civic success.

6.3

Reframing Perspective

Leaders persistently develop their capacity to view resistance as an opportunity rather than a challenge. In fact, leaders understand that resistance is a necessary and expected part of the transformation process. To this end, leaders optimize potential by continuously analyzing relationships and connections of formal and informal groups, seeking alternative perspectives, and attending to the **cultural discontinuity** that can derail change efforts. The leader relies on creativity, flexibility, resilience, and reflection and promotes these as necessary qualities in all members of the learning community.

6.1

Assessing Organizational Readiness

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Emerging Indicators

● 6.1.1 Preparation for Change

- Analyze the levels of cohesion and collaboration of different constituents
- Articulate the various tools and processes that will facilitate data collection and analysis of the organization's readiness for change
- Collect multiple sources of data related to assets, growth areas, student achievement, teacher/staff level of experience, practice, etc., and analyze data for **coherence**, patterns, and trends
- Recognize and analyze the relationship of the organization to external accountability

● 6.1.2 Approach to Learning

- Identify and evaluate current practices in terms of the connection of the organizational systems to outcomes for those they serve
- Articulate an informed perspective about the value and processes of inquiry
- Suggest a theory of change based on an analysis of evidence/data
- Share concrete examples of **evidence-based practices** that demonstrate movement toward goal achievement
- Increase awareness of biases or predispositions toward certain analysis or actions
- Lead from a space of curiosity

● 6.1.3 Building Capacity

- Analyze the theory and practice of **distributed leadership** and why its use is essential to build capacity of constituents in a reciprocal teaching and learning community
- Explain the causal relationship between and among leader actions, teacher practice, and student outcomes
- Analyze the variety of roles a leader must play in order to build capacity and transform organizations

Developing Indicators

⊗ 6.1.1 Preparation for Change

- Articulate ways to increase cohesion for specific constituents and identify opportunities to leverage engagement toward change initiatives
- Engage staff to implement tools and processes to assess level of readiness, **coherence**, assets, needs, and educator practice
- Collect multiple sources of data, centering the perspectives of those who have historically been silenced
- Engage staff in the data collection and analysis processes to articulate the alignment of the organization to external accountability measures and to the vision
- Collectively identify and employ technical and **adaptive leadership** strategies for addressing complex leader dilemmas

⊗ 6.1.2 Approach to Learning

- Engage collaboratively in data collection and analysis to surface patterns of effectiveness in relation to desired outcomes
- Design and implement a plan for desired changes that uses a justice-oriented theory of change and includes capacity-building, collaboration, and collaborative sense-making as key elements
- Collaboratively identify and implement examples of success in the organization and in research to **reframe** the approach to identified challenges
- Monitor the connection between implementation and results
- Put processes in place to avoid **confirmation bias**

⊗ 6.1.3 Building Capacity

- Engage others in identification and analysis of the root causes of current assets and school dilemmas
- Evaluate staff readiness and desire to engage in change efforts
- Assess level of school and personnel readiness to assume leadership roles
- Examine relationship between leaders' actions, teacher practice, and student outcomes
- Employ the theory and practice of **distributed leadership** to engage adults in the change process
- Leverage assets in new ways in service of **continuous improvement** in areas of desired growth

Practicing Indicators

⊗ 6.1.1 Preparation for Change

- Engage the staff and community in the analysis of systems necessary for school cohesion
- Analyze transformation efforts with the goal of understanding the complexity and root causes of dilemmas
- Deepen understanding of organizational readiness for system-wide cohesion and integration of transformation efforts
- Develop a process to address technological and adaptive supports for analysis and cohesion

⊗ 6.1.2 Approach to Learning

- Develop structures that support **continuous improvement** and **evidence-based practices** for adult learning within the organization
- Employ systems that recursively use inquiry processes to examine assets, challenges, data, and leader actions
- Systematically collect, analyze, and share data
- Make organizational adjustments based on evidence
- Develop structures that solidify the regular use of effective internal practices for organizational learning
- Promote collective accountability for monitoring of implementation and results
- Implement processes to complexify the data analysis and action planning
- Seek additional inputs, including engaging with entities outside the organization to deepen understanding of assets and opportunities for change

⊗ 6.1.3 Building Capacity

- Systematically and collectively engage others in determining assets and areas of need
- Activate and co-develop expertise to build individual and collective leadership capacity
- Systematically review outcomes/data and determine the changes needed in both leadership actions and teacher/staff practice to optimize assets/successes and address challenges
- Implement and monitor school-wide structures that support the collaborative and regular review of current **distributed leadership** practices

6.2

Collaborative Goals and Actions

Building on an organization's assets, the leader poses problems of practice in order to engage in transformation; these problems of practice are explicitly linked to goals determined by the organization's constituents. The leader grounds the continuous improvement efforts in a collective vision for social justice and liberation. They frame their inquiry and analysis of root causes through an equity lens, and they develop and implement processes, structures, and actions with an unfailing commitment to students' academic, social-emotional, and civic success.

Emerging Indicators

● 6.2.1 Inquiry-Based, Problem-Posing Stance

- Practice use of an inquiry-based, problem-posing stance
- Articulate the benefit of an inquiry-based, problem-posing stance in building community and collaboration in change efforts
- Articulate the different levels of discourse (**Discourse I** vs. **Discourse II**)
- Identify the steps to move from problem-posing to goal articulation to broad-based collective action

● 6.2.2 Maintaining Focus

- Articulate and demonstrate processes that could lead to significant and high-impact change actions
- Identify contexts, constituents, and practices that support and hinder change efforts
- Identify implicit beliefs, values, and culture that may interfere with equity-centered change efforts
- Analyze the impact of change efforts on equitable student outcomes
- Increase awareness of leadership habits that contribute to and detract from the area of focus
- Access multiple leverage points in the organization to support the focus

Developing Indicators

⌘ 6.2.1 Inquiry-Based, Problem-Posing Stance

- Use an inquiry-based, problem-posing stance that builds on assets to identify dilemmas of practice
- Analyze discourse and name the different levels (**Discourse I** vs. **Discourse II**)
- Seek multiple perspectives to examine and analyze root causes to affirm shared goals and desired outcomes before moving to decisions or solutions
- Analyze the context and build relationships with all constituents in service of collaborative problem-solving
- Connect change efforts on multiple fronts to key teaching and learning goals

⌘ 6.2.2 Maintaining Focus

- Use collaborative processes to maintain focus on significant and high-impact change actions
- Work collaboratively to streamline processes and optimize practices that support change efforts while eliminating and **buffering** distractions
- Create the conditions and processes to surface implicit beliefs, values, and culture that may interfere with equity-centered change efforts
- Collaboratively review change efforts to ensure focus on equitable academic, civic, and **social-emotional** outcomes
- Create and adhere to norms and processes that allow the group to regularly collectively analyze ways of being
- Develop systems for reciprocal accountability among adults

Practicing Indicators

⌘ 6.2.1 Inquiry-Based, Problem-Posing Stance

- Pose all challenges and dilemmas in language that promotes a collective inquiry-based, problem-posing stance
- Engage constituents in **Discourse II**-level conversations to disrupt inequities that contribute to social reproduction within the organization
- Build structures that authentically engage students, parents, and community in inquiry-based problem-solving
- Systematically use structures and processes that ensure respect for differing ideas and lead to the inclusion of divergent voices in service of equity and social justice

⌘ 6.2.2 Maintaining Focus

- Fully implement and use systems to lead with unfailing commitment to ensuring rigorous and equitable academic, civic, and **social-emotional** outcomes for students
- Create structures that allow the organization to remain focused on significant and high-impact changes across the site and community
- Collaboratively develop processes to address implicit beliefs, values, and culture that may interfere with equity-centered change efforts
- Ensure individual and collective participation in equity-centered initiatives
- Collectively monitor the impact of change efforts

6.3

Reframing Perspective

Leaders persistently develop their capacity to view resistance as an opportunity rather than a challenge. In fact, leaders understand that resistance is a necessary and expected part of the transformation process. To this end, leaders optimize potential by continuously analyzing relationships and connections of formal and informal groups, seeking alternative perspectives, and attending to the cultural discontinuity that can derail change efforts. The leader relies on creativity, flexibility, resilience, and reflection and promotes these as necessary qualities in all members of the learning community.

Emerging Indicators

● 6.3.1 Optimizing Potential

- Analyze resistance as surfacing important tensions or differences of opinion or belief
- Develop and use norms in order to optimize **equitable participation** of all constituents and to address conflict as it arises
- Analyze instances of success for developing positive leadership habits of mind and action
- Reflect on personal feelings and response to past resistance

● 6.3.2 Situational Awareness

- Analyze informal relationships among different constituent groups
- Analyze how issues in the school that have not surfaced could create discord
- Predict issues, particularly related to the presence of **cultural discontinuity**
- Identify how identity, **positionality**, and organizational culture impact leadership opportunity

● 6.3.3 Creativity, Nimbleness, and Persistence

- Identify multiple, creative solutions to complex dilemmas
- Reflect on how to remain open to diverse ideas and build upon them
- Depersonalize conflict and articulate opportunities for adaptation and adjustment
- Engage in conversations with individuals or groups that support change efforts
- Be aware of the individual and collective strategies to cultivate persistence in the face of resistance

Developing Indicators

⌘ 6.3.1 Optimizing Potential

- Develop norms and procedures that provide regular opportunities for the exchange of ideas and encourage diverse opinions
- Engage in collective analyses of resistance as a way to better anticipate and understand challenges in achieving the goal
- Model viewing conflict as an opportunity to re-engage and re-focus on common goals
- Model authoritative and authentic responses to confront and **sideline bias** and persistent efforts to undermine progress
- Notice feelings and manage negative responses to resistance as they occur

⌘ 6.3.2 Situational Awareness

- Work to improve connections among informal relationships (between teachers, staff, families, etc.) for the purpose of supporting more cohesive change efforts
- Create space and norms for addressing issues that create discord, paying special attention to issues of **cultural discontinuity**, root-cause analysis, amplifying voices of underrepresented populations, constituent disengagement, and bureaucratic and systemic challenges
- Work with others to create conditions and processes that attend to patterns that marginalize contributions based on identity, **positionality**, or organizational culture

⌘ 6.3.3 Creativity, Nimbleness, and Persistence

- Regularly model exploring and employing multiple, creative solutions to complex dilemmas
- Remain open to diverse ideas and collaboratively discuss the links between and among ideas
- Remain engaged despite temporary conflict and model ways to course-correct or pivot to move beyond challenges
- Re-engage with a diverse set of individuals or groups who can provide regular critical feedback
- Support individual and collective reflection as a consistent norm of practice to build collective commitment and persistence to advance goal achievement

Practicing Indicators

⌘ 6.3.1 Optimizing Potential

- Encourage and solicit differing viewpoints and opinions
- Model and engage others in surfacing resistance
- Utilize conflict as a natural and positive part of the change process and strategically **reframe** resistance in the service of substantial and focused change
- Foster others' ability to respond authentically and authoritatively in **reframing** and optimizing complex situations and moving on when engagement is no longer productive
- Proactively shift toward embracing resistance as a positive force
- Embrace challenges and constraints as an essential practice to cultivate resilience

⌘ 6.3.2 Situational Awareness

- Motivate constituent groups (teachers, staff, families/caregivers) to initiate connections and build relationships for the purpose of cohesive change
- Create and maintain structure to promote collective ownership in continuously reflecting on collaborative work assets and challenges
- Hold the leadership team accountable for anticipating and addressing issues that could create discord
- Support the community in gaining and maintaining momentum for substantive change
- Promote conditions and processes that attend to patterns that marginalize contributions based on identity, **positionality**, or organizational culture

⌘ 6.3.3 Creativity, Nimbleness, and Persistence

- Actively seek input and multiple diverse perspectives in and outside of the organizational setting, intentionally looking for new solutions and possibilities
- Focus on assets and encourage collective innovative thinking to reshape the way individuals and the collective group engage in change
- Promote nimbleness in decision-making by implementing processes that support collective cohesion to core organizational values
- Remain open to new ways of interacting and working as an organization; encourage flexibility, resulting in critical and collective organizational resilience
- Embody individual and collective persistence in overcoming the challenges encountered in times of change

Our work requires a research-driven approach. Rather than starting with the issue, I think more about the approach. We must focus on what strategies work, consider what is happening when they are not working, and what are the local conditions or resources needed to continually improve student outcomes. —Tolani Britton, 2025

Sometimes, we can see another person's wings before they do, but the best we can do is create the conditions that invite them to fly—we can't break the chrysalis on their behalf. And sometimes, we need others to help us recognize, remember, or reinvest in our *own* wings, especially when things get hard. As justice-centering leaders, we are all butterflies and growers of butterflies—caring across so many different phases, heights and flights. —Eleanor Drago-Serverson et al., 2023

Element 7: Continuous Improvement

Exhibit a persistent focus on teacher, staff, and student continuous learning and development by aligning and monitoring a holistic, equity-driven accountability system

7

Continuous Improvement

Exhibit a persistent focus on teacher, staff, and student continuous learning and development by aligning and monitoring a holistic, equity-driven accountability system

The leader must foster an environment where all members of the organization engage in continuous learning and improvement. As the leader responds to district, state, and federal accountability policies and mandates, they hold fast to a comprehensive and complex system using multiple measures of academic, civic, and social-emotional outcomes. The leader exhibits a deep understanding of iterative cycles of inquiry, evidence-based decision-making, and how systems of accountability support intentional change. The leader guides the organization to critically analyze data, utilize tools, and strategically communicate data to compel equity-forward action. Collaborative structures and systems are cultivated to hold everyone accountable to continuous learning and improvement.



7.1

Critical Data Literacy

The leader develops a high degree of data and assessment literacy within themselves and others for the purpose of informing improvement efforts. The leader supports everyone to critically analyze current systems of accountability and assessment to determine the degree to which they are equitable and meet the goals of the organization. In this process, the leader promotes increasing knowledge about current research and policy discussions to inform organizational goals. They approach assessment holistically, using systems with a range of tools to support academic, civic, and **social-emotional** outcomes. They ensure that the analysis of evidence and data is collaborative and provides equitable access.

7.2

Building Capacity Through Infrastructure and Tools

The leader recognizes that accountability is not only a system but also a structure, and it is their responsibility to design, implement, and maintain structures that build capacity across the organization. They seek to be inclusive in data collection—both in the type of data being gathered and in the representation of and input from the community. They are nimble and adaptable in the fast-changing world of **digital literacy**; they define the benefits and challenges as beyond the successful use of technology and tools, articulating the impact on specific marginalized groups. They seize opportunities to use evidence to compel individual and collective action, highlighting successes and advocating for equity.

7.3

Collaborative Structures and Systems

The leader holds everyone accountable for the organization's **continuous improvement**. They set the expectation of collective responsibility for student learning and success and help build the necessary systems of support. They guide evidence-based visioning and goal setting. They ensure that the development and implementation of a strategic plan is a collaborative effort. Finally, they monitor for progress and gaps, celebrating growth and providing coaching and intervention as needed. They build a community of learners and leaders who hold each other accountable for student success.

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Emerging Indicators

7.1.1 Policy-Aligned and Equity-Forward Approach

- Investigate accountability policy mandates to articulate baseline requirements for goal-setting and data collection
- Frame assessment and accountability as a necessary component of **social justice leadership**
- Articulate critical understanding of the historical use of data and the current potential impact of reinforcing inequities through accountability measures

7.1.2 Holistic Assessment

- Access and analyze a variety of assessments (i.e., diagnostic, formative/summative, standardized tests, performance-based, project-based learning, portfolios, etc.) and tools (i.e., rubrics, observational analysis, grading, etc.) to ensure a multiple-measures approach to assessing student learning
- Identify and articulate the benefits of progress-monitoring and **multiple measures** to assess academic, civic, and **social-emotional** learning
- Deconstruct the merits and unintended consequences of assessments and tools
- Make strategic choices about aligning assessments to daily, benchmark, and formative outcomes

7.1.3 Collaborative Analysis of Evidence

- Identify ways in which qualitative and quantitative data can be continuously analyzed and triangulated through cycles of inquiry, grade-level/department meetings, classroom observations, checking for understanding, etc.
- Articulate the emotional impact of data on staff and students
- Build capacity to review, analyze, and understand disaggregated data and the meaning of data trends and outliers
- Articulate the need for an equitable grading system and calibrated assessment reporting process that communicates to families/caregivers the student's achievement in relationship to grade-level standards

Developing Indicators

7.1.1 Policy-Aligned and Equity-Forward Approach

- Model analyzing policy mandates for alignment to the organization's vision for equity and social justice
- Affirm the perspective that assessment and data are necessary to enhance learning and ensure all students can achieve high standards
- Collectively interrogate current use of data to surface and disrupt any perpetuation of inequities
- Engage others in understanding the larger policy landscape related to accountability and in leveraging data to strengthen collective actions for improving practice

7.1.2 Holistic Assessment

- Model fluency in discussing the merits and unintended consequences of a variety of assessments and tools
- Advocate for and provide **multiple measures** that provide a comprehensive picture of student academic, civic, and **social-emotional** learning
- Engage in conversations about what data and information are gained through current assessments and what other kinds of data and assessment would be useful to inform instructional practice
- Engage others in collaboratively aligning lesson plans and instruction to student needs and strengths surfaced through the analysis of **multiple measures**
- Determine the resources available and the support needed to build a comprehensive assessment system

7.1.3 Collaborative Analysis of Evidence

- Collaborate with staff to collect, review, and triangulate qualitative and quantitative data
- Engage staff in making data-driven decisions based on insights gained from cycles of inquiry, grade-level/department meetings, classroom observations, and effective checking for understanding
- Disaggregate data regularly to reveal the progress of all student groups and promote equitable intervention and support
- Incorporate structures, processes, and protocols in data analysis that ensure equitable access and input and respect the emotional impact of data on staff and students
- Develop an equitable grading and reporting system in collaboration with staff and families/caregivers that is aligned with grade-level standards and calibrated across teachers and grade levels/departments
- Engage the community in reviewing outcome data to provide input into programmatic decisions

Practicing Indicators

7.1.1 Policy-Aligned and Equity-Forward Approach

- Develop systems to analyze regular, ongoing assessments to ensure alignment to policy requirements and **coherence** to the espoused equity-forward vision
- Monitor and ensure growth across the organization around data literacy, use, and criticality
- Communicate to the community and beyond the impact of assessment and data on advancing equity and justice initiatives

7.1.2 Holistic Assessment

- Monitor processes to ensure the implementation and consistent use of assessment and data in making informed decisions about instruction
- Support staff to ensure the implementation of powerful learning experiences based on academic, civic, and **social-emotional** assessments
- Systematically engage the entire staff in reviewing the school-wide assessment data to determine an integrated approach to increase academic, civic, and **social-emotional** outcomes for students
- Leverage community, district, and other resources to improve the assessment system

7.1.3 Collaborative Analysis of Evidence

- Develop and monitor systems to ensure that data informs programmatic priorities and decisions
- Build others' capacity to engage in regular data conversations with all constituents, including all staff, families/caregivers, and community
- Maintain an emotionally and **culturally responsive** disposition to data with staff and constituents that centers issues of equity and monitors the impact of equitable intervention and support on all student groups
- Monitor, calibrate, and refine assessment reporting and grading systems

7.2

Building Capacity Through Infrastructure and Tools

The leader recognizes that accountability is not only a system but also a structure, and it is their responsibility to design, implement, and maintain structures that build capacity across the organization. They seek to be inclusive in data collection—both in the type of data being gathered and in the representation of and input from the community. They are nimble and adaptable in the fast-changing world of digital literacy; they define the benefits and challenges as beyond the successful use of technology and tools, articulating the impact on specific marginalized groups. They seize opportunities to use evidence to compel individual and collective action, highlighting successes and advocating for equity.

Emerging Indicators

7.2.1 Inclusive Data-Collection Processes

- Articulate the leader's role and responsibility for inclusion when designing systems for data collection, reporting, and presentations
- Identify the types of resources and technology that allow for timely and comprehensive collection and analysis of data and include input from underrepresented groups
- Articulate expectations that encourage the systematic use of data with an intentional focus on accurately representing all members of the organization
- Articulate accountability systems and interrogate whether actions are informed by or aligned with data

7.2.2 Supporting and Sustaining Digital Literacy

- Develop facility with specific programs and platforms that support school-wide assessment and accountability, at both the district and the state levels
- Continually seek to increase proficiency in the use of data systems that support instructional and organizational outcomes
- Encourage staff and families to continually build their **digital literacy**, including how to safeguard students against cyber threats
- Articulate how technology and accountability platforms advance or hinder equity goals
- Stay abreast of the latest digital technologies, including their uses and impact on student privacy or rights
- Name the disparate impact of digital advancements on marginalized communities

7.2.3 Using Evidence to Compel Equity Action

- Articulate multiple ways to communicate assessment and accountability data
- Review data to assess evidence of alignment of goals to outcomes
- Identify resources and supports that are needed and available for challenge areas
- Articulate the history of assessment and accountability practices and the impact on marginalized student groups
- Continually build capacity to use digital tools to create compelling and accessible data visualizations

Developing Indicators

7.2.1 Inclusive Data-Collection Processes

- Communicate expectations for systematic and consistent use of data
- Collaboratively develop routine systems for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data
- Build in a feedback loop to ensure that data systems and technology supports are equitable and fully implemented
- Solicit input from underrepresented groups in gathering feedback on the types of information to consider when making leadership decisions about student achievement, instructional practice, and programs
- Assign roles and support others to fulfill those roles and responsibilities in data collection, reporting, and presentation
- Articulate key leadership decisions that can be informed by student achievement, instructional practice, and programmatic data

7.2.2 Supporting and Sustaining Digital Literacy

- Model vulnerability and risk-taking while experimenting with and learning new technologies
- Design and implement structures for continuously improving digital-literacy capacity of school and constituents
- Set up and maintain data and technology systems that serve learning and organizational outcomes
- Communicate expectations regarding use of digital technologies to advance equity goals
- Advocate for more equitable access and positive impact for all constituents
- Support staff to interrogate their own biases related to student use of digital technologies

7.2.3 Using Evidence to Compel Equity Action

- Strategically communicate achievement gains, best practices, challenge areas, and resources needed
- Facilitate cycles of inquiry with staff that result in improved practice and outcomes
- Involve staff in creating and using methods of communication about student achievement, instructional practice, and program outcomes that increase understanding and invite collaboration
- Develop communication processes that build upon effective historical **continuous improvement** practices

Practicing Indicators

7.2.1 Inclusive Data-Collection Processes

- Continually adjust data collection and analysis systems in response to feedback
- Use data to regularly engage in conversations with constituent groups about equitable practices and outcomes and fostering coherent practices school-wide
- Ensure a systematic and organization-wide inclusive approach in the use of data for leadership decision-making

7.2.2 Supporting and Sustaining Digital Literacy

- Advocate for, maintain, and fully integrate data and technology systems that serve the school and community
- Monitor and maintain equitable access to technology
- Establish and maintain collective responsibility for technology
- Hold teachers and staff to high standards of continuous learning around technology use in instruction and data analysis
- Optimize digital technologies and platforms as an opportunity to amplify student voice and leadership
- Anticipate the intended and unintended consequences of digital access on different constituents and the organizational culture
- Remain open to and critical of new technologies and their potential to increase access and equity for teachers, students, and families/caregivers

7.2.3 Using Evidence to Compel Equity Action

- Create and maintain structures to communicate achievement and develop collaborative support for student success
- Present data to constituent groups using accessible and **culturally responsive** presentation styles, processes, and formats that inspire collective action
- Garner support from beyond the local community by telling the data story that illustrates assets, growth, and challenges

7.3

Collaborative Structures and Systems

The leader holds everyone accountable for the organization's continuous improvement. They set the expectation of collective responsibility for student learning and success and help build the necessary systems of support. They guide evidence-based visioning and goal setting. They ensure that the development and implementation of a strategic plan is a collaborative effort. Finally, they monitor for progress and gaps, celebrating growth and providing coaching and intervention as needed. They build a community of learners and leaders who hold each other accountable for student success.

Emerging Indicators

7.3.1 Accountability for Learning

- Articulate the need for collective accountability for student learning
- Define a clear picture of student learning (i.e., achievement, civic, and **social-emotional**) using quantitative and qualitative data
- Identify ways in which assessment data are consistently used across the organization to inform instruction and increase student learning, belonging, motivation, and engagement
- Articulate the connections and gaps between student learning and individual and programmatic decisions including assessment analysis and curriculum mapping
- Identify potential root causes contributing to **opportunity gaps**, including systemic, institutional, and structural barriers

7.3.2 Strategic Planning for Improvement

- Define a clear picture of effective instruction/practice using multiple sources of data to set improvement goals
- Articulate a theory of change and potential steps and strategies to accomplish improvement goals
- Identify ways in which assessment data are or can be used to inform pedagogical and resource alignment toward improvement goals
- Articulate the value of critical data discussions that center equity and justice goals
- Practice the processes of data visualization, presentations, and discussions

7.3.3 Accountability for Improvement

- Assess capacity for growth in all members of the organization
- Engage in self-reflection and identification of areas of leadership growth
- Practice a growth mindset in all aspects of leadership
- Deepen understanding about effective evaluation systems for various constituents in the organization (e.g., classified staff, certificated staff, after-school staff, custodial staff, etc.)
- Consider how to craft feedback in a way that offers critical inputs while serving as a source of motivation to improve
- Become familiar with various union contracts for various units within the organization

Developing Indicators

7.3.1 Accountability for Learning

- Communicate the expectation of collective accountability for student learning
- Collectively evaluate and determine which assessments provide an accurate picture of student progress across grade levels and content areas
- Use student achievement gains to evaluate and inform curriculum mapping, instructional practice, and programmatic choices
- Use data as a catalyst for investigating and addressing possible root causes that contribute to **opportunity gaps**, including systemic, institutional, and structural barriers
- Ensure that the assessment systems for students allow opportunities for student self-assessment, analysis of successful learning processes, and personal goal-setting

7.3.2 Strategic Planning for Improvement

- Assess the level of the effectiveness of instruction/practice in relation to the organization's collective vision
- Collaborate to set goals and determine the theory of action; agree on specific strategies for collective effort
- Match data collection processes and tools to the intended measure of growth and improvement
- Meet regularly with groups of teachers and staff in grade levels/departments to discuss data, identify areas of strength and challenge, and adapt and adjust the plan as needed

7.3.3 Accountability for Improvement

- Hold all members of the organization accountable for improving practice as a way to ensure equitable outcomes for all students
- Practice transparency and vulnerability around personal leadership growth areas
- Support all constituents to identify their growth areas and to develop a mindset that invites critical reflection and feedback on performance
- Determine the supports and feedback needed for staff improvement based on observation, assessment, and data
- Provide feedback that is specific and relevant to goals and identify multiple venues of support beyond the evaluation system
- Work with union representatives to support members to improve practice; leverage knowledge of contract language to identify opportunities to hold constituents accountable for improvement

Practicing Indicators

7.3.1 Accountability for Learning

- Support leaders across the organization to hold everyone accountable for student learning and growth
- Build in structures and processes to systematically use multiple sources of data to assess gains in student achievement and the **coherence** between those gains and the school's vision, aligned curriculum and pedagogy, and program reliability
- Lead school staff in using data to identify possible root causes of student outcomes and to develop a theory of action to address those causes

7.3.2 Strategic Planning for Improvement

- Build structures and processes to systematically use data to assess effectiveness in achieving the school's vision and goals
- Model inquiry in individual and collective meetings to discuss data, instructional practice, action plans, and effectiveness
- Facilitate processes to ensure **continuous improvement** planning strategies are employed at all levels of the organization

7.3.3 Accountability for Improvement

- Cultivate an environment that fosters trust and risk-taking and allows for everyone across the organization to hold each other accountable for **continuous improvement**
- Share personal successes and challenges around professional growth as a way of motivating staff to also engage in improvement
- Monitor and evaluate performance of all organizational members on a regular basis, using effective evaluation systems
- Provide ongoing, specific feedback on performance in service of continual improvement of practice
- Highlight school-wide patterns of teacher/staff strengths and design professional learning to address growth areas
- Seek central-office support as necessary to activate accountability measures within contract guidelines

Glossary

A

adaptive leadership

Adaptive leadership is counter to technical leadership that solely focuses on solving technical problems or issues that arise that can be resolved through existing expertise. Adaptive leadership is necessary to solve complex problems that don't have obvious solutions. An example of an instance where adaptive leadership was necessary was the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders had to quickly adapt and evolve in response to the challenges the pandemic brought forth (Dunn, 2020). *See pp. 61, 62, 63, 75*

adult learning theory

School leaders must consider concepts of adult learning theory when designing professional development for teachers and staff. Knowles et al. (1989) argued that to be effective, adult learning (or andragogy) must include the following characteristics:

- The Need to Know: Adults must understand why the learning is important or relevant.
- The Learner's Self Concept: Adults desire to be self-directed and autonomous.
- The Role of the Learner's Experience: Adults require experiential and highly specialized curriculum due to their more robust life experience.
- Readiness to Learn: Adults must feel that their learning is in service to their personal growth or development.
- Orientation to Learning: Adults prefer learning that is life- or problem-centered.
- Motivation to Learn: Adults are motivated to learn by intrinsic factors like self-esteem, job satisfaction, and quality of life.

See pp. 49, 54

agentic leadership

Defined by Gordin Yoskovitz and Schechter (2024) as the agency a leader has to navigate and advocate for social, political, and organizational change during complex circumstances (e.g., the COVID-19 crisis). There are five categories or areas of opportunity for leadership agency: principalship, pedagogy, professional development, role autonomy, and relationships and connections with various communities. *See p. 31*

anti-racist leadership

An intentional model of advocacy leadership, which includes five components: critical reflection, capacity building, strategic thinking, seeing the system, and bricolage (the ability to improvise with available resources in service of improving outcomes for marginalized populations). Anti-racist leadership builds upon the model of **culturally responsive** school leadership (Khalifa, 2018) and adds an explicit naming of anti-racist practices that leaders must model, cultivate among their staff, and develop within their school communities. *See p. viii*

arrogant humility

The process of leading with a sense of authority but with appropriate modesty and full recognition of how much effort from numerous people is required to create a successful school (Theoharis, 2010). Social justice leaders who utilize arrogant humility simultaneously hold fast to their convictions around issues of equity and access, and maintain a stance of curiosity, a desire to understand the complexity of situations, and a willingness to continually interrogate their own biases. *See p. 22*

asset-based

An intentional leadership disposition whereby leaders honor strengths that students bring to the classroom in order to mitigate and disrupt deficit perspectives. Leaders apply an asset-based approach to their perspectives, language, and lens when addressing school- and systems-level issues. In instructional supervision, leaders support teachers by amplifying their effective practice. This approach helps to build trust and encourages teachers to consider ways to continue to grow and develop. *See pp. 4, 21, 27, 29, 32, 33, 39, 40, 41, 54, 95*

B

bridging

powell and Menendian (2024) argued that bridging is a necessary practice to nurture belonging and limit othering. They defined bridging as forming connections across difference (e.g., socio-economic status, race, or religion) and working to grow meaningful relationships through deep listening and respect. *See pp. 29, 33, 92*

brokering

Cosner and De Voto (2023) defined brokering as an approach to **bridging** between contexts, groups, or individuals with little or no connection to each other. School leaders must develop this skill, as nurturing and sustaining connections between disparate aspects of a school ecosystem is a large part of the leadership role. One example of this is how a school leader may work to create **coherence** between teachers (who are often the recipients of district directives) and district officials (who deliver the mandates that teachers carry out). The school leader has the ability to broker by clarifying misconceptions, amplifying assets and intentions, and supporting clear and consistent communication. *See pp. 4, 17, 20, 21*

buffering

A strategy for protecting the goals of a school by creating a shield against immaterial criticism or scrutiny when developing new initiatives. An example of this is declining a funding opportunity that has “strings attached” (Mucerino, 2018). School leaders may strategically buffer their staff from outside influences that detract from the school’s mission and vision. *See pp. 4, 17, 20, 21, 27, 30, 61, 62, 77*

C

chronic absenteeism

A school performance indicator that the California Department of Education reports to the California School Dashboard, chronic absenteeism is the percentage of students absent for 10% or more of days of instruction they were enrolled in (California Department of Education, 2025). *See p. 67*

civic discourse

A form of communication necessitated by an increasingly politicized culture that emphasizes dialogue, sense-making, compromise, and, at times, protest and dissent. Civic discourse requires a foundational respect for human rights (Lee et al., 2021). *See pp. 4, 34, 35, 42, 43*

coherence

The level of consistency and unity in a school about desired goals and collaborative actions in the service of change and reform. The individual and collective expectations, responsibility, and accountability practices are synchronized. Elmore (2004) described three levels of coherence: atomized, emerging, or nearly coherent. Grubb and Tredway (2010) added pre-atomized to indicate a school that exhibits some chaotic conditions. Systems-level leadership requires an attempt to build coherence by considering how various, potentially competing, initiatives impact all constituents within an organization. *See pp. 2, 3, 5, 21, 54, 55, 65, 71, 72, 74, 75, 85, 89, 92, 99*

community asset mapping

Chrzanowski et al. (2010) defined community asset mapping as an essential, ongoing collaboration between a school and its community. School leaders are integral to this process, as community resources (e.g., churches, non-profits, residents, and parents) are limitless and require ongoing discovery and stewardship. These partnerships help foster a cohesive environment for children and directly improve student achievement. *See pp. 4, 44, 45*

confirmation bias

A concept originally developed by Wason (1960), confirmation bias is a phenomenon that occurs when humans seek conclusions based on previously held beliefs, thus reinforcing the belief further. It is crucial that leaders maintain an objective, inquiry-based stance to combat confirmation bias, which can foster discrimination and inequitable outcomes. *See p. 75*

constituent

This word replaces *stakeholder* in educational lexicon. A constituent is a fundamental participant who has a vested interest in an outcome, particularly in creating and being a part of a democratic organization. The term connotes the importance of each person as a citizen-participant who maintains **interdependence** and reciprocity with other members of a group.

continuous improvement

An ongoing process where leaders consistently self-reflect and conscientiously act in service to their own self-development and the transformation of the organizations they serve. Dixon and Palmer (2020) outlined five key dispositions for **transformational leaders** committed to continuous improvement: growth mindset; curiosity, humility, and vulnerability; welcoming uncertainty; scientific reasoning; and **systems thinking**. *See pp. 2, 3, 5, 18, 31, 48, 56, 69, 73, 75, 76, 81, 82, 83, 87, 88, 89, 97*

counter-narrative

Counter-narratives (or counter-stories) bring the stories of marginalized populations that center on dignity and respect to the forefront. These stories often differ from the mainstream stories about these groups. They are a way to decenter white supremacy by challenging whose stories are part of our collective discourse (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). *See pp. 21, 45*

critical friend

A colleague who acts as an important or vital listener and responder to dilemmas of practice, using a critical friends protocol (consultancy or tuning protocols are most common). Critical friends not only listen to dilemmas but also help to promote deep reflection on the part of the speaker. (National School Reform Faculty Harmony Education Center, n.d.) *See pp. 30, 55*

critical hope

The antidote to hopelessness, characterized by sustained resistance against inequity and hatred. There are three essential components (material, Socratic, and audacious) that must act in harmony for critical hope to be realized (Duncan-Andrade, 2009). *See p. 16*

critical resilience

Critical resilience emerged as a concept from a qualitative study of five Mexican American community college students (Campa, 2010). Several key themes that Campa argued are essential for fostering critical resilience include managing personal and environmental factors; understanding power dynamics within families, schools, and communities; considering social, cultural, economic, and historical contexts; and recognizing the complexity of race, class, gender, age, and their intersections. The concept of critical resilience builds upon traditional notions of resilience, which has historically been defined as an individual and static trait. *See pp. 4, 18, 19*

cultural competence

Cultural competence is generally thought of as the beliefs and practices that enable a person to work effectively across diverse cultural contexts. While this is a necessary leadership trait, there is no finish line or end state one can achieve to become culturally competent. It is a worldview and an ongoing practice that involves regular critique of one's self, others, and the world (Kumagai & Lyson, 2009). *See p. 22*

cultural consciousness

Cultural consciousness involves deepening an understanding of one's own cultural identity and the identities of those with different cultural backgrounds. This process includes critically examining one's biases and identifying the ways that beliefs, values, and behaviors influence what happens in organizations. Leaders who work toward developing cultural consciousness continually interrogate how to celebrate and honor cultures of all members of their communities (Banks, 2012). *See pp. 50, 51*

cultural discontinuity

Tyler et al. (2008) defined cultural discontinuity as a phenomenon where cultural (or value-based) practices of ethnic minority students occur at home and are discontinued at school. Cultural discontinuity is experienced by all students; however, the experience is markedly more pronounced for ethnic minority students, as their values and traditions are often absent and sometimes intentionally erased from mainstream schooling. *See pp. 73, 78, 79*

culturally sustaining / affirming / responsive

Alim et al. (2020) described culturally sustaining pedagogy as a critical approach to teaching and learning that decenters whiteness, acknowledges centuries of oppression against marginalized populations, and includes the rich traditions of resistance and liberatory movements against oppressive forces. This approach seeks to encourage and sustain cultural ways of being while shifting the purpose of schooling from assimilation toward cultural pluralism. *See pp. 4, 22, 23, 27, 32, 33, 43, 49, 50, 52, 53, 60, 67, 85, 87, 91*

D

deeper learning

Darling-Hammond et al. (2019) argued that deeper learning is essential to preparing students to engage and adapt in a complex, ever-changing world. For this to happen, there must be a goal of maintaining high academic standards, while also prioritizing engagement, innovation, and student experience. Students engaged in deeper learning practice analysis and application of knowledge to real-life **problems of practice**. To prepare teachers to employ this approach successfully, teacher preparation must be developmentally grounded, contextualized, applied and transferred, occurring in communities of practice, and oriented to equity and social justice. *See pp. 52, 53*

digital literacy

Digital literacy (also known as critical digital literacy or CDL) is the attitude and aptitude needed to search, critically analyze, reflect, and act on the information portrayed in digital media through a lens of democracy and justice (Castellví et al., 2020). *See pp. 5, 83, 86, 87*

Discourse I / Discourse II

Eubanks et al. (1997) described Discourse I and II as two distinct approaches to schooling. Discourse I schools maintain the status quo, which by nature perpetuates inequity. In contrast, Discourse II schools adopt a problem-posing, problem-solving frame of mind. Discourse II schools encourage a growth mindset and actively seek to address and dismantle injustice. This approach encourages talking about practice and change without blame or judgment. The leader meets the constituents at their level of readiness and honors their thoughts and work. This form of discourse is the foundation of the respectful resolution of conflicts and is a fundamental component of democratic engagement. *See pp. 76, 77*

disequilibrium

Becoming a **transformative leader** requires an interruption of previously held mindsets and beliefs, which creates space for new perspectives. Cognitive disequilibrium is the mental and emotional state that occurs when a leader undergoes this transition (Farmer, 2010). *See p. 63*

distributed leadership

There are many interpretations and accepted definitions of distributed leadership. Spillane (2005) argued that it's important to focus on the practice of distributed leadership rather than the mechanics and day-to-day aspects of the role itself. Spillane defined this practice as two or more leaders (formal or informal) working separately yet interdependently toward a shared goal or purpose. Leaders seeking to empower their staff and teachers can find ways to utilize distributed leadership in order to authentically involve teachers in school-level decision-making and governance. Distributed leadership should not simply be a way to delegate tasks in a top-down fashion. *See pp. 9, 55, 61, 62, 63, 74, 75*

E

ecological mapping

Ecological mapping (or eco-mapping) is a framework for understanding a child's support system through three types of support: instrumental, informational, and emotional. Instrumental refers to tangible, necessity-based supports like food, clothing, and books. Informational support takes the form of guidance on how to do specific things or how to make sense of the surrounding world. Lastly, emotional support is provided through listening and acknowledging feelings (Baumgartner et al., 2012). Ecological mapping can also be useful as leaders consider the multiple, intersecting levels of influence (e.g., community, school, district, societal forces) impacting various members of a school organization. *See pp. 5, 61, 62, 63*

equitable participation

All constituents have access to the conversation in ways that are equitable and reasonable to the situation (classroom, meeting, school community); equitable participatory structures consistently and intentionally include the voices of marginalized constituents in building democratic structures. *See pp. 42, 43, 64, 65, 78*

equity audits

McKenzie and Skrla (2011) defined equity audits as a clear and constructive process for school leaders to evaluate and measure equity or inequity in their schools or districts in three fundamental realms: programs, teacher quality, and achievement. Data collected from equity audits can be used to transform schools. *See pp. 40, 41, 64, 65, 66*

equity lens

An approach to leadership, coaching, and mentorship that clearly and unapologetically centers anti-racism, inclusion, and emancipation (Clay et al., 2023). Leaders who apply an equity lens to their work seek to understand how historic and current systems of oppression impact academic, **social-emotional**, and behavioral outcomes. *See pp. 9, 41, 43, 73, 76*

equity traps

The possibility of relying on a constricting view of the situation that limits the ability to take responsibility for achieving outcomes for students. Equity traps include deficit thinking or conversations, erasure (acting if one does not see racial categories), the gaze (diminishing expectations in racially diverse schools and keeping peer teachers “in line” in terms of what is expected of teachers), and paralogical beliefs (attributing low performance to external factors by not assuming personal responsibility) (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). Social justice leaders strive to increase their awareness of and ability to interrupt equity traps in their work to transform schools. *See p. 40*

ethnoracially

An identity classification referring to both ethnicity and racial backgrounds. Jiménez et al. (2015) complexified the idea behind ethnoracial identity by introducing intra-group diversity among ethnoracially similar individuals as a result of class, immigration, and language status. Shirrell et al. (2023) found that academic outcomes improve for students of color when they are taught by teachers of similar ethnoracial backgrounds. This research informs school leaders as they advocate for equitable outcomes for all students and consider the ethnoracial composition of their teachers and staff. *See p. 38*

evidence-based practice

Interventions or programs that are based on research and have been proven effective at producing results and improving outcomes when implemented. *See pp. 5, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 74, 75*

F

funds of knowledge

González et al. (2009) defined funds of knowledge as the assets and resources that families and children bring with them to school. Leaders can integrate funds of knowledge into the curriculum in order to affirm the cultural identities of historically marginalized students and families and to counter deficit-based stereotypes. *See pp. 29, 44*

H

hard conversations

A necessary and difficult part of a school leader’s role is to confront and disrupt inequitable practices. Hard conversations are courageous, direct, and intentional dialogues designed to surface root causes of persistent school-wide oppressive practices. As an example, a leader might address teacher bias that impacts instruction. Having hard conversations requires preparation, strategy, trust, and a commitment to follow through and support transformation. *See pp. 44, 51*

historically resilient

A term for communities that have been historically oppressed, and disenfranchised, and who experience statistically disproportionate negative physical and psychological health outcomes (Ottemöller et al., 2021). Using resilient, instead of marginalized, is intentional, as the use of **asset-based** language highlights the strength of these communities in the face of adversity. *See pp. 62, 63, 65*

I

institutional barriers

Institutional barriers (or factors) are deeply entrenched, unchallenged beliefs, norms, or practices that function within public education systems and, while not intentional, advance inequitable outcomes among marginalized groups of students (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2023). *See pp. 39, 44, 63*

instructional core

The instructional core is a framework that emphasizes the relationship between the teacher, the student, and the curricular content. City et al. (2009) proposed seven components of the instructional core, which guide instructional improvement by reminding leaders, for instance, that if they change one element of the instructional core, it impacts all other elements. Adopting a new curriculum is not a silver bullet; rather, leaders must consider the impact on students and the professional learning and mindset shifts required of teachers. *See pp. 48, 50, 51*

instructional leadership

This term is commonly defined as how principals participate in teaching and learning. Grissom et al. (2021) focused their definition on “high-leverage” forms of instruction grouped into three intertwined categories: teacher observation and evaluation, feedback and coaching, and the establishment of a data-driven instructional program. Instructional leadership can focus on non-evaluative support intended to improve teacher practice and promote teacher reflection. *See pp. 3, 51*

interdependence

One of the five dispositions described by Costa et al. (2014) that support effective teacher growth and that can be applied to leadership practice, interdependence emphasizes the social nature of human development and the need for reciprocity and community in organizations. To this end, leaders and teachers benefit from considering how they can learn from each other when tackling difficult equity dilemmas. This concept promotes the deprivatization of teacher and leader practice, encourages self-reflection and openness to feedback, as well as collaboration as an essential component of effective leadership. *See pp. 4, 26, 27, 32, 33, 34, 40, 55, 62, 63, 92*

intersectionality

Originally coined by Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality is the overlap or intersection of more than one marginalized identity, for example, race, gender, nationality, or sexuality. Considering identity from an intersectional perspective introduces additional layers of complexity. Hill Collins (2000) argued that oppressions often work side by side to sustain injustice. *See pp. 26, 40*

M

macroaffirmations

Building upon Solórzano and Pérez Huber’s (2020) concept of **microaffirmations** (individual positive acts) as an antidote to **microaggressions**, macroaffirmations are systems-level efforts by leaders to acknowledge, amplify, and support marginalized populations within organizations. *See p. 21*

macroaggressions

The foundational set of beliefs used to legitimize white supremacy and institutional racism. Consider a tree as a metaphor for how macroaggressions work. Macroaggressions and white supremacy are the roots that uphold the rest of the tree and its branches, which represent our political, criminal justice, education, economic and health systems, mass media, and institutional racism (Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020). *See pp. 20, 21*

microaffirmations

The antithesis of **microaggressions**, microaffirmations are typically employed by people of color in public and private to express respect for each other’s identities and shared humanity (Solórzano & Pérez Huber, 2020). Microaffirmations can take many forms including non-verbal gestures and explicit acknowledgment of self-worth, shared experience, and culture. In this way, microaffirmations are an act of resistance. *See pp. 21, 41, 96*

microaggressions

Defined by Solórzano and Pérez Huber (2020) as everyday forms of verbal and nonverbal racism, often carried out in subtle and unconscious ways. Over time, racial microaggressions can have a cumulative psychological impact on marginalized populations. *See pp. viii, 20, 21, 40, 96*

micro-cultural identities

All humans are unique combinations of dynamic micro-cultural identities, which represent a vast spectrum of constantly evolving attributes influenced by individual, cultural, language, geographic, historical, and environmental experiences. Micro-cultural identities inform one’s choices, mindset, and beliefs (Mahiri & Banks, 2017). This concept expands the understanding of cultural identity beyond pre-defined categories such as race. *See pp. 28, 29*

micro-political

The term micro-political denotes the sociological aspects of a school environment (or other social network) that are often steeped in interpersonal politics, power, and influence (Ball, 1987). School leaders must consider micro-political dimensions that impact change efforts and equity initiatives within complex organizations. *See pp. 20, 21*

multiple measures

The practice of using formative and summative assessments from several reliable and valid sources to assess student progress. More complex assessments (exhibitions or portfolios using rubrics) are more difficult to use, but critical in gaining a full portrait of student learning. *See pp. 82, 84, 85*

O

opportunity gap

An alternative framing for the achievement gap, a term broadly defined as educational disparities between groups of students across demographics like race and socio-economics. Framing these disparities as an opportunity gap shifts the focus to the root cause, which is a lack of opportunity. Many out-of-school factors (like health, housing, nutrition, and safety) contribute to this phenomenon and must be addressed for educational outcomes to improve (Carter & Welner, 2013). *See pp. 40, 41, 88, 89*

P

pillars of white supremacy

Three distinct yet interconnected pillars (or supports) that constitute and uphold racism and white supremacy: slavery/capitalism, genocide/capitalism, and Orientalism/war (Smith, 2016). This concept considers the historical context that allows for the persistence of racial inequities and systemic racism in our society. Jason (2020) described the pillars of white supremacy as four categories of U.S. policies that uphold white supremacy. These categories include:

- race motivated impairments
- race motivated benefits
- colorblind impairments
- colorblind benefits

See p. 28

positionality

An approach to investigating race and racism in academia, particularly in colleges and universities with largely white populations. This practice is critical in research when power dynamics and inequity can arise from the researchers themselves, the topic, the study participants, and the data analysis process (Espino, 2018). School leaders should continuously reflect upon the impact of their own positionality on their leadership actions. *See pp. 3, 6, 26, 45, 78, 79*

problems of practice

Problems of practice are challenges that arise in schools that are analyzed and studied for collective, institutional learning. Rather than focusing on what children are doing wrong, problems of practice specifically center the observable actions of practitioners and how those actions can be improved upon as a way to get to the root of systemic and instructional problems (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2023). *See pp. 73, 76, 94*

R

reflection/action (praxis)

Furman (2012) described the reflection/action (praxis) cycle as an essential process or framework for **social justice leadership**. Social justice leaders must simultaneously engage in reflection and action (praxis) and must consider the multidimensional areas of praxis, including the personal, interpersonal, communal, systematic, and ecological. Aspiring and practicing leaders work to develop their capacity for reflection and action as a means of **continuous improvement** and refinement of their equity leadership stance. *See pp. 27, 30*

reframing

A frame is a mental map or cognitive lens that informs how individuals see and interact with the world. Reframing is shifting frames when a situation changes or becomes complex (Bolman & Deal, 2014). Leaders must learn to reframe or break frames altogether to adapt to the complexities of schooling in the 21st century. Additionally, leaders must use their ability to reframe strategically in order to help constituents see the complexity of situations or view a situation from a different perspective. *See pp. 4, 5, 9, 17, 20, 21, 45, 55, 72, 73, 75, 78, 79*

relational trust

Establishing relational trust is the hard work of building relationships at all levels of the school community and modeling a commitment to the shared goals of a school improvement plan (Bryk, 2010). Relational trust, when established and nurtured between teachers and leaders, can serve as a lever to activate organizational change and a foundation upon which to hold staff accountable to taking action connected to shared goals. When relational trust is absent, resistance to change becomes prevalent and gaining buy-in for reform initiatives becomes difficult. *See pp. 21, 26, 46*

restorative justice / practices

Introduced in the 1970s as a form of mediation in the criminal justice system, restorative justice practices have gained widespread popularity in many fields, including education. Restorative practices in schools emphasize repairing harm done to individuals and communities, providing an alternative to overly punitive disciplinary tactics. In 2014, federal guidelines were released, recommending that American schools adopt restorative practices to foster equity and improve student achievement (Richardson, 2022). *See pp. 3, 43, 66, 67*

S

science of learning and development

Darling-Hammond et al. (2021) developed this research driven framework, which aims to address what all children need to effectively learn. The framework seeks to transform schools into environments that address the needs of the whole child, which in turn promotes equitable achievement and prosperity. The principles are:

- positive developmental relationships
- environments filled with safety and belonging
- rich learning experiences and knowledge development
- development of skills, habits, and mindsets
- integrated support systems

See pp. 48, 49, 54

sidelining bias

A theory developed by Okonofua et al. (2022) that proposes that leaders cannot wait for implicit bias to be eradicated. Rather, they can use the strategy of working around—or “sidelining”—bias in order to continue to make equitable progress in schools. This theory acknowledges the persistence of implicit bias and the imperative of improving school outcomes in spite of that bias.

See pp. 35, 40, 41, 67, 79

social construction of race

Mahiri and Banks (2017) defined race as a socially constructed concept that humans can be categorized into groups based on innate attributes that separate them from other groups. Scientists have determined that race has no genetic basis. Instead, humans created the concept of race, which has been used for centuries to justify violence and social hierarchies. *See pp. viii, 28, 29*

social-emotional

A term for interpersonal skill building and experiential learning, which are essential for children as they grow and develop. In recent years, the critical importance of social-emotional learning, in addition to academic skill building, has become evident (Farrington et al., 2019). *See pp. viii, 4, 5, 37, 38, 47, 48, 50, 51, 53, 60, 65, 73, 76, 77, 82, 83, 84, 85, 88, 95, 99*

social justice leadership

An approach to school leadership that Theoharis (2007) characterized as an appeal for leveraging one’s authority to eradicate systemic inequities within one’s sphere of influence. Those practicing social justice leadership have a moral imperative to explicitly center issues that perpetuate inequity for marginalized groups. *See pp. vii, 84, 97*

supremacy of whiteness

The supremacy of whiteness refers to America's investment in whiteness as an ideology and oppressive force that serves to define, rationalize, and maintain social hierarchies throughout history. Mahiri and Banks (2017) examined whiteness as a racial marker with political and ideological aspects that have pervaded the United States for centuries. Starting as early as 1790 with the first U.S. Census, whiteness has been used to classify the race of some Americans, while other racial terms have dramatically and problematically changed over time. Who was accepted as white, and therefore endowed with social, cultural, political, and economic privileges, also shifted over time to include Irish Americans, Southern and Eastern European immigrants, and eventually Jewish Americans. Mahiri and Banks argued that it is essential to recognize the complexity of identities beyond ethnicity and culture to deconstruct the socially manufactured concept of race. *See pp. 28, 29, 40*

systemic oppression

The National Equity Project (n.d.-b) described systemic oppression as a type of oppression that exists at the institutional level and often presents as harmful laws or practices that are reinforced over time. It also exists across structures like education and healthcare. Systemic oppression is historical and ongoing. To combat systemic oppression, school leaders must forge alliances across differences and continuously critique the status quo. *See pp. 28, 40, 41, 44*

systems thinking

A holistic approach that considers how an entire system interacts, not just individual pieces. Leaders who apply systems thinking to their work consider the complex and interrelated nature of schools and districts in order to understand how various factors impact aspects of their organization. Examples of areas of focus that could benefit from systems thinking include curriculum improvement, professional learning networks, and analysis of student achievement data (Shaked & Schechter, 2017). *See pp. 21, 62, 63, 93*

T

transformational / transformative leadership

While often used interchangeably due to the similarities related to school reform, transformational leadership tends to refer more to improving organizational dimensions of a school system while transformative leadership involves a more revolutionary approach where leaders seek to disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions that perpetuate inequities (Hewitt et al., 2014). *See pp. 8, 9, 65, 93, 94*

transformative social-emotional learning

Transformative social-emotional learning (TSEL) is an approach to teaching **social-emotional** learning in which adults and youth collaboratively establish and maintain an inclusive and just learning environment and community. This method emphasizes identity, agency, belonging, collaborative problem-solving, and curiosity (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], n.d.-a). *See pp. 49, 50, 52, 53*

U

urgent/important framework

Also known as the Time Management Matrix (Covey, 1989/2020), this framework encourages leaders to categorize tasks into quadrants based on levels of urgency and importance. Doing so supports school leaders in focusing on the long-term impact of their efforts, such as teacher professional learning, rather than only attending to immediate, urgent matters. *See pp. 68, 69*

V

vertical and horizontal articulation

An essential component of curricular **coherence**, vertical articulation refers to the progression of learning that connects grade-level standards from TK through 12th grade. Horizontal articulation refers to coherence across classrooms within a given grade level/content area. Instructional leaders can cultivate professional learning opportunities for teachers to deepen their understanding of the importance of curricular alignment and how to work toward increased articulation. *See p. 53*

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