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## Engagement through Emancipation, Empowerment, and Equity: Heutagogy and the 21st-Century Classroom

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## Abstract

Low student engagement has become a problem for Engagement Academy (a pseudonym), as well as for most schools in Newfoundland and Labrador. Data indicates that approximately 70% of graduating students are disengaged and feel their educational experience is not adequately preparing them for life in the 21st-century. Issues related to student engagement reflect the failure of the province's school system to adapt to societal trends and remain relevant in the 21st-century. Although a 21st-century workforce values competencies such as creativity, critical-thinking, and collaboration, traditional school systems value and reward compliance and conformity. Worse, a critical examination of traditional education systems reveals that many school structures preserve and perpetuate systemic inequities that harm its most marginalized students. This organizational improvement plan employs a humanistic lens that draws upon instructional, transformational, servant, and distributed leadership models that emancipate students from the oppressive structures of traditional schools. The implementation of classroom practices based on heutagogy and the adoption of the pedagogy-andragogy-heutagogy continuum is presented as a strategy to engage Grade 7–9 students in a 21st-century educational environment. Kotter's eight-step model for organizational change and cycles of collaborative inquiry guides teachers through the change process. The concerns-based adoption model provides a framework for developing the change vision, identifying resistance factors, and monitoring change implementation. Klein's communication model and Lewis's stakeholder communication help to create a communication plan for the OIP.

*Keywords:* emancipation, engagement, heutagogy, humanism, 21st-century education

## Executive Summary

Student engagement has been a chronic concern at Engagement Academy (a pseudonym), a K–12 school in western Newfoundland. Approximately 70% of students who graduate high school are disengaged and feel that their educational experience is largely irrelevant to their 21st-century existence (Engagement Academy, 2020). This lack of engagement points to the failure of Newfoundland and Labrador’s education system to keep pace with societal trends and remain relevant in the new millennium. Most classroom structures of Engagement Academy, specifically at the intermediate and secondary levels, are based on traditional hierarchical models of education designed in the 19th-century that are teacher-centered, compliance-based, and ignore the passions, interests, and autonomy of students. These structures often perpetuate systemic inequities that disadvantage Engagement Academy’s most marginalized students.

The current economic, political, and social context of Newfoundland and Labrador serves as the backdrop to this OIP. The province is facing a demographic and economic crisis. With looming bankruptcy and a population that is aging and shrinking, the province’s future is dire. The province’s education system has come under scrutiny, with the Premier’s Economic Recovery Team accusing the system of failing to prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of life in the 21st-century.

The deficiencies of the province’s school system are reflected in the pedagogical practices present in Engagement Academy’s intermediate and secondary classrooms. Traditional teaching and assessment practices leave students bored, uninvested, and are based on traditional factory-model approaches to education that discourage the development of 21st-century competencies such as creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. As principal of Engagement Academy, my goal in this OIP is to improve student engagement by focusing specifically on

classroom practices at the intermediate levels (Grades 7–9), emancipating students from traditional structures which hinder engagement while creating a more equitable learning environment. The work of this OIP should empower intermediate learners, helping them to grow as confident and critical thinkers who are capable of assuming a sense of ownership over their own classroom experiences, making their education more relevant and meaningful. At the micro level, the goal of this OIP is to improve the educational experience of all students at Engagement Academy; at a macro-level, this OIP is concerned with creating a generation of students capable of transforming the economic outlook of Newfoundland and Labrador and securing a more prosperous and optimistic future for the province.

Chapter 1 begins with an analysis of the organizational context of Engagement Academy. I identify my personal leadership position, with student equity, student–teacher relationships, student engagement, and 21st-century pedagogies guiding the discussion. A conceptual framework for this OIP centres around the theme of emancipation in the traditional school setting and combines humanist and constructivist approaches along with considerations for culturally responsive education, self-determined learning, and social justice. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Engagement Academy’s readiness for change.

Chapter 2 focuses on the planning and development of the change process. Instructional, transformational, servant, and distributed leadership approaches and the role of each in organizational change is examined. I explore frameworks for guiding the change process before deciding upon Kotter’s (2022) eight-step model for organizational change. A critical organizational analysis using Nadler and Tushman’s (1980) congruence model demonstrates misalignment between teacher and student goals and reveals that the modern education system has not evolved to accommodate today’s digitally connected and culturally astute students, who

have unlimited access to information and whose lives outside of school are defined by choice.

I consider three solutions to the problem identified in this OIP. First, I consider the incorporation of a deep-learning framework (Fullan et al., 2018) to encourage the development of 21st-century competencies. Second, I consider the adoption of culturally responsive education practices to promote equality and to ensure that all students' experiences in the classroom are meaningful. These two solutions are rejected and the chosen solution emerges from the consideration of self-determined learning (Deci & Flaste, 1995) and the field of heutagogy (Hase & Kenyon, 2000). The adoption of the pedagogy-andragogy-heutagogy continuum (Luckin et al., 2011) which provides a framework to empower students through self-determined learning presents a pathway to 21st-century education and student engagement.

Chapter 3 focuses on the implementation of heutagogy at Engagement Academy and the evaluation and monitoring of the OIP's progress. I present the concerns-based adoption model (Hord et al., 2006) as a tool for gauging staff reactions to the OIP, outlining a change vision, and measuring staff adoption of heutagogy. I consider potential problems that may arise in the implementation phase and establish short-, medium-, and long-term goals of the OIP.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of a communication strategy that borrows from Klein's (1996) communication model and Lewis's (2011) stakeholder theory model of communication. Klein's model aligns naturally with Kotter's (2012) eight stage process, and Lewis's model accounts for the organizational complexities that exist amongst stakeholders. The OIP concludes with a discussion of Engagement Academy's next steps, including the potential of deploying heutagogy beyond the intermediate level.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Executive Summary .....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	vi
Table of Contents .....	vii
List of Tables .....	xi
List of Figures .....	xii
Acronyms .....	xiii
Definitions.....	xiv
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Organizational Context .....	1
Organizational Structure .....	2
Theoretical Frameworks of the NLESD.....	4
Political, Economic, Social, and Technological Context .....	5
Education in the 21st-Century.....	8
Leadership Position and Lens .....	10
Leadership Position .....	10
Leadership Lens .....	12
Equity .....	12
Relationships .....	14
Student Engagement.....	14
21st-Century Pedagogies.....	16

Leadership Problem of Practice .....	16
Emancipation: Framing the Problem of Practice .....	18
Emancipation Through Humanism .....	20
Emancipation Through Self-Determination Theory.....	21
Emancipation Through Constructivism .....	22
Emancipation Through Culturally Responsive Pedagogies .....	22
Emancipation Through Social Justice .....	24
Reflecting on Emancipation .....	25
Questions Emerging From the Problem of Practice .....	26
Leadership-Focused Vision for Change.....	27
The Present and the Envisioned Future.....	27
Change Drivers.....	27
Change Priorities .....	29
Organizational Change Readiness .....	31
Conclusion .....	32
Chapter 2: Planning and Development .....	34
Leadership Approaches .....	34
Humanist Leadership.....	39
Framework for Leading the Change Process .....	39
Leading Change.....	40
Change Analysis: Kotter’s Eight-Step Process for Leading Change .....	41
Critical Organizational Analysis.....	49
Tasks.....	50



Formal Organization .....	50
Informal Structures.....	50
People .....	50
Solutions .....	53
Solution 1: The Adoption of Deep Learning Methods.....	53
Solution 2: The Incorporation of Culturally Responsive Teaching .....	55
Chosen Solution: Using Heutagogy for Self-Determined Learning .....	57
The Pedagogy-Andragogy-Heutagogy Continuum.....	58
Benefits of Heutagogy: Engagement.....	60
Risks of Heutagogy .....	62
Ethical Considerations of Heutagogy .....	63
Conclusion .....	65
Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication.....	66
Collaborative Inquiry .....	66
Change Implementation .....	69
Goal 1: Form an LLT .....	71
Goal 2: Provide an Orientation to Heutagogy for All Stakeholders.....	71
Goal 3: Build Choices Into All Courses Starting in Grade 7 .....	72
Managing the Transition.....	73
Gauging and Managing Stakeholder Reactions .....	74
Potential Implementation Concerns .....	75
Implementation Logistics .....	79
Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation.....	83

Using the CBAM to Monitor Change .....	84
Data Collection.....	85
Communication.....	87
The Communication Plan.....	87
Klein’s Management Communication Strategy for Change .....	87
Stakeholder Model of Communication .....	91
Employing Stakeholder Communication Strategies.....	93
Links to CBAM.....	96
Next Steps and Future Considerations .....	98
Epilogue .....	99
References .....	100
Appendix A: Forcefield Analysis .....	139
Appendix B: Recommendations From the Truth and Reconciliation Report.....	140

**List of Tables**

Table 1 <i>Identified Gaps of Engagement Academy</i> .....	53
Table 2 <i>Timeline of Implementation</i> .....	69
Table 3 <i>Stages of Concern</i> .....	75
Table 4 <i>Staff Involvement Over Time</i> .....	81
Table 5 <i>IC Map for the Adoption of Heutagogy</i> .....	82
Table 6 <i>Levels of Use Domain of CBAM</i> .....	85
Table 7 <i>Alignment of Klein and Kotter Communication Models</i> .....	88
Table 8 <i>Communication Plan</i> .....	91
Table 9 <i>Types of Implementers</i> .....	96
Table 10 <i>Lead Learner's Foci Versus Stakeholder Foci</i> .....	97

## List of Figures

Figure 1 <i>Personal Leadership Lens</i> .....	12
Figure 2 <i>Conceptual Framework for Student Engagement</i> .....	19
Figure 3 <i>Evolution of Kotter’s Eight-Step Model</i> .....	42
Figure 4 <i>Applying Nadler and Tushman’s Congruence Model</i> .....	52
Figure 5 <i>The Pedagogy-Andragogy-Heutagogy Continuum</i> .....	59
Figure 6 <i>Collaborative Inquiry Cycle</i> .....	67
Figure 7 <i>Concerns-Based Adoption Model</i> .....	73

## Acronyms

7–12 (Grades 7–12)

CBAM (Concerns-Based Assessment Model)

EECD (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development)

IC Map (Innovation Configuration Map [a domain of CBAM])

K-6 (Kindergarten to Grade 6)

LLT (Lead Learning Team)

LoU (Levels of Use [a domain of CBAM])

NLESD (Newfoundland and Labrador English School District)

NPDL (New Pedagogies for Deep Learning)

OIP (Organizational Improvement Plan)

PAH Continuum (Pedagogy-Andragogy-Heutagogy Continuum)

PERT (Premier’s Economic Recovery Team)

PLC (Professional Learning Community)

PMF (Provincial Measurement Framework)

PoP (Problem of Practice)

SBA (Standards-Based Assessment)

SDT (Self-Determination Theory)

SoC (Stages of Concern [a domain of CBAM])

## Definitions

**21st-century education:** Education practices that incorporate Kereluik et al.'s (2013) foundational knowledge, meta knowledge, and humanistic knowledge, that prepares students to be lifelong learners, and that is based on equity.

**Andragogy:** A model of learning that is teacher directed and student determined.

**Deep learning:** A model for student engagement developed by Fullan et al. (2018) based on the acquisition of 21st-century global competencies.

**Heutagogy:** A model of learning that is student directed and student determined.

**Kinderstart:** A prekindergarten program in Newfoundland and Labrador designed to offer a smooth start to kindergarten for all students. The program is offered to students during the school year before they start kindergarten.

**PAH continuum-** A framework for the implementation of heutagogy developed by Luckin et al. (2011) that sees students progress through phases of pedagogy, andragogy, and then to heutagogy, with the student assuming more responsibility for learning at each step.

**Pedagogy:** Teaching methodologies and practices. In the context of the PAH continuum, pedagogy refers to teacher-centered instructional styles focused on the transmission of content from teacher to student.

**Public exam:** High-stakes final examination administered by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in most core Level 3 courses.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) seeks to improve student engagement by employing 21st-century models of education at Engagement Academy (a pseudonym), a kindergarten to Grade 12 (K–12) school in Western Newfoundland where I serve as principal. A lack of student engagement is a chronic problem both at Engagement Academy and throughout the province. With education failing to evolve with societal trends, more and more students view their education as irrelevant to their 21st century lives. My goal in this OIP is to improve the educational experience at Engagement Academy by implementing heutagogy (Hase & Kenyon, 2000) to provide students with an engaging 21st-century education.

### **Organizational Context**

Falling under the jurisdiction of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD), Engagement Academy serves approximately 450 students while employing 32 teachers and an additional 18 noninstructional staff. The school handles all facets of education from Kinderstart to graduation and is the only school in its immediate geographical area. Engagement Academy is a short drive from several major centres, giving students access to many amenities. There is a lack of visible diversity of staff and students, though approximately 25% of students identify as Indigenous (Engagement Academy, 2022b).

Engagement Academy was founded in 2005 with the amalgamation of the region's kindergarten to Grade 6 (K–6) and Grades 7–12 (7–12) schools. Sixteen years later, the school is still divided along these lines, as is demonstrated in contrasting pedagogical approaches. In K-6 there is a strong focus on play-based learning (Bubikova-Moran et al., 2019), student inquiry (Saunders-Stewart et al., 2015), and social-emotional teaching practices (Collie et al., 2012; Frey et al., 2019). When students enter junior high school, these student-centered approaches are often

replaced by more traditional practice. Students typically write high-stakes public examinations in Grade 12. The impact of public exams can be seen in Grade 7, as traditional paper and pencil tests displace exploration and inquiry and student engagement begins to suffer (Engagement Academy, 2022a). If student engagement is going to improve, it is urgent that pedagogical practice at the intermediate level is changed. Many of the student-centered approaches present in K-6 classrooms are approaches that can be found in 21st-century educational research and are also linked to improved engagement outcomes for all students. Sadly, classroom practices at the intermediate and secondary levels seem more concerned with exam preparation than authentic learning, resulting in educational practices that seem irrelevant and disengaging for students.

### **Organizational Structure**

Sattler (2012) described neoliberal characteristics impacting education such as “greater centralization, standardization of curriculum, results-based education, and increased accountability for student performance through standardized testing” (p. 20). The organizational structure of the NLESD has been largely shaped by such factors. Tucker and Fushell (2021) traced the evolution of the school system in Newfoundland and Labrador. In 1997, the province’s 27 denominational school boards were collapsed into 11 nondenominational boards, as approximately 150 schools closed over a 3-year period (Tucker & Fushell, 2021). In 2004, the 11 boards were reduced to five regional boards. In 2013 these five regional boards were reduced to two: the NLESD and the Conseil Scolaire Francophone. The 2004 and 2013 reductions were based on economic pressures on the province, not pedagogy (Tucker & Fushell, 2021).

The NLESD has a traditional hierarchical structure. At the top of the organization is the director of education. Under the director of education are regional assistant directors, and under them are a team of directors of schools who work directly with school principals. School



principals are tasked with implementing district initiatives at the school level.

There has been a subtle shift in this hierarchical leadership structure. The district is seeking leadership from the classroom level and empowering teachers to become changemakers in their schools and in the district. The language used by the district to describe the work of educators is also changing; school administrators are often referred to as *lead learners* (Fullan, 2002; James et al., 2007; Katz et al., 2018; Tibbles, 2020) and the NLESD organizes a lead learning summit each spring, celebrating school level initiatives implemented by teachers.

This is a time of major disruption for education in Newfoundland and Labrador. The provincial government merged the NLESD with the provincial Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) in September 2022 (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2021). The decision once again was based on economics (Mullaley, 2021). How this merger will impact the theoretical framework of the NLESD is uncertain at the time of writing.

What is certain as I write this in November 2022, is that in the organizational context of the NLESD, teachers are tired and deflated. The COVID-19 pandemic has exasperated strains that were present in the system prior to 2020. Since March 2020, teachers have pivoted between online, in-person, and hybrid models on numerous occasions (CBC News, 2022b). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a substitute teacher shortage (Hillier, 2019) and COVID-19 has exacerbated this problem significantly (VOCM, 2020). During the 2021–2022 school year, Engagement Academy struggled with shortages of human resources, as teachers were called on to regularly cover classes during their planned prep periods. Such problems may turn out to be short-term; however, it is an important factor that needs to be considered when preparing for organizational change.

## Theoretical Frameworks of the NLESD

The NLESD's strategic plan for 2020–2023 outlines three priorities: (a) student engagement and success; (b) equity, health, and well-being, and (c) organizational effectiveness (NLESD, 2020). The first priority—student engagement and success—situates this OIP within the theoretical framework of the NLESD. Although student success has always been a mandate of the NLESD, the focus on engagement is new. From 2013 to 2018, student success was largely defined by assessment data. Before the pandemic, students would write criterion reference tests at the end of Grades 3, 6, and 9 and public examinations in Grade 12. Assessment scores were used to measure both student success and school effectiveness while driving school-improvement initiatives. Classroom instruction, particularly in Grades 7–12 was increasingly influenced by assessment data with little regard to whether students actually enjoyed school.

Realizing that student engagement was suffering and recognizing that engagement was integral to learning, in 2019 the NLESD partnered with Fullan's New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL) global network with the aim of adopting a *deep-learning* (Fullan et al., 2018) model of education that engaged students through the development of 21st-century competencies and real-world application (NLESD, 2020). The partnership with the NPDL network aligns this OIP with the strategic focus of the NLESD, as both are concerned with student engagement through 21st-century education. This partnership has been supported by all senior management of the NLESD, including the director, assistant-directors, and directors of schools. Senior leadership of the NLESD have become champions of administrators who are encouraging change through engagement and 21st-century modes of instruction, and are encouraging and celebrating administrators and teachers to be change makers in their own schools. Although previous iterations of the NLESD have been more restrictive and controlling in terms of expectations, the

current leadership of the district is giving space for individual schools to implement initiatives, take risks, and attempt to modernize their school systems.

### **Political, Economic, Social, and Technological Context**

Schools are complex organizations that exist as physical embodiments of the political, economic, social, and technological forces of their geographies. To understand the full scope of this OIP it is necessary to understand how the complicated history of Newfoundland and Labrador has shaped the current state of the province.

Politics and economics have been forever intertwined in Newfoundland and Labrador. Prior to 1997, the province reported only two budgetary surpluses since joining Canada in 1949 (Locke & May, 2019). As a *have not* province, Newfoundland and Labrador received equalization payments from the Federal government of Canada during much of its history to help provide a minimum standard of services. Marland (2014) referred to the “old Newfoundland inferiority complex” (p. 276) which arose from Newfoundland’s lower socio-economic status compared to the rest of Canada.

In my lifetime, nothing symbolized the poor financial state of the province as strongly as the 1993 closure of the province’s cod fishery (Haedrich & Hamilton, 2000; Schrank & Roy, 2013). Davis (2014) equated the cod moratorium to the death of the province’s rural communities, as many Newfoundlanders sought employment outside the province (Hiller, 1995; Mitchell, 2019). Arguably, the most damaging effect of the fishery collapse was the impact on Newfoundlanders’ collective sense of self-worth. As a teenager coming of age during the 1990s, a feeling of inferiority permeated my outlook of what it meant to be from the province. Newfoundland was often defined by the rest of the country through the stereotypical “Newfie joke” (Carroll, 2020; Davies, 1997). Wente, in a 2005 article in *The Globe and Mail*, described

rural Newfoundland and Labrador as “the most vast and scenic welfare ghetto in the world” (para. 7). As recently as 2019, an episode of *The Simpsons* outraged many by using the term “stupid Newfies,” (CBC News, 2019) cementing that unfortunate stereotype into popular culture.

In the mid-2000s, the province’s economic fortunes temporarily improved. As the province’s oil sector was expanding, the price of oil tripled. Newfoundland and Labrador become a *have* province for the first time in its history (House, 2021). Between 2005 and 2012, the “seven golden years” (Locke & May, 2019, p. 6) of Newfoundland’s history, the provincial budget increased by 30%, or \$2 billion a year (Baird, 2016). In 2012 the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric project was sanctioned. Originally estimated at \$7.4 billion dollars, the cost of the project ballooned to \$13.1 billion by 2020 (The Canadian Press, 2022) incumbering the province with generations of debt (Heaney, 2020; Leblanc, 2020; Roberts, 2016b). The 2016 drop in world oil prices (Millard et al., 2017) further gutted provincial coffers. In Premier Ball’s 2016 austerity budget, provincial libraries were closed (Moore, 2016) and a deficit reduction levy was taxed on most families in the province (Roberts, 2016a). In March 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the Newfoundland economy, Ball wrote to Prime Minister Trudeau, warning that the province was poised to run out of money and financial assistance was needed from the federal government (Cochrane & Antle, 2020). The Bank of Canada purchased provincial bonds to give the province the financial liquidity it needed to meet payroll (Antle, 2020); however, the economic outlook for the province remains dire.

With the fishery not back to its premotorium levels, and a pivot to green energy signifying the beginning of the end for the province’s oil sector, the province is pinning its future hopes on its burgeoning technology sector. Richardson (2021) highlighted the changing face of the province’s economy, with tech startups replacing traditional industries. Companies such as

Verafin (Spectrum Equity, 2021) are putting the province on the map as a technology and innovation hub. The province, partnering with federal government and private businesses, has developed an Atlantic Ocean supercluster, designed to take advantage of Newfoundland's unique geography to become a world-class developer of ocean-industry innovations representing "aquaculture, defense, fisheries, marine renewable energy, ocean technology, oil and gas, shipbuilding and transportation" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2018). The province is also looking at becoming a clean-energy warehouse, expanding its hydro and wind resources (CBC News, 2022a).

The province's education system has to reposition itself to prepare students to work in industries poised to define the new Newfoundland economy. In May 2021, the Premier's Economic Recovery Team (PERT; CBC News, 2020) accused the province's education system of not being responsive to societal trends and of failing to prepare students for the 21st-century economy (PERT, 2021). The report stressed the importance of education to the province's economic future, stating "it is critical the province's education system prepares children to contribute more than was expected of any previous generation" (PERT, 2021, p. 3).

This OIP was conceived in the context of these political, social, economic, and technological factors. As neoliberal forces have caused the erosion of multiple school districts into one centralized organization, the system's past focus on high-stakes testing has failed to prepare students to meet the challenges that the province is currently facing. With the NLESD adopting Fullan et al.'s (2018) deep-learning framework as a strategy to address the district's goal of student success and engagement, there is an awareness that the province's education system needs to evolve to support the province's transition into the 21st-century economy.

## Education in the 21st-Century

As the world has entered the digital age, school districts worldwide have recognized that education systems developed in the 19th-century are ineffective in preparing students for the complexities of 21st-century life (Claxton, 2021; Fullan et al., 2018; Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015). As school systems struggle to address this deficiency, the term *21st-century education* has emerged as an overused phrase permeating discussions of education reform. But what exactly defines a 21st-century education? There are a number of recurring ideas in the literature. Below I discuss three of these ideas, which, when combined, help establish the definition of 21st-century education used in this OIP.

Schools have historically been responsible for transmitting knowledge to students; however, in an age where smartphones give students immediate access to information, the role of schools as gatekeepers of knowledge has shifted. Kereluik et al. (2013) reviewed research on 21st-century education, attempting to clarify the role of knowledge in modern education systems. They concluded that schools had the role of conveying three distinct types of knowledge to students: foundational knowledge, meta knowledge, and humanistic knowledge. Foundational knowledge, sometimes referred to as content knowledge, is the stuff of the traditional school system. Hence, content-delivery structures of traditional schools still have a place, albeit a diminished one, in 21st-century institutions. Meta knowledge expands on foundational knowledge, placing an increased emphasis on applying knowledge for the purpose of developing 21st-century skills such as “problem-solving and critical thinking, communication and collaboration, and creativity and innovation” (Kereluik et al., 2013, p. 130). Such an approach is echoed in Fullan et al.’s (2018) work on deep learning which encourages the development on global 21st-century competencies. Humanistic knowledge turns itself inward, helping students to

develop “a vision of the learner’s self and its location in a broader social and global context” (Kereluik et al, 2014, p. 131). Humanistic knowledge is the ability of students to understand themselves and their unique place in the world, so they can positively impact the world around them. Mishra and Mehta (2017) agreed that all three types of knowledge are of equal importance in a 21st-century education. Thus, the inclusion of Kereluik’s three distinct types of knowledge becomes the first component of defining a 21st-century education.

Inherent in humanistic knowledge is the second component of a 21st-century education—the need for students to emerge as lifelong learners. Harari (2018) theorized that as society evolves, today’s graduates will be required to learn throughout their careers. Jobs will become increasingly technical. Some jobs will be automated away. Students will have to continuously upgrade their skills or change careers throughout their lives. Twenty-first-century schools need to instill in students an awareness of how they learn and the skills to be lifelong learners. Students need to be curious, confident, and capable of adapting to various learning challenges throughout their lives.

Andreotti (2021), Claxton (2021), Fullan et al., (2018), Mehta and Fine (2019), and Wagner and Dintersmith (2015) are a small number of the many researchers who have presented visions of what a 21st-century education should look like since Kereluik et al.’s (2013) study was published. Though each researcher presents a different approach to 21st-century education, what is common in all of their work is an awareness of equity. Over the course of my own career, Newfoundland schools have become more astute in creating spaces for the LGBTQ community (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2013; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2016). The pandemic has highlighted the inequity of BIPOC populations in all areas of society, including education (Safir & Dugan, 2021). Canadians are also collectively learning of

their own history around residential schools and gaining an understanding of how the education system has historically exploited its Indigenous students (Safir & Dugan, 2021). If schools are going to improve in the 21st-century, people in schools need to be aware of their historical deficiencies in serving all students, and improvements need to be made to serve all students.

Thus, for the purpose of this OIP, I define a 21st-century education as one that incorporates Kereluik et al.'s (2013) three types of knowledge, that gives students the tools and ability to develop as lifelong learners, and that is equitable to all students.

### **Leadership Position and Lens**

In this section, I define my role as an educational leader and discuss how I situate myself ideologically in the role of school principal of Engagement Academy.

#### **Leadership Position**

I have served as school principal of Engagement Academy since September 2020. I started my career as a classroom teacher, then progressed through the traditional hierarchy structure of the NLESD, working as department head and assistant principal before accepting my current position. My responsibility and agency as an educational leader have increased as I have assumed each new role.

There is no clear-cut job description for a principal employed in the NLESD; however, job ads for the position described the principalship as assuming “responsibility for student learning in your building” (NLESD, n.d.). As principal of Engagement Academy, I have the positional authority and agency to oversee and direct school-improvement initiatives. I also have the moral obligation to ensure that educational improvements benefit students, and all students receive an education that prepares them for life after graduation. Principals are required to “promote practices that create equity, recognize individual differences and celebrate cultural



diversity” (NLESD, n.d.). These professional obligations help determine my actions as principal.

Educators have a responsibility to learn professionally to ensure classroom practices remain current. Myers (1996) argued that “When teaching is thought of as it should be, it ought to be conceptualized as a career-long process of professional problem-solving, a process that starts when future teachers are still classroom students and does not stop before retirement” (p. 4). As society evolves, education cannot remain stagnant. Harris (2015), Kurt (2016), and Rikkerink et al. (2016) equate school improvement with organizational learning. An organization only improves if its individual members learn (Senge, 1990). The NLESD expects school principals to act as “learning leaders” (NLESD, n.d.) and “demonstrate knowledge and experience in leading for learning in a school community” (NLESD, n.d.). As a principal, I attempt to affect school improvement by creating a culture of learning.

For Engagement Academy to emerge as a 21st-century institution, teachers need to engage in intentional learning around 21st-century practices. Principals are often referred to as change leaders (Fullan, 2002). The term has connotations of traditional power hierarchies, with leaders exercising control over their followers. To align this OIP with the expectations from the NLESD, as well as my own affinity for distributed leadership (Harris, 2015), which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2, I attempt to position myself not as a change leader but as the lead learner (Fullan, 2002; James et al., 2007; Katz et al., 2018; Tibbles, 2020) at Engagement Academy. Throughout this paper the term lead learner can be considered synonymous with change leader. Organizational change will not happen if organizations and the individuals that comprise them do not engage in intentional learning. As principal and lead learner, I endeavour to inspire teachers in their learning journeys by being open and transparent in my own journey as a learner. Salas-Vallina et al. (2020) argued that leaders are capable of inspiring their followers

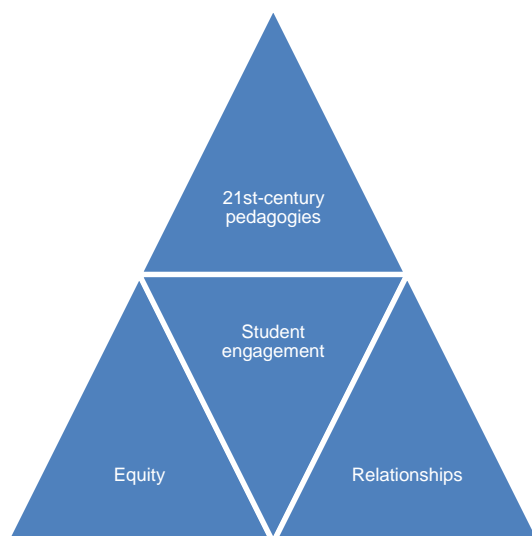
through developing strong visions, setting clear goals, and encouraging employee participation. If I can inspire teachers of Engagement Academy to learn together, the organization will evolve, improve, and be successful in the achievement of the goals of this OIP.

### **Leadership Lens**

Creswell (2014) referred to worldview as “the larger philosophical ideas” (p. 4) one subscribes to, and Guba (1990) defined worldview as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (p. 17). One’s worldview influences one’s practice (Flanagan, 2021). My personal leadership position is represented by the pyramid in Figure 1, with equity and relationships creating a base that allows student engagement and 21st-century pedagogies to emerge.

### **Figure 1**

#### *Personal Leadership Lens*



*Note.* Pyramid represents individual leadership lenses of the author

### **Equity**

I believe that all students have a right to an education, regardless of their circumstances. As a school leader, it is my responsibility to ensure that all students are given an opportunity to

succeed, and I am morally obligated to advocate for school structures that include and empower students of marginalized backgrounds. Despite the best intentions of educators, schools do not always provide an equitable educational experience. Many school policies reproduce societal inequalities at the classroom level (Bali et al., 2021). Theoharis (2007), Glaze et al. (2013), Flores and Kyere (2021), and Sahlberg and Cobbold (2021) advocated for school leadership and school structures that ensure that all students are given opportunities for success. Students who need school the most are often the very students who are most isolated by traditional structures (Evans & Vaandering, 2016; Fullan et al., 2018).

My first job as a school administrator was as an assistant principal of a large junior high school. Student discipline monopolized much of my day, and I felt a lot of staff pressure to take punitive measures against students who demonstrated chronic compliance issues, whether through loss of privileges, detentions, or suspensions. I learned early that students who were in my office regularly were often facing many complex challenges in their personal lives that made it difficult for them to find success in school. These students came from poverty, they or their parents were experiencing mental or physical health issues, and their families were overrepresented in the justice system or involved with social services. Taking punitive measures against these students would have the unintended consequences of widening the gap that these students would have to traverse to find success in school. These students needed an education that was sympathetic to their personal situations. Instead, school structures that did not account for their personal struggles were setting these students up for failure.

Schools should support not only the brightest and most motivated students, but also those students who struggle academically, present the most extreme behaviours, or who are most at risk of dropping out (Lopez, 2021; Passy & Ovenden-Hope, 2020). Schools have a moral

obligation to examine how their structures and policies exclude marginalized students.

## **Relationships**

I believe that strong teacher–student relationships are essential to the learning and well-being of students. The forging of strong teacher–student relationships has been directly related to effective teaching (Couros, 2015; Quin, 2017). Pierson, in a famous TED talk, declared “Kids don’t learn from people they don’t like” (TED, 2013). Research indicates that when students have strong relationships with their teachers, they are more likely to commit to their work and less likely to exhibit negative behaviours or disengagement (Hill et al., 2018; Quin, 2017).

Strong teacher–student relationships help teachers uncover their students’ passions and natural skills. Through relationships, teachers can discover students’ individual gifts and help connect them to their place in the world (Ladson-Billings, 2021a; Pollock and Briscoe, 2020; Shores et al., 2020). My views on this matter have been significantly influenced by my wife, Amy. Since 1998, Amy has owned and operated her own dance studio as a successful and creative businesswoman and artist. Yet, Amy looks back at her 13 years in public school with dread. A constant refrain she heard from her teachers was that she was not applying herself. Amy was applying herself to dance, training four nights a week and teaching dance on the weekends. Dance was where Amy’s passion lay; however, her teachers did not get to know or value her talents, causing her to spend her time at school feeling undervalued and disconnected. Had dance been used to form a relationship and connect Amy to the curriculum, her teachers would likely have seen a marked improvement in her engagement and academics.

## **Student Engagement**

Hill et al. (2018) defined engagement as “students’ commitment to school” (p. 596). The NLESD (2020) defined student engagement as “the degree of attention, curiosity, interest,

optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught” (p. 2). Kelly (2007) contended that engagement arises from a sense of meaning one finds in their work. Intrinsic motivation is deeply connected with engagement. Researchers have consistently found intrinsic factors to be much more motivating than extrinsic rewards (Boru, 2018; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2019; Kusurkar et al., 2011; Thoonen et al., 2011; Vallerand, 2000). Student engagement (Fullan et al., 2018; Holmes, 2018; Quin, 2017) has been an ongoing interest of mine. Research for my master’s dissertation turned into an action research project (Koshy, 2005) that focused on how process drama (O’Neill, 1995) could be used to increase student engagement in the language arts classroom.

A key to student engagement can be found in Engagement Academy’s primary wing. Couros (2015) and K. Robinson and Aronica (2015) acknowledged the link between play, engagement, and learning. When I see primary aged students engrossed in play-based learning (Bubikova-Moran et al., 2019), there is no doubt they are engaged. Play feeds a child’s sense of imagination, curiosity, and enjoyment, helping children find meaning (Resnick, 2017). As students get older, play diminishes and classroom experiences often demand student conformity and teacher control with intrinsic motivation being replaced by extrinsic rewards. This results in a visible lack of engagement in the core curriculum with pockets of engagement emerging in courses such as art, music, physical education, and drama, where students are more easily able to access their innate sense of play and achieve a state of “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2007, p. 29). An advantage of being a kindergarten to Grade 12 school, is that teachers from 7–12 can learn from classroom practices of their K-6 colleagues, who often incorporate student-centred approaches such as learning centers, collaboration, inquiry, and play.

## **21st-Century Pedagogies**

Due to technological advancements, most facets of society are drastically different today compared to 20 years ago. Education, however, is an exception. Most classrooms today look strikingly similar to classrooms of my generation: students sitting in rows, facing the front of the class, and working on low-level activities such as completing worksheets or copying notes. Classroom activities which focus on such tasks that serve only to keep students busy do not pair well with students born in the new millennium. Students need an educational experience that gives them access to Kereluik's (2013) foundational, meta, and humanistic knowledge. They need to develop the skills to become lifelong learners. And the educational experience has to be one that is equitable and inclusive to all students.

My interest in 21st-century education has also been spurred on by my own children who are currently in fifth and first grade. Both of my children are likely to be active in the workforce well into the 2070s. When I consider how much society has changed in my own teaching career, yet how slow schools have been to keep pace with these changes, it becomes obvious that traditional educational approaches are losing their ability to prepare students for life after graduation (Bray & Tangney, 2016; Fartusnic, 2018; Kereluik et al., 2013; Kivunja, 2014).

School leadership has an important role in guiding schools into the 21st century. Equity, relationships, student engagement, and 21st-century pedagogies provide various lenses that help to frame my approach to educational leadership. When viewing Engagement Academy through these lenses, the problem of practice (PoP) that focuses this OIP emerges.

### **Leadership Problem of Practice**

Every year the NLESD surveys staff, students, and parents. Survey results are compiled into provincial measurement framework (PMF) reports to inform school development. All

students from Grades 3 – 12 are asked to reflect on such questions as: How many of your classes do you enjoy? How often do you get so focused on activities in your classes that you lose track of time? In how many classes are you eager to participate? And, overall, how interesting are the things you learn in your classes? PMF reports for Engagement Academy point to very low levels of student engagement. Less than 30% of students enjoy their classes, find the curriculum interesting or relevant, or feel engaged in their learning (Engagement Academy, 2020).

Engagement Academy is not unique. PMF data for the province indicated that only 36.6 percent of students are engaged province wide (Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, 2021). Trends indicate significantly higher engagement in primary and elementary school, a major dip in junior high, with a modest rebound in engagement as students leave high school. For Engagement Academy, the 2022 PMF data showed that in Grade 3, 86.2% of students paid attention in class, as did 96.7% of Grade 5 students. That number dropped to 30.9% in Grade 7 and bottomed out at 14.3% in Grade 9 (Engagement Academy, 2022a). Research indicates that these trends are universal in nature (Fullan et al., 2018; Jenkins, 2013; Mehta & Fine, 2019).

Today's education system, designed in the 1800s, is based on a factory model intended to help train complaint employees for low-skilled manufacturing work (Mehta & Fine, 2019; Rincón-Gallardo, 2020; T. Walker, 2016). Bostrom (2014), Tegmark (2017), and Harari (2018) predicted a future where many low-level jobs are automated away, making education practices that reinforce low-level tasks increasingly irrelevant to modern life.

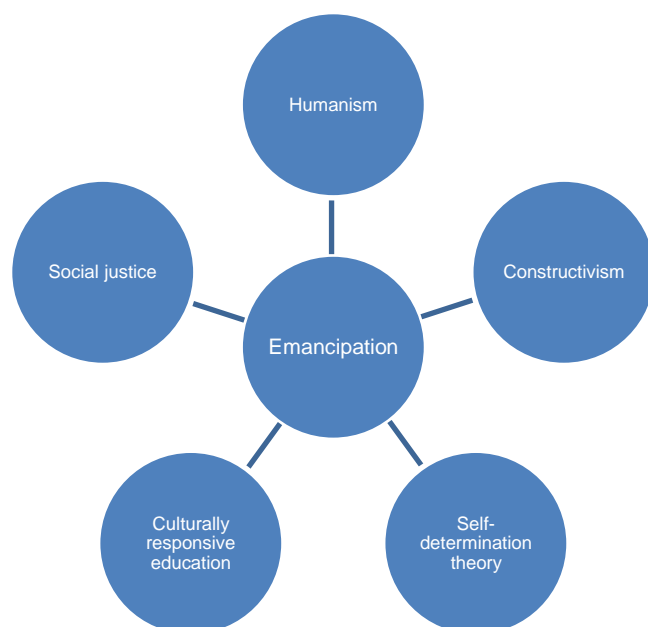
The PoP addressed in this OIP focuses on the lack of student engagement at Engagement Academy. Disengagement is largely related to the failure of Engagement Academy to keep pace with societal changes, specifically around equity, relationships, and 21st-century pedagogies.

The PoP manifests itself in students' low levels of attention and commitment to their schoolwork, leading to decreased learning, increased discipline issues, missed time, and teacher stress. As principal, I have a moral obligation to provide the best educational opportunities for all students. My role as principal allows me the agency to set a course for school improvement and to engage with all stakeholders regarding this issue. This OIP should increase student learning by providing a more engaging, equitable, empowering, and meaningful education. This OIP seeks to answer the question of what educational approaches can be adopted to give students a more engaging experience to prepare them for life in the 21st-century.

### **Emancipation: Framing the Problem of Practice**

This OIP incorporates many theories that create a conceptual framework for student engagement and 21st-century education. Linking these theories together is the idea of emancipation. Humanism (Silverman, 2017), constructivism (Banihashem et al., 2021), self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Flaste, 1995), culturally responsive education (Aronson & Laughter, 2016), and social justice (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021) arise from the idea of emancipation (Freire, 1970) and are necessary for engaging all students (Figure 2). Oppression is not always violent; people can be oppressed through systemic structures that seem neutral yet subtly exclude, discriminate, subjugate, and exploit while preserving preexisting hierarchies and inequalities (Bartolome, 1994; Hase & Blaschke, 2021b). In the introduction to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* written by Freire (1970), Shaul (1970) described modern education systems as having the potential to oppress: "There's no such thing as neutral education. Education either functions as an instrument to bring about conformity or freedom" (p. 34).



**Figure 2***Conceptual Framework for Student Engagement*

*Note.* Conceptual framework demonstrating emancipation’s role at the core of student engagement.

When the modern education system originated, schools controlled the flow of knowledge. With few libraries, little access to printed materials, and low literacy rates, people did not have easy access to information. The school system decided what information students were given, when they would receive it, and how it would be presented. Papp (2018) criticized traditional education systems and their Western influences for determining what is “right, wrong, acceptable or unacceptable” (p. 159). Schools decided what information would be excluded, thus perpetuating certain societal narratives. Canada has recently opened its eyes to the atrocities faced by its Indigenous students in residential schools; however, most of Canada’s public schools have historically excluded Indigenous ways of knowing from the curriculum (Althaus, 2019; Andreotti, 2021; Deloria et al., 2018; McCarthy & Rogers Stanton, 2017). By exercising such control of information, the system was able to influence the values, attitudes, beliefs, and general

ethos of the populace, while ensuring certain segments of society remained subservient (Mehta & Fine, 2019; T. Walker, 2016). Traditional educational structures controlled students by rewarding compliance and conformity, and are not conducive to authentic student engagement.

### **Emancipation Through Humanism**

When students fit in, they are expected to be like everybody else; however, when students belong, they are free to be themselves (B. Brown, 2021). Permitting students to embrace their authentic selves is the realm of humanism (Lerner, 1962). Radical humanism is an emancipatory philosophy which insists that many institutions restrain individuals, inhibiting “true human fulfillment” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 32). Traditional schooling encourages conformity over individuality (Mehta & Fine, 2019). 21st-century models of education need to center the individual student in their classroom experience.

Humanism is inherent in the work of education. Silverman (2017) suggested that schools need to embrace and find value in all students. Too often schools value only a portion of their student body, putting the organization’s goals ahead of the needs of students. Bartolome (1994) argued for a school system that humanizes learning. Modern institutions have favoured economic factors such as GDP while ignoring human factors such as well-being, health, and happiness (Pillay, 2020). Through this OIP, I attempt to reframe the success criteria of Engagement Academy, valuing student individualism over assessment scores.

Humanism is a philosophy grounded in ethics and equity. Humanist principles recognize the value and agency of all individuals (M. Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). Further to this, the very concept of engagement can itself be considered to be humanistic. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) argued that life is too short to waste on experiences that are not fulfilling or joyful. Sadly, Engagement Academy’s PMF data highlighted the fact that the majority of students in Grades 7–

12 are not fulfilled while in school ([Engagement Academy, 2020]). The goal of this OIP is that teachers recognize the potential of all students, that all students achieve a sense of belonging, and all students are supported in their efforts to live happy and fulfilling lives.

### **Emancipation Through Self-Determination Theory**

In traditional school settings, students are given very little voice or choice over their learning. Llewellyn (2013) argued that lack of choice leads to complacency and advocated for increased student decision making in the classroom. Curriculum in Newfoundland and Labrador is created by the EECD, with teachers typically controlling how curriculum is implemented and assessed. The educational experience of most students—what they study, how they interact with the material, and how they demonstrate their learning—is determined by outside forces. These forces include the pedagogical approach of the teacher, the curriculum, assessment and reporting expectations, their age, and the schedule of the school day. SDT (Deci & Flaste, 1995) provides a framework for empowering students, in order to give them some control over these forces.

SDT purports that students are intrinsically motivated to engage in tasks when they feel a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Vallerand, 2000). Student engagement can be increased by creating classroom environments that support student autonomy (Kusurkar et al, 2011; Rincón-Gallardo, 2020). Giving students autonomy leads to improved motivation and learning (Roth et al., 2007).

Self-determined learning has developed into its own field called heutagogy (Hase & Kenyon, 2000). Through heutagogy, students take the lead in their own learning, determining what topics, problems, and approaches are important. Heutagogy helps students develop a sense of agency and control over their learning (Hase & Blaschke, 2021b) and has the potential to significantly impact student engagement while developing 21st-century learning environments.

### **Emancipation Through Constructivism**

With roots back to Piaget (1954/1999), constructivism theorizes that true learning happens when individuals create knowledge by actively engaging with the curriculum rather than experiencing the curriculum passively through their teacher. Constructivist approaches lead to engaging classroom experiences that are personal and meaningful because “learning originates from the inside of the child” (Kamii & Ewing, 1996, p. 260). Emphasizing the construction of rather than the reproduction of knowledge, constructivism presents students with authentic tasks in context (Zajda, 2011). Adopting constructivist approaches empowers students as learners (Fullan et al., 2018) and is a key to increasing student engagement (Banihashem et al., 2021).

Traditional schooling is founded not in constructivist models, where students are free to explore and create, but on behaviouralist models (Barrett, 2019) where students are expected to comply and conform. Many teachers of Engagement Academy employ traditional instructional approaches, such as assigning worksheets, to lead students to a predetermined outcome decided on by the teacher. Constructivism maintains that each student “creates his or her meaningful knowledge and interpretation of the world” (Zajda, 2011, p. 19). Constructivism encourages culturally responsive approaches, shaping a more equitable learning experience.

### **Emancipation Through Culturally Responsive Pedagogies**

The school system in Newfoundland and Labrador is founded on principles that are both Eurocentric and Western influenced (Papp, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2012). These influences are so ingrained, they are often invisible. Higgins et al. (2015) accused traditional school systems as preserving “Whiteness” (p. 269) and perpetuating social inequalities and racism. Similarly, Tuck and Yang (2012) blamed traditional education systems for using colonialist structures where the “invisibilized dynamics of settler colonialism mark the organization governance, curricula, and

assessment for compulsory learning” (p. 2). One cannot address issues such as poverty, equity, and inclusion if educators are not aware of their own biases nor the biases engrained in the system (Pollock et al, 2013). If schools are to become truly equitable, school leaders have to undertake the complex work of understanding the inequities that exist within their buildings and then working to dismantle structures that promote inequality (Pollock & Briscoe, 2020).

The examination of teaching in light of diverse and historically underserved communities and the adoption of culturally responsive pedagogies is necessary to promote equity and emancipate students from systematically racist structures (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Through culturally responsive approaches, schools are aware of and sensitive to the cultures of all students (Papp, 2018). Ladson-Billings (2021b) argued that educators should not only be aware of differences in school culture but should also leverage those differences to effectively teach students. When culturally responsive approaches are employed, a student’s unique culture becomes a lens for them to explore the curriculum, not a barrier to accessing learning.

Freire (1970) declared that “One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion” (p. 95). Further, J. M. Anderson (2004) asserted that “There are no places that are not colonized” (p. 329). Engagement Academy is no exception. Approximately 25% of students identify as being Indigenous (Engagement Academy, 2022b); however, Indigenous representation in the school culture is largely nonexistent. Despite its rich Indigenous history, Newfoundland and Labrador’s embracing of these cultures has paled in relation to other provinces. Most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are ignorant of Indigenous cultures, relying on stereotypes that perpetuate racism, while the education system preserves organizational structures that continue to colonize schools (Godlewska et al. 2017a).

Godlewska et al. (2017b) blamed the school curriculum in Newfoundland and Labrador for ignoring Indigenous histories, lacking context when histories are discussed, and including settler perspectives that undermine Indigenous content.

Ladson-Billings (2017) discussed how certain populations can be underserved, if not directly hurt, by traditional school structures. Indigenous studies have been historically excluded from school curricula (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2021). A deeper consideration into the role of colonization and how Western influences have dominated traditional systems at the expense of Indigenous ways of life needs to be considered as a part of this OIP and as part of the future of Newfoundland and Labrador's school system.

### **Emancipation Through Social Justice**

Closely related to culturally responsive pedagogies in the concept of social justice. Systemic inequities are embedded in the current system, privileging certain backgrounds over others (Bartolome, 1994; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Students who are non-White, marginalized, coming from poverty, facing mental health challenges, or experiencing complex homelives are served less effectively by the education system than their White, financially and socially stable peers (Hair et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2019; Shields & Warke, 2010). For many students, their home address is an accurate predictor of school success (Ladson-Billings, 2021a).

Upper-class families tend to be overrepresented in advanced courses which engage students in more complex reasoning and higher order critical thinking abilities, whereas high-poverty students are overrepresented in nonacademic courses (Mehta & Fine, 2019). This perpetuates cycles of poverty lasting for generations (Fiddian-Green, 2019). The goal of this OIP is to ensure that all students of Engagement Academy, regardless of background, are given the tools and supports to achieve educational success.

Socioeconomic equity issues are pervasive social justice issues in schools (Dell'Angelo, 2016; Hair et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2019; Shields & Warke, 2010), and the most visible barriers to equity at Engagement Academy are socioeconomic related. During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, I learned that roughly one third of students lacked home access to internet and were at a major disadvantage as instruction pivoted online.

This OIP can be considered through the lens of social justice because diversity, equity, and inclusion are social justice issues (Barnett, 2020; Endo, 2021; Jimerson et al., 2021; Mallon, 2019; Ramirez, 2021). Stommel (2017) argued that social justice cannot be achieved in “a hierarchical system that pits teachers against students and encourages competition by ranking students against one another” (para. 2). Such approaches are not only contrary to social justice, they are also another example of how traditional schooling can oppress its most vulnerable students. Theoharis (2007) discussed the importance of administrators like me guiding “their schools to transform the culture, curriculum, pedagogical practices, atmosphere, and school wide priorities to benefit marginalized students” (p. 231). As principal and lead learner, I have an obligation to examine what barriers to education exist in Engagement Academy’s traditional school model and then do the hard work of removing them.

### **Reflecting on Emancipation**

Although traditional education systems are oppressive, more oppressive regimes exist throughout the world, and many who are less fortunate would gladly adopt the system I am critiquing. The existence of worse systems, however, does not mean educators should be satisfied with the status quo and not strive for improvement. The biggest gains are to be achieved by focusing on those the system is ignoring or even unintentionally harming. Bartolome (1994) argued that pedagogical spaces need to be created that “enable students to move from object to

subject positions” (p. 177). Such a reframing of our classrooms can have a significant impact on engaging and humanizing marginalized students. Involving students as partners and creating the conditions that emancipate rather than oppress their potential is necessary to ensure the success and engagement of all students and transform schools into 21st-century institutions.

### **Questions Emerging From the Problem of Practice**

The PoP described above caused me to consider many questions to guide the work of this OIP. These questions reflect the broader organizational theories, models, and frameworks explored in the OIP. The questions are as follows:

1. What organizational structures of Engagement Academy hurt student engagement?

Student engagement is a direct reflection of the institutional structures that define Engagement Academy. Structures that permeate modern day education systems are often referred to as the “grammar” of schools (Mehta & Fine, 2019; Mehta & Datnow, 2020). This OIP questions the effects of this grammar on student motivation.

2. What are the resistance factors to school change?

A question central to any OIP is the extent that organizational employees will embrace or resist change plans. Change will happen only by identifying and overcoming resistance factors. Personal factors such as teacher workload, efficacy, comfort level, and most recently, COVID fatigue, can emerge as barriers (Gardner et al., 2022; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013) and are present in the current conditions of Engagement Academy. Furthermore, resistance can emerge from societal expectations of what school is expected to look like.

3. How can school change be meaningful and sustained?

Another consideration is whether this OIP can produce meaningful and sustainable change. Kotter (2012) discussed the danger of organizations slipping back to prechange



conditions before a change is institutionalized into a school's culture. Consideration needs to be given to institutionalizing change (Kotter, 2022) as part of Engagement Academy's culture.

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

Having defined the PoP, I shifted to consideration of the desired future of Engagement Academy. This section focuses on the change drivers and the change priorities for the OIP.

#### **The Present and the Envisioned Future**

A walk through the hallways of Engagement Academy, particularly in the intermediate and secondary wings, reveals the need for change. Students spend most of their time sitting while teachers deliver curriculum through lectures from the front of the classroom. Lessons are often designed around test preparation and classroom routines are often based on compliance. Signs of disengagement are numerous: students with heads on desks, students texting, students misbehaving, and worse, students not attending.

This OIP envisions a school where students engage with pedagogical models designed to prepare students for life in the 21st-century. In the desired state, students play an active role. Teachers move from the front of the class to the sidelines, as classrooms shift from students listening to students doing. Students are given the agency to pursue their own interests and determine their own learning. Students embody Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) idea of "flow" (p. 29), becoming lost in their work, losing track of the time, and are disappointed when the bell rings.

#### **Change Drivers**

School change is ultimately a human endeavor with teachers being more likely to commit to a change once they understand how the change will benefit their organization and overall work experience. The areas addressed by this OIP offer many potential benefits to Engagement Academy, each which can increase teacher commitment and drive the proposed change.

### ***Increased Learning***

This OIP will lead to increased student learning. Research indicates that when students are engaged, they learn more (Fullan et al., 2018; Gardner et al., 2021; OECD, 2019). This learning is shown in both the depth of understanding and in long-term retention of information.

### ***21st-Century Preparation***

This OIP will lead to increased 21st-century preparation. Couros (2015), Resnick (2017), K. Robinson and Aronica (2015), Kivunja (2014), Wagner and Dintersmith (2015), and OECD (2019) all discussed the need to prepare students for life in the 21st century.

### ***Improved Attendance and Decreased Dropout Rates***

Although a multitude of factors influence attendance rates, students are more likely to attend school when they are engaged (Stoner & Fincham, 2012). According to the Public Post-Secondary Education Review (2021), approximately 1300 students drop out per year in Newfoundland and Labrador. The province's Child and Youth Advocate, Kavanagh (2019), noted the link between school attendance and academic success and its inverse correlation to dropout rates. This link is consistent with the research of Archambault et al. (2008).

### ***Decrease in Discipline Referrals***

This OIP has the potential to decrease student discipline concerns. Research has found a negative correlation between school engagement and disruptive behaviours (Green et al., 2021). Less disruptive classrooms can improve learning and student–teacher relationships.

### ***Positive Mental Health Outcomes***

This OIP can positively impact mental health outcomes for students and staff. The COVID-19 pandemic has exasperated mental health concerns of students, who have seen an increase in social isolation since the pandemic began (Hamoda et al., 2021). The mental well-

being of students is impacted by student engagement and students' perceived success (Kavanagh, 2021). When engaged in meaningful work, students feel an increased sense of connection and belonging (Pumariega, 2021), both which improve mental health outcomes. Student engagement has also been linked to improved teacher mental health outcomes (Wong et al., 2017).

### ***Increase in Equity and Empowerment***

A final benefit to this OIP is an increased sense of student equity and empowerment through the removal of traditional structures. Giving students voice and choice, and helping students realize their own strengths fuels engagement (OECD, 2021). An increase in student motivation disproportionately benefits students who are disadvantaged due to socioeconomic factors, race, minority status, and mental health issues (Fullan et al., 2018; McGregor, 2014).

### **Change Priorities**

Before I accepted the principalship at Engagement Academy, I worked as assistant principal at a high school where staff implemented a *genius-hour* program (Katrein, 2016; C. Robinson, 2018). A portion of the school year was dedicated to students working on a self-determined project. Although many students were excited and engaged by the initiative, many students were uncomfortable taking control over their own learning and demonstrated resistance. After years of having teachers dictate their learning, these students no longer knew how to explore their own interests and take on a more active role in the learning process.

The report from PERT (2021) noted a “lack of entrepreneurial spirit in graduating students” (p. 146). This lack of entrepreneurial spirit was what I witnessed in the *genius-hour* project. To achieve my goal of graduating students who can contribute to the 21st-century economy, the work of this OIP must empower students. This OIP lists three change priorities designed to increase student engagement and provide a 21st-century learning experience for

students: encouraging self-determined learning through choice; developing student efficacy; and fostering entrepreneurial spirit.

### ***Encouraging Self-Determined Learning Through Choice***

Fullan et al. (2018) and Quinn et al. (2020) called for a reframing of the traditional student–teacher relationship, with students being promoted to equal partners with their teachers. Involving students as partners in their learning experience is a step towards fixing equity issues that are systemically embedded (Bartolome, 1994; OECD, 2021). Choice empowers students (Llewellyn, 2013) and encourages the development of their unique skills and interests.

### ***Developing Student Efficacy***

Schools spend more time discussing teacher efficacy than student efficacy. This OIP has to be concerned with the development of student efficacy, as students need to be comfortable working in 21st-century models of education. Van Dinther et al. (2011) noted how efficacy has a direct impact on engagement and learning, as people are likely to engage in activities that they feel they are capable of. This OIP will force students out of their comfort zones, so the plan will include supports for students throughout the process.

### ***Fostering Entrepreneurial Spirit***

If today's students are going to develop creative ideas that improve the province's place in the 21st century, educators need to foster entrepreneurial spirit in students. This is not to say that I am endeavoring to reproduce the neoliberal values of encouraging students to participate in the market economy through this OIP, but rather to develop the skills of creativity and innovation typically associated with entrepreneurship. Students need to develop the skills and confidence to propose and develop their own ideas.

The change drivers listed above provide an engaging and meaningful approach to

education that is suited to life in the 21st century while addressing equity, social justice, and decolonization issues. Empowering students through choice and helping all students develop their self-efficacy and sense of entrepreneurship will help give those students typically lost in the system the skills they need to flourish and escape their colonized pasts (Lopez, 2021).

### **Organizational Change Readiness**

Analyzing organizational change readiness is an integral part of the change planning process, as internal and external organizational factors can hinder implementation. Many mechanisms already in place, such as teacher individual learning plans, school development plans, and the teacher growth and appraisal process can be leveraged to assess change readiness. Teacher surveys also provide much insight into change readiness. In Engagement Academy's PMF data for 2019–2020, only 40% of teachers indicated that they were supportive of changes to school culture (Engagement Academy, 2020).

Organizational change is difficult, and schools are complex. Lead learners need to understand how people in an organization collaborate, communicate, and work with one another. Organizational cultures form based on the inner forces of an organization; the organization will remain in a state of stasis unless these forces are altered. I used a forcefield analysis (Cawsey et al., 2016) to analyze organizational forces at Engagement Academy.

A forcefield analysis identifies specific organizational forces working for and against change. Page and Schoder (2019) stated that “only when the force to change outweighs the forces against it will people be ready to make the move” (p. 39). The full results of my forcefield analysis are found in Appendix A and are discussed below.

Several internal forces can push teachers towards supporting the OIP. These forces include wanting to improve teacher–student relationships, finding meaning and fulfillment in

one's work, and positively impacting students. Likewise, the disengagement of students reflected in the PMF data is a force that encourages change. These forces are largely personal, and their level of influence will vary from teacher to teacher. Factors pushing against change, such as pressures around curriculum coverage and assessment practices, are deeply embedded in the established structures of Engagement Academy. Pressures from parents and students, workload issues, and teacher's own personal philosophies over what school should look like, also serve to discourage school change.

Some forces' impact on this OIP remain unknown at this time. Since March 2020, COVID-19 has put a tremendous strain on resources in education and threatens to continue to tax the system into the 2022–2023 school year and beyond. Public examinations were cancelled from 2020–2022 (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2021); however, if exams are reinstated in the future, then exam preparation will serve as a resistant factor for some teachers. Finally, with the NLESD being absorbed by the EECD, there is uncertainty around the philosophical direction of the new school district and how this OIP will complement the goals of the new organization. Although the reasons to resist change are strong, strong leadership can counter entrenched resistance factors and work to push organizational change forward.

### **Conclusion**

The stakes for the success of this OIP are high when considering the economic and demographic challenges faced by Newfoundland and Labrador is facing. Student engagement is deeply linked to the long-term personal happiness and fulfillment of students (Gardner et al., 2021). Ensuring that students live happy and fulfilling lives connects with the humanistic principles of this OIP. The current low levels of student engagement speak to the importance of

giving students a more relevant and engaging educational experience which will lead to many positive outcomes. These outcomes are considered when weighing solutions to the PoP which will be discussed in Chapter 2.

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

This OIP addresses the lack of student engagement for Grade 7–9 students of Engagement Academy through the adoption of 21st-century pedagogies intended to provide a more relevant and meaningful experience. This chapter discusses how my chosen leadership styles complimented by Kotter’s (2022) eight-step model will be used. I perform a gap analysis using Nadler and Tushman’s (1980) congruence model and examine possible solutions to the PoP before choosing heutagogy (Hase & Kenyon, 2000) as a viable approach for 21st-century education and engagement.

### **Leadership Approaches**

Leadership is integral to any successful organizational change (Donohoo, 2013; Hargreaves & Harris, 2015). With up to 70% of change initiatives falling, quality of leadership is often the difference between success and failure (Higgs & Rowland, 2005). Hargreaves and Harris (2015) said that effective leadership is “found in the capacity to fuse many styles and components together into an integrated and self-assured whole” (p. 47). My approach to leadership borrows from instructional, transformational, servant, and distributed leadership.

### ***Instructional Leadership***

Student learning is the primary goal of education and at the heart of any organizational change in schools is improved student learning (Harris, 2015). As such, instructional leadership (Bellibas et al., 2020; Bellibas & Liu, 2015; Hallinger, 2003) is a leadership style that grounds my daily practice. I worked for 11 years as a language arts department head, working closely with teachers on instruction and assessment practices. This experience integrated my leadership practice with the classroom. The quality of the classroom teacher impacts student achievement (Bellibas et al., 2020) and focusing on teacher practice is integral to school improvement (King



& Stevenson, 2017). Instructional leaders foster improved learning environments (Abdullah & Kassim, 2011). Employing instructional leadership approaches as a lead learner focuses this OIP on student learning.

As principal and lead learner, I plan to lead the implementation of this OIP at the classroom level, not from the comfort and safety of my office. I plan to work alongside teachers. Hallinger (2003) described instructional leaders as “hands on principals, ‘hip-deep’ in curriculum and instruction, and unafraid of working with teachers on the improvement of teaching and learning” (p. 332). Instructional leaders conduct classroom observations, connect professional development to practice, while focusing on academic standards and quality teaching practices (Katz et al., 2018).

Instructional leadership has been linked to the academic success of students (Bellibas et al., 2020; Bellibas & Liu, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015) and is related to transformational leadership (Bass, 1999; Caldwell et al., 2011; van Oord, 2013) in that both approaches can be used for effective organizational change.

### ***Transformational Leadership***

Transformational leadership is concerned with the transformation of organizations. Transformational leaders look for solutions to problems and challenge the status quo (Geijsel et al., 2002; Salas-Vallina et al., 2020). Employee motivation increases through transformational leadership with employees often exceeding expectations (Eyal & Roth, 2011; Ghadi et al., 2013; Ross & Gray, 2007). Employee engagement is correlated to how meaningful employees find their work to be (Ghadi et al., 2013; Kelly, 2007). Transformational leaders help employees find meaning through intellectual stimulation and inspiration (Bass, 1999; Bennis & Nanus, 2007; Faupel and Súrß, 2019; Ross & Gray, 2007).

Transformational leaders often focus on issues related to equity, one of my leadership lenses. Lopez (2021) stated that transformational leaders turn “ideas into action that create schools where all students are successful, and in particular those who have been marginalized” (p. 364). This view is mirrored by van Oord (2013) who described transformational leaders as being committed to social justice, equality, and democracy.

I plan to use aspects of transformational leadership to motivate staff, inspiring them to aspire to the ideals of this OIP. Transformational leaders demonstrate high ethical standards and a values-based perspective, inspiring ethical behaviour in their employees by “doing what is right rather than what is easy” (Page & Schoder, 2019, p. 34). There is a moral imperative in the work of this OIP to provide students a better educational experience; as a transformational leader, I hope to instill this in teachers.

### ***Servant Leadership***

The concept of servant leadership was initially proposed by Greenleaf (1977). Servant leadership recognizes the potential benefits of leaders supporting and “serving those around them rather than merely leading them” (Irfan & Rjoub, 2021, p. 2). Servant leaders are a “new kind of leader” (Kiersch & Peters, 2017, p. 153) where the focus is not on formal power structures but on relationships, support, and collaboration. With relationships informing my leadership lens, a servant leadership style aligns with my natural disposition. As an introvert who does not enjoy confrontation, I am more comfortable leading through relationships than by exercising authority.

Servant leadership can increase engagement and performance (Zheng et al., 2020), positive feelings towards the organization, and acceptance towards organizational change (Irfan & Rjoub, 2021). Servant leaders build confidence and empower employees by building capacity (Davis, 2017; Holdsworth & Maynes, 2017; Stewart, 2012; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

A servant leadership approach can propel organizational change by supporting teachers through uncertainty. Servant leaders inspire a sense of trust (Fry, 2003; Caldwell et al., 2011; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Zheng et al., 2020) through “the perception of support” (Holdsworth & Maynes 2017). As such, servant leadership approaches can help teachers to engage with the OIP.

It is through teachers that administrators can impact students (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). I will employ servant leadership to support teachers through professional development, allow time for collaboration, and provide feedback to support practices. When teachers feel supported, accepted, empowered, and valued, they will be more inclined to engage with this OIP.

### ***Distributed Leadership***

If instructional leadership grounds my leadership practice, and transformational leadership and servant leadership are used to inspire and support teachers, it is distributed leadership on which the success of this OIP depends. Distributed leadership is the dominant approach that will be employed to achieve organizational change. My personal leadership style aligns itself naturally and is influenced by the work of Harris (2015). Harris (2015) maintained that top performing schools “invest in collective professional capacity rather than individual expertise...[ensuring] that their teachers continue to learn and are deeply engaged in collaborative professional learning” (Introduction, para 8). The success of this OIP is contingent on organizational learning, something that distributed leadership encourages (Kurt, 2016; Rikkerink et al., 2016). Teachers grow and develop as they adapt to new roles and responsibilities.

Like servant leadership, distributed leadership has been shown to increase staff commitment to change (Harris et al., 2007). Distributed leadership (Bellibas et al., 2020; Hartley, 2010; Sloan, 2013) can be understood by examining “how leadership practice is distributed

among positional and informal leaders as well as their followers” (Spillane et al., 2001, p. 16). School administrators cannot implement school change single-handedly. Organizational change is too daunting a task for one person. By involving multiple staff members, the likelihood for authentic and sustainable change is increased.

Modern educational systems tend to be hierarchical. Teachers receive direction from administrators and students receive directions from teachers. Although hierarchies have benefits, they can also disempower employees and hurt morale. Traditional leadership models “smack of elitism” (Rosile et al., 2018, p. 308); however, distributed leadership is democratic and inclusive, valuing networked cultures as opposed to hierarchies (Hartley, 2010). With Fullan (2013) calling teachers and students to work together as partners, distributed leadership structures mirror such partnerships in the teacher–administrator relationship.

Yukl (2002) described distributed leadership as a method of enhancing the collective capacity of organizations by empowering employees while increasing risk-taking, creativity, and efficacy (Eyal & Roth, 2011; King & Stevenson, 2017). Such approaches aid teachers in becoming “initiators of innovation” (Holdsworth & Maynes, 2017, p. 668) in their practice.

Distributing leadership and responsibility for the OIP to others can have huge payoffs for organizational change. Employing distributed leadership approaches as the lead learner can encourage learning of Engagement Academy teachers, leading to organizational improvement. Employing a distributed leadership perspective, I will be focused on identifying and empowering the natural leaders of Engagement Academy. I will offer encouragement, support, and professional development opportunities to develop the leadership capacity and efficacy of teachers while empowering them to learn and grow as educational leaders.

## **Humanist Leadership**

Transformational, distributed, and servant leadership styles complement the humanist principles that inform this OIP. Just as teachers need to honour their students as unique individuals, school leaders should employ humanistic approaches that acknowledge the strengths and needs of their teachers. Although organizational needs drive change, effective change “is all about people” (Page & Schoder, 2019, p. 39). Khilji (2022) contended that humanizing approaches to leadership “compels leaders to act in ways that honor human beings, upholds their dignity, promotes equality, fosters a sense of responsibility, and promotes well-being” (p. 443). Leaders have the potential to influence the happiness of those in their charge, leading to personal fulfillment (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020).

Humanist philosophies are rooted in the foundations of transformational leadership, challenging basic organizational and social structures while recognizing their follower’s individuality (Eyal & Roth, 2011; Ghadi et al., 2013). Servant leadership supports the growth and development of teachers so they can overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. Distributed leadership gives teachers a sense of efficacy and expanded voice, empowering them through increased responsibility. Sloan (2013) described distributed leadership models as a mechanism for “disturbing the system” (p. 44) and giving agency to those who are oppressed. A combination of these leadership styles can motivate, empower, and support teachers, ensuring that teachers achieve their full potential as educators.

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

Engagement Academy operates under a model of continuous improvement (Deming Institute, 2022; Evans et al, 2012; Knouse et al., 2009; van Aartsengel & Kurtoglu, 2013). Teachers review school data annually to identify focus areas. This process is largely reactive,

with the previous year's data shaping school development. Change tends to be incremental and sudden shifts are rare. Incremental change allows stakeholders to easily adapt to new initiatives; however, change tends to be slow. With the rate of societal change increasing, schools become increasingly outdated and irrelevant as they fail to keep pace.

### **Leading Change**

In the planning of this OIP, three change models were examined. Lewin's (1951) stage theory of change and Cawsey et al.'s (2016) change path model were carefully considered before Kotter's (2022) eight-step process for leading change was selected. In examining the stage theory of change, I agreed with common criticisms that the model is overly linear and simplistic (Cummings et al., 2015; Shirey, 2013). The idea of unfreezing and freezing an organization has been criticized as unrealistic when considering the dynamic, complex, and ever-changing cultures of 21st-century organizations (Child, 2005; Marshak & Heracleous, 2004). In examining Cawsey et al.'s (2016) change path model, I felt that the four domains (awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization) were nuanced terms that lacked clarity. The domains are clarified in the model's descriptors; however, deciphering the model requires effort. My experience as principal has taught me that the effort required would serve as a barrier for some teachers. Although both models have their strengths, I concluded that they were not ideal models for the context of my organization and this OIP.

Kotter's (2022) eight-step model aligned itself naturally with the OIP. Each of Kotter's steps is self-explanatory, applicable, and complements the daily routines and pressures of the modern school system. Kotter's model is not without limitations: no mechanism is provided for dealing with staff resistance and it has been criticized as being too linear (Applebaum et al, 2012). Kotter's model does, however, provide a clear framework for change, and when

supplemented with cycles of collaborative inquiry (Donohoo, 2013) and the concerns-based adoption model (Hord & Roussin, 2013), both which will be discussed later, the model is strengthened.

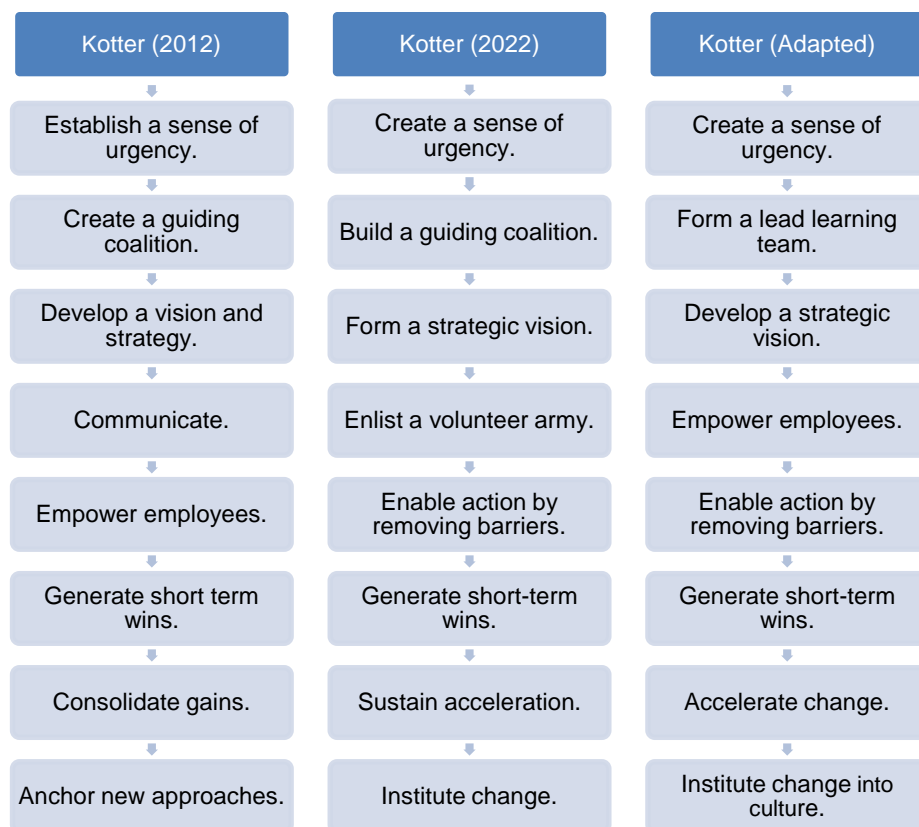
### **Change Analysis: Kotter's Eight-Step Process for Leading Change**

Kotter's (2022) eight-step model was first introduced in 1995 before being formalized in Kotter's book, *Leading Change* (1996). I first encountered the 2012 iteration of Kotter's model that was discussed in the book's second edition. Kotter's model has evolved, with some steps from the 2012 model having been updated. I felt some of these updates were less relevant to this OIP. As a result, I have adapted Kotter's model, incorporating steps from various iterations. Figure 3 shows the 2012, the current, and the adapted versions.

As principal and lead learner of Engagement Academy, I will be employing my adapted version of Kotter's eight-step process to implement the OIP. Kotter's steps are discussed below.

#### ***Step 1: Create a Sense of Urgency***

Creating a sense of urgency is Kotter's (2022) first step. When teachers feel change is urgently needed, they are more open to accepting it (Grant, 2016). Hase and Kenyon (2007) noted, "people only change in response to a very clear need" (p. 110). Leaders often undermine their change initiatives by not creating enough urgency to achieve staff buy-in (Kotter, 2012).

**Figure 3***Evolution of Kotter's Eight-Step Model*

*Note.* Adapted from *Leading Change* (2nd ed.), by J. Kotter, 2012. Copyright 2012 by Harvard Business Review; and from *The 8 Steps for Leading Change* by J. Kotter, 2022. Copyright 2022 by J. Kotter.

Three factors can be leveraged to create a sense of urgency in this OIP. First, the political and economic situation of Newfoundland and Labrador reveals an urgent need to reform the province's educational system. Students need to be well-versed in 21st-century skills that will equip them to tackle current and future problems such as those highlighted in the United Nations 2030 agenda (United Nations, 2022). The challenges facing the planet such as "the cascading effects of inequalities, racial and colonial violence, climate crises and biodiversity loss, economic austerity, precarity and instability, mental health crises, political polarization, large-



scale human migration, and more” (Andreotti, 2021, p. 144), emphasize the complex skills and competencies that will be required by today’s students.

Second, the need to increase social justice, equity, and decolonization in education is urgent and important work. Through this OIP, I hope to both reveal and undo the oppressive structures ingrained into the culture of Engagement Academy. Teachers need to advocate for the most marginalized in their care if all students are to be engaged.

If these goals seem lofty and unobtainable, Engagement Academy’s PMF data provides a microlevel justification for why change is necessary. When 70% of students express dissatisfaction with the status quo, educators have a duty to listen and to act. Motivating teachers to do better by their students can provide urgency to the work of this OIP.

As principal, I have the power and agency to set a course for school improvement; however, I cannot force change on teachers. I have to influence change by nudging, cajoling, and encouraging subtle shifts in practice. I need to be relentless in unveiling the inadequacies in the current system and challenge teachers to go beyond what is required and tap into their values, motivations, and moral imperative to serve students. As I identify like-minded teachers, I will invite them to be part of a lead learning team that will work collectively to inspire and implement change within Engagement Academy.

### ***Step 2: Form a Lead Learning Team***

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) encouraged the strategy of “us[ing] the group to change the group” (p. 37). Harris (2015) argued that teachers, not administrators, can potentially have the biggest impact on the professional practice of their colleagues. Similarly, Kotter’s (2022) idea of a guiding coalition used strategic members of a group to initiate and influence change. The guiding coalition shares ownership over a change initiative (Kang et al., 2022), inspiring change

through distributed leadership (Hartley, 2010; Rosile et al. 2018; Spillane et al., 2001). Principal-led initiatives often do not create change that survives beyond a 10-week period (King & Stevenson, 2017). Change is more likely to be sustained when its responsibility is shared (Harris et al., 2007; King & Stevenson, 2017; Stewart, 2012).

A professional learning community (PLC) is a group of teachers who learn alongside one another for the purpose of improving student learning (Carpenter & Munshower, 2020; Dufour, 2004; Myers 1996, Prenger et al., 2017). A variation of the PLC is a lead learning team (Katz et al., 2018). The concept of a lead learning team (LLT) aligns with the NLESD's (n.d.) insistence that principals serve as lead learners in their schools, as well as with the belief that organizational change is contingent on organizational learning (Senge, 1990). LLTs are small groups of teachers who work together as critical friends, meeting approximately every 6 weeks to critique practice using inquiry and collaborative analysis. PLCs often default to cultures that are "contrived and collegial" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 61) and do not develop the internal structures to properly critique one another in a way that brings meaningful change. Katz et al. (2018) asserted that many schools develop a "culture of niceness" (p. 78) where fear of offending colleagues leads to validating ineffective practices and accepting the status quo. Organizations that improve find ways to push beyond this culture of niceness and create a space where individual practices can be constructively challenged. Although it can feel uncomfortable, constructive criticism can provide teachers with the direction required to improve practice. An LLT establishes the criteria for staff members to feel safe being critical of their colleagues for the purpose of improving practice.

For the purpose of this OIP, Kotter's guiding coalition becomes the LLT. Harris (2015) asserted that the role of formal leaders in supporting PLCs is to "create the time, the opportunity,

and the resources for the group to function effectively” (Chapter 7, Role of section, para. 1). As principal and lead learner, I will use my agency to recruit teachers into the LLT; however, in order for distributed leadership to be properly employed, actions at the classroom level cannot be micromanaged. Teachers who are passionate about this work and who agree to be in the LLT need to be given the autonomy to implement the OIP in their classrooms according to their professional judgement. By working together and sharing best practices and unique approaches, the LLT can learn from one another and foster a sense of collective efficacy. In the sharing of successes and failures, the organization can collectively learn and improve.

### ***Step 3: Develop a Strategic Vision***

A “shared vision” (H. J. Anderson et al., 2017, p. 247) that is clear, focused, and meaningful is Kotter’s (2022) next step to inspiring change. A strong vision can offer “a unifying framework for organizational members” (Fiset & Robinson, 2020, p. 100). Without a clear vision, change “can easily dissolve into a list of confusing, incompatible, and time-consuming projects that go in the wrong direction or nowhere at all” (Kotter, 2012, p. 8). Establishing a clear vision for change is a recurring motif in transformational leadership literature (Bass, 1999; Bennis & Nanus, 2007; Caldwell et al., 2011; Fry, 2003; Geijsel et al., 2002). For this OIP, a relevant, engaging, and equitable vision of education that emancipates marginalized students from oppressive structures of the current system is required.

Kang et al. (2022) posited that Kotter’s steps are “revisitable and revisable rather than deterministic” (p. 280), and I believe this is apparent when considering the function of a strategic vision. A vision for change can establish a sense of urgency while also serving as a recruitment tool for the LLT. As principal and lead learner, I plan on developing a vision for change that will do both. However, once teachers join the coalition, I need to surrender control of the vision to

them so the vision becomes shared. Kurt (2016) cautioned against lead learners offering “ready made solutions” (p. 11). Authentic and sustained change cannot be prescribed. Involving the LLT in refining the vision ensures a sense of ownership that empowers employees.

#### ***Step 4: Empower Employees***

Transformational leaders foster “empowerment through participation” (Page & Schoder, 2019, p. 32). When employees are invited into the LLT, asked to take a leadership role, and given the autonomy to do the work, they are empowered as professionals. Solly (2018) explained that distributed leaders do not merely delegate tasks to others but increase “the leadership capacity within a school so that schools can improve and grow in an authentic manner” (para. 8). Activating the leadership potential of others can be achieved by granting the autonomy to act while ensuring accountability (Solly, 2018). SDT (Deci & Flaste, 1995) has demonstrated that autonomy increases motivation.

When empowerment leads to increased efficacy, commitment to change increases (Gunawan & Widodo, 2021). Empowering employees goes beyond giving employees permission to innovate within their practice; teachers must also be given the skills needed to engage within 21st-century structures. A servant leadership approach can help administrators support teachers through this adjustment. Empowering teachers to change their practice means empowering them to fail. Change happens through learning, and learning happens through failure. A school culture that encourages risk-taking and embraces learning through mistakes creates a safe space that empowers teachers to take risks and learn together.

Engagement Academy’s (2020) PMF data indicated that less than 40% of teachers feel capable of engaging unmotivated students, illustrating a low sense of efficacy. It is my responsibility to help foster these abilities in teachers: I plan to empower employees by providing

permission for teachers who are confident to innovate in their classrooms, and professional development, support, and guidance for those teachers who are not yet in a position to do the work of this OIP.

***Step 5: Enable Action by Removing Barriers***

Even when empowered, barriers still sometimes exist that prevent teachers from experiencing success. Kotter's (2022) fifth stage aspires to remove these barriers, enabling teachers to act. Teachers will encounter obstacles as they engage with this OIP. A servant leadership approach that focuses on minimizing these obstacles empowers teachers, helping both teachers and the organization to achieve their goals.

Barriers to change can be logistical, psychological, or pedagogical. Barriers may be common to the entire staff, or unique to individual teachers. As principal and lead learner, I must engage regularly with staff so that barriers are identified as they arise. Fostering trust through a servant leadership approach can ensure that teachers feel comfortable confiding their concerns with the OIP. Employing a service leadership model will help me to assist teachers in overcoming obstacles and developing necessary skills to incorporate 21st-century approaches into their practice. My role will be to provide advice and supports, offer feedback on approaches, acquire resources, secure professional development opportunities, and foster mutually beneficial connections.

***Step 6: Generate Short-Term Wins***

School change is not going to be immediate. Lasting organizational change can take 3 to 5 years to achieve (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Kotter (2012) discussed the importance of generating short-term wins to build momentum. Teachers should feel they are making progress to not become discouraged by a monumental change process. Small steps can have a

compounding effect on organizational change and should be shared and celebrated.

Teachers will become energized and engaged as victories are achieved. Kang et al. (2022) acknowledged the power of short-term wins “enhancing the credibility of the change process” (p. 284). With each short-term win, teachers gain confidence for the next challenge. Positivity sustains motivation. Short-term wins can be a tool of transformational leaders who work to impact the emotions of their followers by reinforcing positivity amongst team members (Page & Schoder, 2019).

Kotter (2012) argued that short-term wins cannot be hoped for, they need to be created. As principal and lead learner, I plan on working with the LLT to identify successes that can be easily accomplished and move the organization towards embracing the OIP. In Chapter 3, I discuss three specific short-term wins that can be accomplished early in the OIP (see Change Implementation section).

### ***Step 7: Accelerate Change***

Kotter (2012) contended that short-term wins create a momentum that accelerates change and warned against relaxing change initiatives once short-term wins are achieved. Change is fragile at this point, not having yet been absorbed into the culture. Transformational leadership can play an important role in keeping employees motivated (Sukoco et al., 2020) so that engagement with the OIP does not stall.

Predicting what actions will be necessary at this step is difficult, as accelerating change will require a focusing on aspects of the OIP that are succeeding. As principal and lead learner, it will be my responsibility to ensure that I am aware of successes, so that I can work with the organization to ramp up change measures in these areas.

### ***Step 8: Institute Change***

Kotter (2012) acknowledged that cultural changes happen at the end of a change process, not the beginning. Once change has been achieved, the change needs to be institutionalized into the organization's culture. Otherwise, slippage to prechange conditions is a possibility.

Changes can be institutionalized through the development of policies that make new approaches the norm (Page & Schoder, 2019). To get staff to buy into new policies, I must work closely with them, address their concerns, and give them a voice when developing policies. It is also necessary to consider unintended consequences of policies and how these consequences may disadvantage students who are most marginalized. Many traditional policies related to grading, discipline, and attendance have been developed with good intentions, but in practice they have been harmful to marginalized and colonized communities (Cairney & Kippin, 2022). Policies need to be developed with an eye to equity and social justice.

Change can also be institutionalized when a critical mass of the organization decides that the change is now the expectation. Transformational leadership can be effective in influencing the culture of an organization and institutionalizing change. Transformational leaders focus on both people and process when driving change (Page & Schoder, 2019). By focusing on people through inspiration and personal influence, transformational leaders can cement change into an organization's culture.

### **Critical Organizational Analysis**

This section provides a critical analysis of Engagement Academy, contrasting its current state with its desired state. Differences between the present and desired states highlight gaps that I hope to bridge through this OIP. These gaps can help in establishing the need for change and can help to create Kotter's (2022) sense of urgency. Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence

model serves as an instrument for performing such an analysis. The model focuses on four aspects of an organization: tasks, formal organization, informal organization, and people. Where these elements do not align, gaps are revealed, and problems are exposed. Results of the gap analysis are discussed below.

### **Tasks**

The tasks performed at Engagement Academy are typical of tasks performed in all schools. Teachers plan lessons, teach classes, assign work, assess students, and carry out other similar tasks. Students are expected to attend classes, study the prescribed curriculum, complete assessments, receive feedback, and progress through chronological grades until graduation.

### **Formal Organization**

Formal organizational structures of Engagement Academy consist of the curriculum, reporting structures, school policies, technologies, and societal expectations that help to define the daily operations of schools. Employee roles and collective agreements that define duties help create the formal organization. Formal structures support the tasks performed by teachers.

### **Informal Structures**

An organization's informal structures help to shape its culture: the beliefs, actions, attitudes, and tacit understanding of how things are done (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). Informal structures are forged through an organization's tasks and formal structures. For example, because formal structures dictate that students write public exams, teachers at Engagement Academy design lessons around test preparation creating a culture of assessment.

### **People**

Though Engagement Academy has many varied stakeholder groups, most of the organization's practices focus around either teachers or students. Teachers are clearly aligned



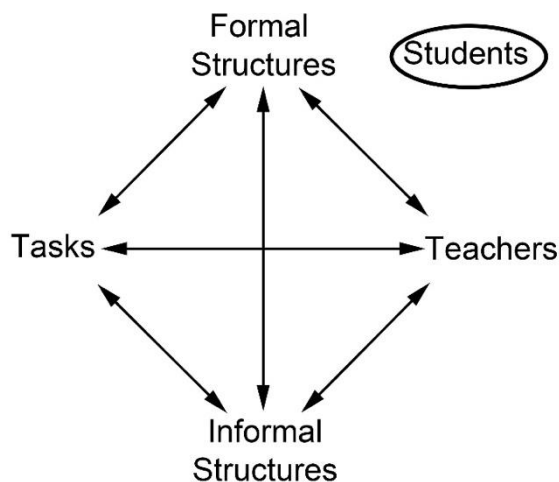
with the organization. Teachers tend to be comfortable in their roles, are familiar with their curriculum, and understand formal organizational structures of schools.

Gaps are revealed when students are considered. The natural impulses, urges, and desires of students do not naturally align with the tasks and formal and informal structures of schools. Students live in a 21st-century world; traditional schooling models are of the last century. Gemius Global (2017) dubbed this generation as both the *YouTube Generation* and *Generation C*. Smartphones, digital apps, and social media give students the tools for connecting, creating, and curating unique content in digital communities. Teens today have unlimited access to an endless supply of media from anywhere in the world, leading to more varied interests and individually curated life experiences.

A 2013 *Think with Google* blog post described today's students as being "highly engaged, making purposeful decisions about the way they choose to live their lives" (Google, 2013, p. 3). Students are given endless choice and autonomy in most facets of their lives, but not while in school where their experience are most often dictated by their teachers. Tasks, formal structures, informal structures, and teachers are aligned, but students often operate outside of these facets of school and are not fully included in the daily school experience in a way that truly recognizes and celebrates their humanity as unique and autonomous individuals (Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

*Applying Nadler and Tushman's Congruence Model*



*Note.* Adapted from “A Model for Diagnosing Organizational Behavior,” by D. A. Nadler and M. L Tushman, 1980, *Organizational Dynamics*, 9(2), pp. 35–51 ([https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616\(80\)90039-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616(80)90039-X)). Copyright 1980 by Elsevier.

In Engagement Academy’s current state, many students do not want to be in school. As discussed in chapter 1, many teachers are stressed, exhausted, and feeling overworked, content to accept the status quo if not totally apathetic towards their work. Curriculum is often presented inauthentically, and classroom routines are based on compliance.

In the desired state of Engagement Academy to which I aspire as principal and lead learner, teachers and students are engaged. Students are excited to be in school and are interested in the curriculum. Teacher and student relationships are rich and nurturing, reducing stress and increasing belonging for all members of the school community. Learning is self-determined and intrinsically motivated, and students are assessed authentically. Table 1 identifies gaps between Engagement Academy’s current and desired state.

**Table 1***Identified Gaps of Engagement Academy*

Current State	Desired State
Apathetic students	Engaged students
Teachers satisfied with status quo	Teachers motivated to improve student experience
Classroom routines dictated by test preparation	Classroom routines fostered by authentic learning
Some students included	All students included
Students conform	Students empowered
Test driven	Learning driven
Inequality	Equality

**Solutions**

This section proposes three solutions to bridge the gap between the current and desired states of Engagement Academy. These solutions, each which are discussed below, are:

1. The adoption of deep learning (Fullan et al., 2018) methods
2. The incorporation of culturally responsive teaching
3. Using heutagogy for self-determined learning

**Solution 1: The Adoption of Deep Learning Methods**

Fullan et al. (2018) proposed a model of 21st-century instruction and student engagement referred to as deep learning. Deep learning places an emphasis on the development of 21st-century competencies through real-world problem solving. Through learning partnerships, learning environments, new pedagogical practices, and leveraging digital skills, deep learning encourages student engagement, preparing students for life in the 21st-century. Adopting deep learning as a solution aligns this OIP with the NLESD's current vision for student learning,

reinforced by the NLESD's partnership with Fullan's NPDL network. Despite the partnership having begun in 2019, there has not been a widespread adoption of deep learning throughout the province. The NLESD has encouraged the use of deep learning; however, it has not been mandated. Engagement Academy was first introduced to deep learning in December of 2020, but pandemic stresses have hindered meaningful implementation.

The deep learning model is designed specifically to target student engagement through real-world relevance. Deep-learning empowers students by changing traditional hierarchical structures, redefining teacher-student relationships so that students are equal partners in their education (Fullan et al., 2018). The deep-learning framework ties into the idea of emancipation that pervades this OIP. Fullan et al. (2018) stated that "humans work hard to get away from something that is oppressive whether it be constraints or boredom" (p. 4). The deep-learning model promotes equity for all students, as Fullan et al. (2018) explained that "deep learning is good for all but it is especially effective for those most disconnected from schooling" (p. 5).

This solution presents some minor challenges. Engagement Academy teachers critique the NPDL for providing few concrete examples of deep learning in core subjects, specifically highly academic mathematics and science courses. As such, teachers who teach in these subject areas may be less likely to commit to the OIP. In terms of resources, Fullan et al.'s (2018) deep-learning framework calls for the leveraging of digital technologies to help students connect the curriculum to the larger world. Precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the NLESD provided each Grade 7–12 student in the province with a personal Chromebook, greatly reducing equity barriers. The NLESD's partnership with the NPDL team also provides the opportunity for regular professional development opportunities. Engagement Academy teachers can register with the NPDL deep-learning hub—an online repository of deep-learning materials. Furthermore, as

teachers across the province become more adept in adopting deep-learning practices, there is potential for collaboration.

### **Solution 2: The Incorporation of Culturally Responsive Teaching**

The second proposed solution for this PoP is the adoption of culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching uses “students’ customs, characteristics, experience, and perspectives as tools for better classroom instruction” (Will & Najarro, 2022, para. 5).

Recognizing a student’s unique identity, including their culture, gives permission for that student to be their authentic self, and it embraces the humanist principles of this OIP. Culturally responsive teaching is democratic and inclusive (McCarthy & Rogers Stanton, 2017; Walsh et al., 2018). Traditional school systems perpetuate oppressive systems that preserve historical inequities (Andreotti, 2021; Bartolome, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Rincón-Gallardo, 2020). Culturally responsive teaching removes these barriers.

As mentioned, 25% of Engagement Academy students are Indigenous. Statistics indicate that this number is increasing. In 1996, 880 people in the area identified as Indigenous, with that number increasing to 1940 by 2006 (Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 2011). The increase was not due to in-migration, rather due to an increasing awareness of Indigenous histories that had for so long been ignored in the province (Godlewska et al., 2017a). Potentially, many of these Indigenous students learn in ways not supported by the traditional classroom (Kitchenham, 2016). This may explain why less than 40% of Engagement Academy students feel valued as part of the school’s culture (Engagement Academy, 2020).

There is a growing awareness of the importance of decolonization in education, especially in light of recent discoveries of mass graves located on the grounds of former residential schools (Dickson & Watson, 2021). School leadership needs to shed light on the

colonial histories of their own buildings, so that schools can begin the “hard, unsettling work of decolonization” (Tuck and Yang, 2012, p. 4). Schools cannot tackle issues related to cultural inequities until teachers examine their own biases (Pollock et al, 2013) and teachers need professional development so that they can battle systematic racism at the classroom level (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015; Papp, 2020) and overcome “historical educational power imbalances” (Crosslin, 2021, SMPL and Equity section, para. 4).

The need for culturally responsive teaching is obvious when examining academic inequities in the current system (Wai & Lakin, 2020). Attendance rates of secondary Indigenous students tend to be 6%–12% lower than their White classmates (Briggs, 2016). Minority students are overrepresented in suspension and expulsion rates and special education referrals and underrepresented in educational funding opportunities (Ladson-Billings, 2017). Marginalized students are underrepresented in highly academic fields (Secules et al., 2018; Wai and Lakin, 2020). According to the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), only 8.7% of First Nations people, 5.1% of Inuit, and 11.7% of Métis have a university degree (p. 151). Culturally responsive schools have a responsibility to follow the recommendations of the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015). In the commission’s 2015 report, 11 of the reports’ 94 recommendations related directly to education (Appendix B).

Higgins et al. (2015) suggested that the lack of engagement of some Indigenous students is related to “the systematic and day-to-day racism that they face within schools” (p. 266). Exposing racist structures embedded in the system can increase equity, improve engagement, and deepen learning for marginalized students. There are risks inherent in this solution. Ahenakew (2016) cautioned that a focus on Indigenous education could result in the “utilitarian risk to all-too-quickly instrumentalize and embrace Indigenous research methodologies as quick-fix

solutions to or escapes from deep-rooted and ongoing (neo)colonial thinking” (p. 323). Tuck and Yang (2012) cautioned against using such decolonization practices as metaphor. Incorporating this solution would require serious commitment and meaningful action from all stakeholders.

I can also relate to Patel’s (2022) viewpoint as a settler that “I knew the words, but did not have the feelings, the imagination, nor the ethics to really understand what Indigenous resurgence and decolonization was demanding from my settlerness” (Limits section, para. 2). As a non-Indigenous White male of European descent who occupies a position of power, I have some hesitation in embracing the mantle of this particular solution. Patel (2022) referred to others in my position whose actions have been taken only to “strengthen their academic careers” (From Empathy section, para. 1). Incorporating culturally relevant approaches is important and necessary work; however, I question whether my focus should be on creating the conditions for others to accomplish this very important task, rather than leading this work myself.

Teachers can avail of numerous resources in implementing this solution. The NLESD actively promotes Indigenous education practices, recently hiring a director of schools for Indigenous education and tasking program specialists with related responsibilities. The NLESD has supported a virtual Indigenous alliance made up of students from across the province. Community partnerships are available to teachers including Elmastukwek Mawio-mi (Qalipu First Nation) which is currently working with several of Engagement Academy’s teachers.

### **Chosen Solution: Using Heutagogy for Self-Determined Learning**

The third and chosen solution for this OIP is the adoption of heutagogy as a vehicle for 21st-century learning and student engagement. Heutagogy originated with the work of Hase and Kenyon (2000). The term derives from the Greek word for “self” (Hase & Kenyon, 2007) as heutagogy is a model for self-directed learning. Stoten (2020) explained that heutagogy is a model for self-directed learning.

approaches shift away from “cohort-based notions of education” (p. 123) and create a more personalized curriculum. Heutagogy empowers students to become autonomous agents in their learning. Heutagogy is common in the world of higher education; however, research has shown that learners of all ages can apply heutagogy to their learning (Ecclesfield et al., 2021).

### **The Pedagogy-Andragogy-Heutagogy Continuum**

Luckin et al. (2011) developed the pedagogy-andragogy-heutagogy (PAH) continuum as a tool for implementing heutagogy in the classroom (see Figure 5). The move from pedagogy to heutagogy represents the transition from traditional teacher-centered classrooms to student-determined environments. The continuum allows learners to continuously switch between phases, depending on their learning needs (Crosslin, 2021; Stoten, 2020). Allowing students the freedom to operate in the pedagogic and andragogic realms is an important part of supporting students where they are. Students should be supported in the pedagogic and andragogic realms if that is what their learning requires, moving to heutagogy only when they determine they are ready.

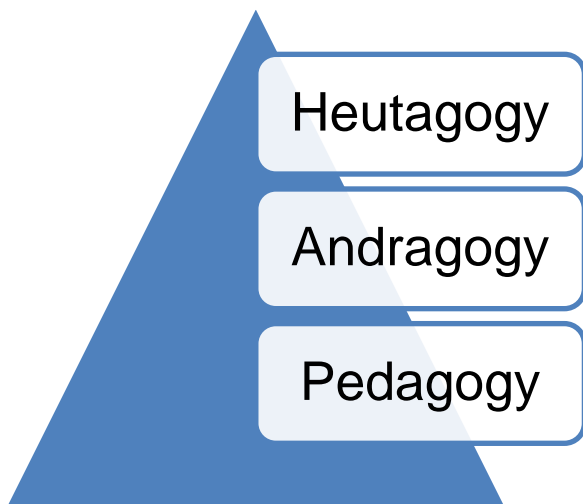
Pedagogy is concerned with the traditional transmission of knowledge from teacher to student. In pedagogy-focused environments, students learn from the teacher who determines the curriculum and instructional design of the classroom. To return to the definition of 21st-century learning as discussed in Chapter 1, in the pedagogy phase, students focus on the acquisition of Kereluik’s et al.’s (2013) foundational knowledge, which is necessary for laying the groundwork for deeper learning in a subject. Andragogy has historically had a place in adult-centered education. In andragogy-based classrooms, the curriculum is determined by the teacher; however, the student takes a more self-directed approach when it comes to working through the curriculum. Andragogy is useful for helping students understand that the learning process is



negotiable and fluid. As the student determines the approach to exploring the curriculum, in the andragogy stage, the student is able to tap into Kereluik et al.'s (2013) idea of meta-knowledge. In heutagogy, both curriculum and the learning process are determined by the student, as the teacher takes on a role of guide or facilitator. Heutagogy becomes a means of empowering students through individualized approaches to learning. The heutagogy phase requires an initiative, maturity, confidence, and entrepreneurship on behalf of the student that is missing from the previous stages. The student who is able to adequately direct and determine their own learning through heutagogy will have a highly refined understanding of Kereluik et al.'s (2013) humanistic knowledge.

### Figure 5

#### *The Pedagogy-Andragogy-Heutagogy Continuum*



*Note.* Adapted from “*Learner-Generated Contexts: A Framework to Support the Effective Use of Technology for Learning*,” by R. Luckin, J. Cook, W. Clark, P. Day, F. Garnett, N. Ecclesfield, A. Whitworth, T. Hamilton, J. Akass, and J. Robertson, 2011, In M. J. W. Lee & C. McLoughlin (Eds.), *Web 2.0-Based E-Learning: Applying Social Informatics for Tertiary Teaching*, pp. 70–84 (<https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-60566-294-7.ch004>). Copyright 2011 by IGI Global.

### **Benefits of Heutagogy: Engagement**

Heutagogy has been associated with increased levels of student engagement (Hill et al., 2018). Kaplan et al. (2021) equated heutagogy's power to engage students with concepts of SDT (Deci & Flaste, 1995), particularly relatedness, competence, and autonomy. SDT asserts that students will be engaged when they can relate classroom activities to meaningful real-life experiences (*relatedness*). When students feel they are good at something (*competence*) they are more likely to want to continue doing it. The final element of SDT is *autonomy*. Traditional classrooms tend to be teacher-centered, and heutagogy-based classrooms give autonomy to students as they take control of their learning (Setlhako, 2021).

Education in the 21st-century should be different than previous periods, due to “the wealth of readily accessible information” (Ashton & Newman, 2006, p. 829). Students do not need to rely on their teachers for information; the internet has liberated information from schools and given it to students (Hase & Blaschke, 2021b). As all students in Grades 7–12 have access to digital devices, Engagement Academy is well-positioned to leverage technology. With content knowledge being freely accessible, education can place an increased emphasis on Kereluik's et al.'s (2013) meta knowledge as demonstrated in the acquisition of 21st-century skills. Heutagogy has been shown to be effective in this regard (Bhojrab et al., 2010; Carberry, 2021; Eberle & Childress, 2009; Hase & Kenyon, 2007; O'Brien & Reale, 2021; Setlhako, 2021). Incorporating constructivist perspectives (Jones et al., 2019), heutagogy provides the natural evolution of earlier educational models which “prepares students for the self-determined lifelong learning which is essential for survival in a 21st century world” (Ashton & Newman, 2006) p. 825). One of the change priorities in this OIP is the fostering of entrepreneurial spirit. Heutagogy has the ability to foster an entrepreneurial mindset (Jones et al., 2019; Martinez & Munoz, 2021) as it

encourages students to value and develop their unique ideas.

If schools are to develop lifelong learners, top-down models of instruction need to evolve (Ashton & Newman, 2006). Setlhako (2021) acknowledges a “growing awareness in educational circles that students have a role to play in the teaching and learning process” (Learning section, para. 1). Shpeizer and Glassner (2020) called for students to engage in “symmetric dialogue (without authority) with their teachers” (p. SF84). This is a significant departure from how teachers and students interact in traditional classrooms, as the teacher guides the learner by “providing formative feedback that is personalized according to the learner needs” (Jones et al., 2019, p. 1173). Similarly, Hase and Blaschke (2021a) insisted that teachers have a role to play in helping students discover essential content and skills. The role of the teacher becomes much more complex than in traditional classrooms as the teacher is moving throughout each stage of the PAH continuum with their students, constantly determining when to act in a traditional teaching role and when to surrender the learning to the student.

Margarit (2021) maintained that the very act of implementing heutagogy has the potential to positively impact student–teacher relationships. To effectively employ the PAH continuum, teachers need to develop an in-depth understanding of their students. A level of trust is required between teachers and students beyond what is needed in the traditional classroom.

A final benefit of employing heutagogy is its’ creation of the school conditions for the other two proposed solutions of this OIP to emerge naturally. Heutagogy would allow aspects of deep learning to permeate the culture, as students are empowered to be learning partners with their teachers and leverage digital technologies to tackle authentic world problems (Fullan et al., 2018). Because students take the lead in their own learning, space is naturally made for culturally responsive approaches. Engagement Academy can make gains in areas of deep learning and

culturally responsive education by employing heutagogy as the solution to the PoP.

### **Risks of Heutagogy**

The implementation of heutagogy is not without risk. Heutagogy is an abstract concept that may seem overly academic and disconnected from the traditional day-to-day duties of most teachers. Heutagogy is also a relatively new field, with a need for more extensive studies and quantitative statistical data to support its implementation (Agonács & Matos, 2019).

Crosslin (2021) acknowledged that teachers can become overwhelmed when employing heutagogy. Eberle and Childress (2009) echoed this point, arguing that heutagogy is demanding for both teachers and students. Similarly, Stoten (2020) criticized heutagogy as being idealistic, chaotic, and difficult to implement, while inviting resistance from teachers, parents, and employers. Students can find heutagogical methods difficult to adjust to, as many students feel uncomfortable and anxious operating in gray areas where there is no preferred pathway (Crosslin, 2021; Kenyon, 2021; O'Brien & Reale, 2021). Assessing when using heutagogy can also present a challenge as students and teachers can become overwhelmed by an indefinite number of assessment options (Crosslin, 2021).

Agonács and Matos (2021) cautioned that many students lack the maturity to engage in heutagogy. I would counter this point by noting that the PAH continuum allows students to work from pedagogy to andragogy and to use heutagogy at their own pace.

The resource most needed for the adoption of heutagogy may be the resource that is in the shortest supply—time. Teachers need time to research heutagogy and to collaborate with coworkers to learn how they can incorporate heutagogy in their classrooms. Teachers will also require professional development. There is little NLESD support specifically available for heutagogy, as the district does not sanction heutagogy as an approach; however, many NLESD

staff employ heutagogical principles without being aware they are doing so. Heutagogy overlaps with other NLESD initiatives such as deep learning (Fullan et al., 2018) culturally responsive teaching (Aronson & Laughter, 2016), standards-based assessment, (Iamarino, 2014) and universal design for learning (Posey & Novak, 2020). As such, district staff can certainly be rich resources for helping to develop skills necessary for the implementation of heutagogy.

Finally, there are opportunities to reach out and consult with experts in the field of heutagogy, bringing their expertise to Engagement Academy. Dr. Blaschke, Dr. Hase, and other experts could be asked to help Engagement Academy and the NLESD adopt heutagogy. One positive impact of the pandemic on education is that educators have become adept at leveraging digital technologies to forge professional connections and foster professional learning from afar. As school principal and lead learner, I will take responsibility for this task.

### **Ethical Considerations of Heutagogy**

Theoharis (2007) insisted that school change should benefit those students who are most disadvantaged. Pollock and Briscoe (2020) asserted that “principals are uniquely positioned to either promote or undermine equity in their schools” (p. 519). The adoption of heutagogy can provide a more equitable educational experience that benefits disadvantaged and marginalized students. In the context of Engagement Academy, heutagogy provides a mechanism for engaging students of Indigenous backgrounds. Patel (2022) reasoned that Indigenous perspectives need to be considered, valued, and incorporated if schools are to become decolonized. Diverse backgrounds are respected under heutagogy, as students select learning goals suited specifically to them (Margarit, 2021). When students’ backgrounds shape their learning as opposed to being a barrier to learning, students are provided a more equitable education (Bartolome, 1994).

Schools are entering an age of democratic education. Luckin et al. (2011) argued that

technological advancements have brought students the “tools for increased educational democracy” (p. 72) and given students the “technological means to engage in system reform” (p. 71). The system has changed, and educators now have the ability “to move learners out of a subordinate relationship to their context and into one of greater control” (Luckin et al., 2011, p. 74). Hase and Blaschke (2021b) argued that “an educational system that promotes agency and uses a learner-centered pedagogy such as self-determined learning both facilitates emancipation and fosters change” (Oppression section, para. 3).

Heutagogy can improve equity outcomes in how it impacts traditional grading and assessment practices. Heutagogy encourages a movement away from high-stakes testing and incorporate more authentic assessment practices. Such a shift can positively impact student mental-health outcomes. High-stakes testing has created a phenomenon of “academic obsession” (Fullan, 2021, p. 5) which is driving an increase in stress and anxiety while negatively impacting learning (Eizadirad, 2020). Authentic student assessment opportunities as encouraged through heutagogy can also improve equity outcomes (Feldman, 2019).

Traditional testing marginalizes many students while privileging others (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Marinho et al., 2017). This is apparent when viewing academic achievement through the lens of socioeconomic and generational factors. Students whose parents went to university tend to perform better on traditional assessments (Nichols & Isis, 2016). In the context of Engagement Academy, data available, albeit from 2001, indicates that only 6.5% of adults in the community possess a university degree and 46.6% of families have only have a Grade 12 diploma or below (Fisheries and Oceans Canada, 2011). This is to say that many of our families do not have a strong academic background or place a huge value on higher education. We have to reach the students from these families if our education system is going to move into the 21st-

century, and heutagogy provides a means for accomplishing this.

Heutagogy is founded on humanistic principles, as it naturally dismantles oppressive structures of traditional classrooms (Agonács & Matos, 2019; Blaschke & Hase, 2021; Stoten, 2020). Traditional teaching methods give power to teachers while keeping students passive and dependent (Ashton & Newman, 2006). Heutagogy assumes the learner is capable and gives them greater independence and agency (Hase & Blaschke, 2021b). Adopting the PAH continuum provides an increase in student voice, builds hope, and that helps students unleash their individuality and potential.

As seen above, the implementation of heutagogy is not a panacea; however, the potential benefits of heutagogy make it worth considering. Heutagogy aligns itself with the theoretical underpinnings of the OIP, incorporating humanism, constructivism, relationships, self-determined learning, and elements of social justice.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter 2 introduced heutagogy as an approach that can increase student engagement by providing a 21st-century learning experience to students of Engagement Academy. Although heutagogy is not without risks, it does provide many benefits as a progressive student centred approach to education that incorporates deep learning and culturally responsive teaching. Heutagogy empowers students, emancipating them from ingrained oppressive structures and providing a more equitable and engaging experience. Chapter 3 discusses the process of implementing and monitoring the adoption of heutagogy at Engagement Academy.

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

This chapter focuses on implementing heutagogy to provide students of Engagement Academy an engaging and meaningful 21st-century education. Kotter's (2022) eight-step process for leading change provides a framework for the adoption of heutagogy over multiple cycles of collaborative inquiry (Donohoo, 2013). Change is monitored through use of the CBAM (Hollingshead, 2009; Hord et al., 2006; Hord & Roussin, 2013). A communication plan to support the OIP, based on Klein's (1996) management communication strategy and Lewis's (2011) stakeholder theory communication model concludes the chapter.

#### **Collaborative Inquiry**

Collaborative inquiry (Donohoo, 2013; Fullan et al., 2018; Quinn et al., 2020) is informed by constructivist philosophies, as teachers construct local solutions to specific problems (Butler & Schnellert, 2012; Wagner, 1998). The collaborative inquiry cycle mirrors the plan, do, study, act model (Cleary, 2015; Deming Institute, 2022; Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2017) and serves as a tool for continuous organizational improvement. Teachers progress through steps of planning, implementing solutions, and assessing results before cycling through the process again. The collaborative inquiry model presented by Fullan et al. (2018; see Figure 6) will be used as it is also used by the NLESD and will be familiar to teachers of Engagement Academy.

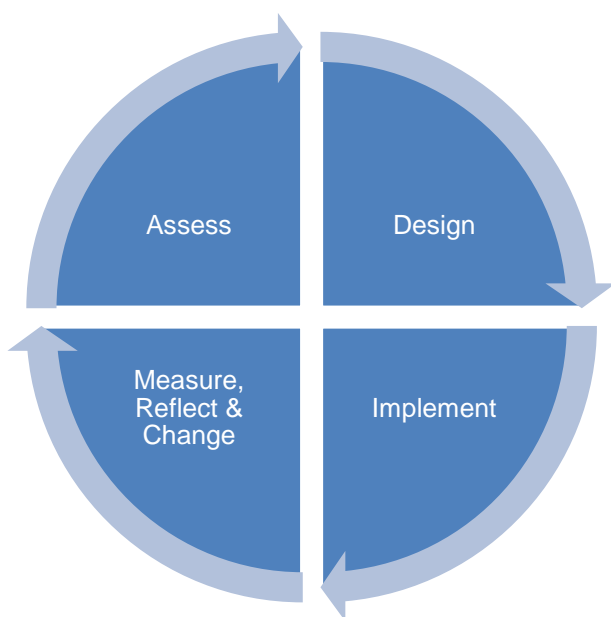
Collaborative inquiry is a “counter narrative to top-down professional development models” (Adams, 2015, p. 306). Fullan (2006) discussed how inquiry can result in “lateral capacity building” (p. 116). Professional development typically involves teachers learning out of context, and bringing a new skill into the classroom environment, but in collaborative inquiry, teachers learn in the context of their school. As Harris (2015) stated, “changes in professional behavior or classroom practice are more likely to result from job-embedded learning or learning



in context” (Chapter 7, para 5). Collaborative inquiry flows naturally from distributed leadership models where responsibility is shared amongst colleagues working together to find solutions to localized problems (Harris, 2015). Organizational change requires organizational learning (Hord & Roussin, 2013; Senge, 1990). Harris (2015) argued that the one of the most effective forms of professional learning happens in collaborative teams. Donohoo (2013) recognized the power of collaborative inquiry to “co-construct new understandings through learning by doing” (p. 35).

### Figure 6

#### *Collaborative Inquiry Cycle*



*Note.* Adapted from *Deep Learning: Engage the World Change the World*, by M. Fullan, J. Quinn, and J. McEachen, 2018, p. 101. (<https://us.corwin.com/en-us/nam/deep-learning/book255374>). Copyright 2018 by Corwin & Ontario Principals’ Council.

When teachers are invited to collaborate on a problem, they are given agency and are empowered as professionals. Collaborative inquiry empowers teachers to engage in their practice as researchers (Cantalini-Williams, 2015; Emerling, 2009; Sloan, 2013). James et al. (2007) discussed how collaboration naturally complements the principles of distributed leadership

which is the dominant leadership style of this OIP. As principal and lead learner, it is my job to foster both individual and organizational learning. Collaborative inquiry accomplishes both.

Collaborative inquiry mirrors the humanist principles that pervade this OIP. Just as students are given the chance to grow, develop, and fulfill their potential through choice, autonomy, and self-directed learning, collaborative inquiry affords the same opportunity to teachers, allowing teachers to fulfill their potential as they learn and grow as professionals. Fullan et al. (2018) argued that collaborative inquiry can give teachers a powerful learning experience and foster increased teacher efficacy, providing a constant feedback loop to teachers to help improve their practice. Each time a teacher completes a collaborative inquiry cycle, they will become more knowledgeable of how heutagogy and the PAH continuum can be used in their classrooms to engage and empower students.

### ***Collaborative Inquiry Cycles and Timelines***

I propose a 3-year timeline for implementation. A school year at Engagement Academy consists of two terms, one running from September to January and one running from February to June. Each term is approximately 18 weeks long. During this OIP, staff will progress through two collaborative inquiry cycles a year over a 3-year period. Each cycle will last approximately 12 weeks. This will allow each cycle to be comfortably embedded within each term, with a period of preparation at the start and a period of reflection at the end of each term. Table 2 provides a change plan for Year 1 of the OIP. The tasks detailed will be repeated in Years 2 (2023–2024) and 3 (2024–2025), and will be adjusted by the LLT as the process is refined.

**Table 2***Timeline of Implementation*

Date	Tasks
May 2022	Form the LLT
June 2022	Develop a shared vision for change
September 2022	Refine shared vision and establish goals for school year Provide orientation for all teachers, parents, and students Incorporate choice into all subjects in Grade 7
September 2022–January 2023	Collaborative inquiry Cycle 1 September 15—SoC Google form October 15—LLT meeting 1 December 1—LLT meeting 2 January 10—LoU Google form January 15—LLT meeting 3
February 2023	Celebrate and disseminate learning Refine vision for change Reestablish and grow the LLT
February 2023–June 2023	Collaborative inquiry Cycle 2 February 15—SoC Google Form March 15—LLT meeting 1 May 1—LLT meeting 2 June 10—LoU Google form June 15—LLT meeting 3
June 2023	Celebrate and demonstrate learning Refine vision for change Reestablish and grow the LLT

*Note.* LLT = lead learning team, SoC = stages of concern; LoU = levels of use.

### **Change Implementation**

Heutagogy and the PAH continuum redefine the rules of the traditional classroom. Such a

change can be disconcerting for all stakeholders. Teachers need to set clear expectations (Blaschke & Hase, 2021) by painting a clear picture of what classroom structures will look like and what the students' role will be while employing heutagogy. There may be less direct instruction, more inquiry-based exploration, the use of nontraditional assessment practices, and increased responsibility on students to take responsibility for their learning. Table 5, presented in the Developing the Change Vision subsection, illustrates the progression from traditional classrooms to heutagogical environments. Students need to feel supported as they move from the familiar and comfortable realm of pedagogy into the world of heutagogy where a more active role is required.

Heutagogy requires a level of initiative, maturity, confidence, and entrepreneurship that many students may not immediately possess. These skills will have to be encouraged and developed. Garnett (2021) described a process of “brokering” (Green My Curriculum section, para. 2) where students must negotiate a balance between formal education expectations and their own personal agency. Such a balance requires critical thinking, complex reasoning skills, and maturity. Teachers are also likely to struggle in the early stages. As each collaborative inquiry cycle is completed, students and teachers will further refine the skills necessary to employ heutagogy with confidence.

Kotter (2022) discussed the importance of establishing short-term wins to build momentum in the change process. The following three goals can be achieved early in the OIP:

- form an LLT
- provide an orientation to heutagogy for all stakeholders
- build choice into all courses, starting in Grade 7

Accomplishing these goals will develop teachers' sense of efficacy, expanding their knowledge

and understanding of heutagogy and the PAH continuum, while starting the process of empowering students. These goals should be completed during the first term of implementation (September 2022–January 2023).

### **Goal 1: Form an LLT**

Developing an LLT is an easily accomplished short-term win that can be achieved early in the OIP. The formation of the LLT was discussed in detail in chapter 2. As principal and lead learner, I will take an active role in recruiting teachers to the LLT. The LLT will be empowered to tackle the PoP through the process of collaborative inquiry.

When recruiting a guiding coalition, an individual's position, power, expertise, credibility, and leadership need to be considered. Teachers carry varying amounts of social capital and their ability to impact change will vary. The goals of the LLT will be to oversee and facilitate the implementation of this OIP. Harris (2015) argued that the two key activities that drive the work of professional learning teams include meaningful collaboration and active inquiry and insisted that collaborative teams need to be empowered to generate new ideas and practices for the organization. These roles need to be built into the expectations of the LLT so that the LLT can “push all group members’ thinking and learning beyond what they could accomplish on their own” (Katz et al., 2018, p. 86).

### **Goal 2: Provide an Orientation to Heutagogy for All Stakeholders**

All stakeholders need to gain an understanding of heutagogy, its challenges and benefits, what their role will be, and timelines for implementation. Teachers need to engage in professional learning around heutagogy and how to apply it in their classroom. Involving parents and students in these conversations will empower them to become true partners in their education (Fullan et al., 2018). It will take time for all stakeholders to adjust to the adoption of heutagogy.

A period of orientation provides a window for transition. As principal and lead learner, I will take responsibility for this process. Involving Engagement Academy's school council, its home and school association, and its student leadership team will help provide this orientation to all stakeholder groups.

The NLESD does not employ programs' staff dedicated specifically to heutagogy. As a lead learner in the NLESD, I have a role to play in educating the district about heutagogy and the PAH continuum. In August of 2022, I delivered a presentation on heutagogy to NLESD educators through the Ulearn summer learning series (NLESD, 2022). This was my first step in working with the NLESD to promote heutagogy as a model for student engagement and 21st-century learning. I plan on seizing on other future opportunities to share my learning with the NLESD, for the purpose of helping to shape the future of education in the province beyond the walls of Engagement Academy.

### **Goal 3: Build Choices Into All Courses Starting in Grade 7**

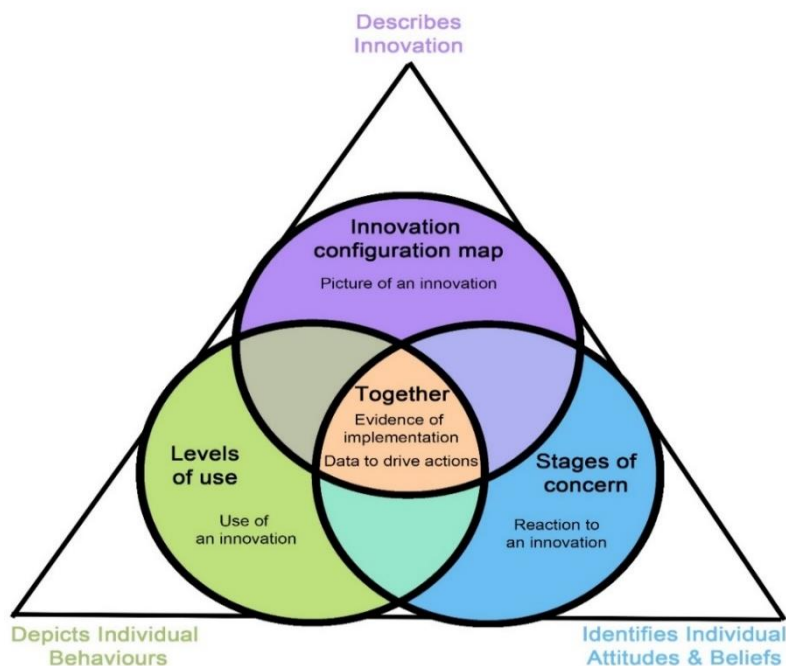
Heutagogy is an abstract term that may be difficult to comprehend. When establishing short-term wins (Kotter, 2022), concrete actions that immediately impact the classroom must be taken. Hase and Blaschke (2021b) presented the offering of choice as an easy first step to implementing heutagogy. Students may be given a choice as to which topics they will explore. When this is not possible due to curricular mandates, students may be presented choice in how they will demonstrate their learning or respond to a topic. Many teachers regularly offer choice in their courses, so making choice mandatory builds on already established practices and allows teachers to "shrink the change" (Heath & Heath, 2010, p. 124). When given choice, students are empowered to determine their own learning journeys.

## Managing the Transition

This OIP lays out a clear plan to engage students through 21st-century learning; however, the plan will evolve as individuals engage with it, obstacles present themselves, and other ideas emerge. I will use the concerns-based adoption model (CBAM) as a tool for managing the OIP. Although many monitoring tools for organizational change have been designed for business settings, when Hall et al. developed the CBAM (Figure 7) in 1973, they designed it specifically for education. The CBAM is a versatile tool with each of its three domains serving a distinct purpose. Innovation configuration maps (IC maps) help define and communicate the change vision; stages of concern (SoC) help reveal the attitudes of teachers implementing the change; and levels of use (LoU) help monitor how teachers are using an innovation (Hall et al., 2006).

### Figure 7

#### *Concerns-Based Adoption Model*



*Note.* Adapted from *Concerns-Based Adoption Model*, by SEDL Archive, 2022,

(<https://sedl.org/cbam/>). Copyright 2022 by SEDL.

## **Gauging and Managing Stakeholder Reactions**

Khoboli and O'Toole (2012) declared that “the teacher is an often-forgotten gatekeeper in educational change” (p. 139). The CBAM is a tool that can help the lead learner understand how the change is experienced by the classroom teacher. Hord and Roussin (2013) argued that you cannot change a school without changing its teachers. Individuals change before organizations. The CBAM can help monitor and gauge how individuals are responding to an initiative, allowing the lead learner to react accordingly.

### ***Humanism and the CBAM***

Organizational change can be managed more effectively if lead learners manage the human side of change (Bridges, 2022). The CBAM is a humanistic model, as it uses the SoC domain to consider the feelings and concerns of teachers, allowing the lead learner to employ attributes of servant leadership to support teachers through the change. Heller (2020) argued that teachers need to be equal partners with administrators to implement authentic school change. Autonomy, empowerment, and ownership over one's actions is important for both students and teachers. The CBAM puts stakeholder reaction at the centre of the OIP. In the SoC dimension of the CBAM, I can monitor how supportive staff are of the OIP and respond to specific concerns expressed by teachers.

There are seven stages of concern (SoC) in the CBAM (see Table 3). I plan on measuring these SoCs by giving teachers an anonymous Google form at the beginning of each collaborative inquiry cycle. As teachers engage in the change over time, SoC indicators should increase as teachers become more invested. Kotter's (2022) eight-step process discussed the importance of enabling action by removing barriers. The SoC domain of the CBAM helps to identify barriers, so lead learners can help teachers overcome them.



**Table 3***Stages of Concern*

Focus	Stage of concern (SoC)	Expression of concern
Impact	6: Refocusing	I have some ideas about something that would work even better.
	5: Collaboration	I am concerned about relating what I am doing with what my coworkers are doing.
	4: Consequence	How is my use affecting clients?
Task	3: Management	I seem to be spending all of my time getting materials ready.
Self	2: Personal	How will using it affect me?
	1: Informational	I would like to know more about it.
Unconcerned	0: Unconcerned	I am not concerned about this.

*Note.* Adapted from *Measuring Implementation in Schools: The Stages of Concern*

*Questionnaire*, by A. George, G. Hall, and S. Stiegelbauer, 2006, SEDL, p. 4

([https://sedl.org/cbam/socq\\_manual\\_201410.pdf](https://sedl.org/cbam/socq_manual_201410.pdf)). Copyright 2022 by SEDL.

Yan and Deng (2019) identified lack of concern as a hindrance to change initiatives.

Teachers need to feel an emotional investment in the OIP if they are going to engage with the it (Hord & Roussin, 2013). An emotional investment reinforces Kotter's (2022) need to establish urgency to inspire change. I will employ transformational leadership approaches to inspire teachers while using the SoC dimension to measure teachers' concerns throughout the process.

### **Potential Implementation Concerns**

Organizational change is a complex and unpredictable process. It is naïve to assume that change will be linear and simplistic. Some possible issues, which may arise, are discussed here.

### ***The Role of Curriculum***

When I engage teachers of Engagement Academy around 21st-century educational approaches, the most common pushback I get comes from teachers who are concerned that they

are compromising the prescribed curriculum. In order to address these concerns, I turned to provincial curriculum documents. During the first year of implementation, teachers will be largely focused on Grade 7. A close look at the provincial curriculum guides for Grade 7 math and language arts demonstrates that heutagogy and other student-centred approaches can honour and preserve the school curriculum in ways that the practice of most teachers does not.

It has been my observation that math teachers often put up the loudest arguments against nontraditional approaches. Engagement Academy's mathematics classrooms tend to be traditional learning environments, with teachers seldom moving away from direct instruction, assignments, and tests. The math 7 curriculum guide (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2013), however, acknowledged that students are "curious, active learners with individual interest, abilities and needs" (p. 1). The document encourages the leveraging of students' diverse experiences, the taking of intellectual risks, teaching through inquiry, the development of lifelong learners and "using mathematics to contribute to society" (p. 2). The Grade 7 language arts curriculum guide (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2016) explicitly discusses the concept of 21st-century education and "learning skills for generation next" (p. 12), and argued that "support for students to develop these abilities and skills is important across curriculum areas and should be integrated into teaching, learning, and assessment strategies" (p. 13). Each of these goals is not only compatible but can be optimized through heutagogy.

When teachers argue that school initiatives such as the work described in this OIP interfere with their delivery of curriculum, what they are really arguing is that the OIP is preventing them from implementing the same teach and assess cycle that has defined the traditional classroom and that has kept students disengaged (Feldman, 2019). In mathematics for instance, most teachers tend to assess using paper pencil assessment tools, worksheets, and tests.

However, the math curriculum calls for teachers to be “seek diverse ways in which students might demonstrate what they know and are able to do” (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2013, p. 13), while suggesting that observation, performance, paper and pencil, journal, interview, presentation, and portfolios should be used to assess the math curriculum (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2013). Thus, implementing heutagogy does not compromise the curriculum. Instead, it allows the curriculum to be taught in a way that it intended.

### ***Lack of Staff Commitment***

Staff need to commit to a new initiative for change to be successful; however, teachers are often hesitant to commit to organizational change. When teachers of Engagement Academy were asked “when new initiatives to improve teaching are presented at your school, how supportive are your colleagues?” only 40.6% of teachers answered this question in a positive manner (Engagement Academy, 2020).

There are many reasons, both personal and professional, why teachers may not engage with the OIP. Teacher workload is a major obstacle to school improvement, and school improvement initiatives are often perceived by teachers as further increasing workload (Morris et al., 2021). Although there may be an initial increase in workload as the OIP is implemented, teacher workload should decrease as student engagement increases, students take ownership over their learning, and students assume a more active role in the classroom.

COVID fatigue is also a factor that must be considered at this time. COVID-19 has negatively impacted teacher morale and stress levels. Gardner et al. (2022) defined this phenomenon as “pandemic gravity.” Impacts of COVID-19 are not unique to Engagement Academy; nonetheless, the work-related stress felt by teachers will prevent many teachers from engaging with this OIP to their full potential.

### ***Employee Cynicism***

Employee cynicism can have a damaging effect on organizational improvement initiatives (M. Brown & Cregan, 2008). Many teachers view change initiatives as bandwagon trends that distract them from doing their real jobs. Abraham (2000) claimed organizational cynicism arises when employees view leadership as being dishonest, unfair, insincere, and as using change initiatives in a self-serving manner. Harris (2015) discussed how distributed leadership approaches are often derailed because employees view the approach as being manipulative and leading to an increased workload. Sadly, I have witnessed a psychological divide between teachers and school administrators, with teachers often accusing administrators of having lost touch with classroom realities. If the adoption of heutagogy is viewed simply as my own pet project designed to further my personal ambitions with no meaningful benefit to the organization, teachers will resist the change. As lead learner, I can work to decrease employee cynicism by building trust with teachers, reducing employee anxiety, and giving employees a greater sense of personal control (M. Brown & Cregan, 2008).

### ***Change in District Vision***

As discussed in Chapter 1, the NLESD merged with the EECD in September 2022. There have been no changes in the philosophical direction of the district at the time of writing; however, as the EECD puts its own stamp on the NLESD, shifts in philosophy are likely to be announced. Student engagement and 21st-century models of education will certainly play a part of the new organization; however, the nuances of policies and practices could impact implementation of aspects of this OIP. As principal and lead learner, I need to be agile enough to be able to refine the OIP to align with a yet-to-be-determined vision.

### ***Unforeseen Problems***

In any organizational change, unforeseen problems will arise. Lead learners need to monitor for unexpected issues and remain flexible enough to course correct. Lead learners should engage in change initiatives with staff to identify problems as they emerge. The stakeholder communication model discussed below provides a mechanism to accomplish this. The use of the SoC domain of the CBAM will provide feedback that will identify concerns experienced by staff before each cycle of collaborative inquiry begins. Paying attention to the SoC feedback can help to determine where problems may surface, and where attention should be focused.

### **Implementation Logistics**

In moving from planning to implementation, attention shifts to logistics of the change process. This section discusses logistical considerations and timelines for implementation.

### ***Selecting the LLT***

One of the first practical considerations of this OIP is deciding which teachers are to form the LLT. This OIP will focus specifically on Grade 7 during the first year of implementation; therefore, the LLT must be made up of Grade 7 teachers. All seventh-grade teachers also teach other grades at the intermediate and secondary levels. By implementing heutagogy only in their Grade 7 classes, these teachers can keep their workload manageable. This approach will also allow members of the LLT to adopt heutagogical approaches over time, preventing teachers from becoming overwhelming.

There are 32 teaching staff at Engagement Academy, 16 at the intermediate and secondary levels. Eight teachers having responsibilities in Grade 7. I would like to see at least four of these eight teachers recruited to the LLT, with at least two coming from the core curriculum. Implementation in core courses is necessary because core courses are where

engagement levels of students tend to be the lowest. Unfortunately, teachers of core courses are potentially most likely to resist engaging with the OIP, as curriculum pressures and assessment expectations are higher for them. As principal and lead learner, I will engage with teachers of core courses for the purpose of recruiting them to the LLT and determining their individual resistance factors.

Winning over potential resisters early on is a difficult task that can have huge benefits. Engaging an organization's cynics can improve the change process (Bommer et al., 2005). Harris (2015) discussed how distributed leadership can fail when those in formal positions of power only select those from their organization who support a particular agenda, causing initiatives to seem inauthentic and predetermined. If leaders can shrink the number of resisters by including them in initiatives, resistance can be reduced. Resisters are also more likely to challenge the change plan and expose flaws, helping improve the overall initiative. My goal is to involve resisters in the LLT, for the purpose of increasing staff commitment to the OIP.

Increasing the number of staff members involved in the change over time is necessary for the success of the OIP. The percentage of staff involved becomes a reflection of the scope of the change. The LLT will begin as a group of approximately four teachers; however, this small number of teachers needs to grow as the OIP progresses through multiple collaborative inquiry cycles. Table 4 outlines short-, medium-, and long-term goals for staff involvement.

**Table 4***Staff Involvement Over Time*

Prechange September 2022	Short-term goal June 2023	Medium-term goal June 2024	Long-term goal June 2025
4 teachers	5–7	8–10	11+
25%	31%–44%	50%–63%	68% +

*Note.* Numbers represent teachers of Grade 7–12 only.

***Developing the Change Vision***

Once the LLT has been selected, the change vision (Kotter, 2022) needs to be developed. IC maps, another domain of the CBAM, can be used to help teachers (and all stakeholders) envision the proposed change and serves as a tool for communicating this vision. IC maps can also be used for staff members to monitor their own practice against a proposed change. The success of this OIP depends on observable positive change to classroom practices by teachers and students. Table 5 presents an IC Map describing classroom practices as teachers and students progress through the PAH continuum (Luckin et al., 2011). Short, medium, and long-term goals for the adoption of heutagogy are described.

**Table 5***IC Map for the Adoption of Heutagogy*

Metric	Prechange September 2022 (Pedagogy)	Short-term goal June 2023 (Pedagogy/ Andragogy)	Medium-term goal June 2024 (Andragogy/ Heutagogy)	Long-term goal June 2025 (Heutagogy)
Classroom routines	Traditional hierarchies with students in rows and teachers in front	Incorporation of group work and flexible seating	Regular use of learning stations	New classroom routines based on optimal learning environments
Instructional practice	Factory-like	Introduction of collaboration	Student voice and interest incorporated	Inquiry-based
Assessment practices	Test culture	Move towards collaborative measures	Incorporation of performance-based standards	Students can demonstrate their learning in multiple methods
Student choice and voice	Teacher determined	Students are given periodic choice to pursue interests and guide classroom instruction	Students are given regular choice to pursue interests and guide classroom instruction	Students as equal partners in determining learning with both determining pathways for classroom instruction
Focus on learning relationships	Focus on curriculum and not on relationships	Teachers get to know students as individuals and learn their interests	Teachers understand how their students learn	Knowledge of students' learning styles and personalities determine instructional approaches



Metric	Prechange September 2022 (Pedagogy)	Short-term goal June 2023 (Pedagogy/ Andragogy)	Medium-term goal June 2024 (Andragogy/ Heutagogy)	Long-term goal June 2025 (Heutagogy)
Focus on 21st-century competencies	Focus on curriculum outcomes	21st-century competencies are introduced periodically as one-off activities	21st-century competencies are introduced regularly in the classroom but are not given value in terms of assessment	Students use 21st-century competencies to explore the curriculum and demonstrate their learning of the subject area
Focus	No grade focus	Grade 7	Grade 7 and 8	Grades 7–9

*Note.* IC = innovation configuration. The LLT will provide input to determine these goals.

For this OIP to employ a true collaborative approach, members of the LLT need to be involved in the development of the change vision. This OIP provides a starting point for change; however, space has to be created for other voices. There is a danger of having a lead learner overprescribe at the beginning and diminish the group’s voice. Solutions may be specific to individual students or classrooms, and teachers need to be empowered to adapt their change initiatives based on immediate situational feedback. LLT members will be granted the autonomy to adapt their approaches according to their specific classroom level situations.

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

Monitoring and evaluating change are essential to ensuring success of this OIP. As Cawsey et al. (2016) noted, “measurements influence what people pay attention to and what they do” (p. 340). Strong leaders continually check the performance of the organization against the expressed vision (Hord & Roussin, 2013). A monitoring and evaluation plan is valuable for each stage of the process. Before the change is implemented, data can demonstrate why the change is

needed and determine whether the organization is ready to engage with the change. During implementation, monitoring can ensure that change is being effectively implemented, so that troubleshooting can occur if necessary. Monitoring conditions at the end of the process will help to determine the overall success of the OIP.

### **Using the CBAM to Monitor Change**

The CBAM provides a “comprehensive approach for studying the change process” (Hollingshead, 2009, p. 182). Saunders (2012) described the CBAM as a “robust and empirically grounded model for examining change” (p. 183). Both the SoC and IC map domains of the CBAM have been discussed; the third domain, LoU, provides a useful tool for monitoring change at the classroom level. Hord and Roussin (2013) argued that use of an innovation cannot be measured through a binary lens (either a teacher is adopting a change or they are not). Use of an innovation is much more nuanced, with the adoption of a change existing on a wide spectrum. Under the LoU domain, lead learners can monitor how many staff can progress through eight distinct levels as they progress from no engagement to full engagement (See Table 6).

Each teacher’s LoU will be determined at the beginning of each collaborative inquiry cycle to gauge the use of heutagogy in individual classrooms. I will observe and talk with teachers to help determine where they are on the LoU scale. I will also develop an anonymous Google form that asks staff to reflect on where they and their coworkers are in the change process. Data from the Google form will be analyzed by the LLT to inform next steps. As staff and students become comfortable using heutagogy, LoU data should trend upwards over time.

**Table 6***Levels of Use Domain of CBAM*

User/Nonuser	Levels of use (LoU)	Staff behaviours
User	Level VI: Renewal	Explores major modifications or alternatives to current innovation
	Level V: Integration	Coordinates innovations with other users for increased client impact
	Level IVb: Refinement	Makes changes to increase client outcomes, based on assessment
	Level IVa: Routine	Makes few or no changes to an established pattern of use
	Level III: Mechanical	Makes changes to better organize use
Nonuser	Level II: Preparation	Prepares to begin use of innovation
	Level I: Orientation	Seeks information about the innovation
	Level 0: Nonuse	Shows no interest in the innovation; takes no action

*Note.* Adapted from *Implementing Change Through Learning: Concerns-Based Concepts, Tools and Strategies for Guiding Change*, by S. Hord and J. Roussin, 2013, Corwin Press, Handout 5.1. Copyright 2013 by Corwin Press.

**Data Collection**

When preparing for the data collection phase, lead learners need to determine what evidence is collected, how evidence is collected, and who is responsible for collecting evidence (Donohoo, 2013). The LLT needs to play a role in these decisions.

At the end of each collaborative inquiry cycle, qualitative data can be gleaned from a number of sources including, teacher observations, student conversations, stakeholder emails,

and student artifacts. All three domains of the CBAM should be reviewed at the end of each cycle. SoC will help the LLT monitor resistance factors and LoU will describe how teachers are implementing heutagogy in their classrooms. IC maps (see Table 5) provide a framework for teacher's classrooms to be compared against the goals of the OIP and should be revised regularly.

Quantitative data also can be uncovered to help determine if the change process has been successful. Student engagement indicators can be found in the number of discipline referrals, missing assignments, and attendance rates of both students and teachers. Data around these engagement indicators will be collected and analyzed at the end of every term in order to measure the impact of this OIP. Engagement levels should trend positively in each of these metrics.

PMF data will continue to play a role in measuring the success of this OIP. PMF data is collected yearly by the EECD and is a consistent measure that will play an important role in determining the effectiveness of the OIP over time. PMF results exist independent of the OIP, providing a consistent and objective means of monitoring student perceptions of their education. If heutagogy has a positive impact on student engagement, PMF data will capture this success.

As the principal of Engagement Academy, I have the agency and tools for data analysis available to me that other staff do not. PowerSchool, the school's main data base that stores student demographic, attendance, and academic data, as well as Review 360, which stores student discipline referrals are tools that I use regularly in the role of principal. Members of the LLT will have teaching duties and obligations, but my schedule as principal affords me the flexibility to focus on the data collection process. For these reasons, I will take on the responsibility for data collection and work with the LLT to analyze and interpret data that is

collected. I do not want the data collection process to inhibit the work of the LLT. In assuming the responsibility for data collection, I am employing principles of servant leadership, while also incorporating Kotter's (2022) step of removing barriers to success. Further to this, by taking responsibility for data collection, I can ensure that a level of anonymity and confidentiality is maintained in the data collection process.

### **Communication**

Communication is necessary at all stages of organizational change (Salek, 2021; Torppa & Smith, 2011). Bennis and Nanus (2007) stated that "leaders are only as powerful as the ideas they can communicate" (p. 99). Cawsey et al. (2016) opined that most organizational changes fail because their "communication process is flawed, leading to confusion and doubt" (p. 226) and Kotter (2012) maintained that a lack of clear communication can derail a change initiative. Communicating a shared vision, the plan for achieving change, and the strategies for troubleshooting problems are necessary for supporting staff throughout change.

### **The Communication Plan**

The communication plan for this OIP borrows from two models. Klein's (1996) communication model discusses how communication needs to be furnished at each stage of implementation. Lewis's (2011) communication model based on stakeholder theory was also chosen as it accounts for the dynamic and complex relationships between stakeholders and stakeholder groups within an organization. Stakeholder theory compliments the CBAM, which recognizes how stakeholder concerns can impact change.

### **Klein's Management Communication Strategy for Change**

Klein's (1996) management communication strategy provided a thorough plan for communicating change while aligning with Kotter's (2022) eight-step process (Table 7).

**Table 7***Alignment of Klein and Kotter Communication Models*

Author	Prechange	Change	Postchange
Klein's (1996) communication phases	Develop need for change	Mainstream change	Confirming the change
	Create a guiding coalition (LLT)	Communicate change vision	Consolidate gains and produce more change
Kotter's (2022) change stages	Establish a sense of urgency	Empower employees	Anchor new approaches
	Develop a vision and strategy	Generating short-term wins	

Klein's (1996) communication strategy examines communication approaches at the prechange, change, and postchange stages. Considerations for each stage are discussed below.

***Prechange***

Communication during the prechange phase establishes the need for change by explaining, rationalizing, motivating, and recruiting. When establishing Kotter's (2022) sense of urgency, leaders establish why the change is needed. Communication at this stage has to convince teachers that the problem is worthy of attention.

Prechange communication should be motivational, harnessing emotions so that "hearts and minds" of teachers are engaged (Kotter, 2012, p. 101). Communication "creates meaning" (Bennis & Nanus, 2007, p. 40) for employees. When employees find a message to be personally relevant, it helps them commit to the initiative (Hasford et al., 2015; Klein, 1996), improving the likelihood of successful implementation. Communication at this stage should focus on readying the organization and recruiting staff members to become part of the LLT (Kotter, 2012). Readyng the organization means communicating the vision for change (Bolman & Deal, 2017;

Kotter, 2012). Without a clearly defined vision, change can be unfocused, chaotic, uncontrolled, and sporadic.

To decrease resistance, prechange communication should target all stakeholders. Parents and students need to be included in the communication and have the opportunity to provide feedback. Families of students who are experiencing success in traditional classrooms may perceive any change as a threat to the success of their child. These families need to understand why the change is happening and they need to be reassured that their children will not be disadvantaged through heutagogy.

Responsibility for family communication needs to be shared amongst administration and the classroom teacher. As principal, I communicate with parents regularly. I use School Messenger, an application in PowerSchool to send weekly communications. I also take advantage of traditional events such as curriculum nights and parent teacher interviews to communicate with parents around school happenings. As such, I will take the responsibility for communicating the broad details of the OIP; however, specific communication around how heutagogy will be implemented in specific classrooms should be communicated by classroom teachers.

### ***Mainstream Change***

In the prechange period, communication is likely to focus on the why (sense of urgency), the who (LLT) and the what (change vision). As the implementation period begins, focus has to shift to the how. Generalizations which may have been present in the prechange process will be replaced by specific strategies for implementing heutagogy. Communication during the change phase needs to guide, support, instruct, and reassure.

Cawsey (2016) acknowledged that a communication plan should evolve as the plan

advances, moving from low-intensity to higher-intensity forms of communication. Fullan (2020) echoed this idea, stating that “once you do start a change increase communication from day one” (p. 58). Teachers need more support the deeper they get into the change and this support should be reflected in the communication which will consist of specific strategies and approaches. Fullan (2020) pointed out that communication during the implementation process, particularly when two-way in nature, gives the leader an opportunity to learn how implementation is progressing and to become aware of emerging problems.

Teachers in the LLT will be responsible for implementing heutagogy in the classroom. Employing a distributed leadership approach to empower employees, the LLT will take responsibility for the communication of the OIP in internal communications. The sharing of teaching strategies, best practices, and successes around the OIP carry more weight when coming from teachers dealing directly with heutagogy.

### ***Confirming the Change***

At the end of the change process, the purpose of communication is to debrief, reflect, analyze, celebrate, and refocus. Communication should “include building structures and processes that support the new ways” (Klein, 1006, p. 42) which help to institutionalize change as part of the school culture as per the last step of Kotter’s (2022) model. Reflecting on and learning from the change process is important for pushing change forward. Communication at the end of each cycle of collaborative inquiry can be used to celebrate successes and recruit other teachers to join the LLT. Table 8 presents a detailed communication plan that uses Klein’s communication strategy at each step of the communication process.



**Table 8***Communication Plan*

Klein's stage	Kotter's stage	Objective	Communication tool
Prechange	Establish a sense of urgency	Ready organization for change	Staff meetings Staff email
	Create a guiding coalition (lead learning team)	Challenge the status quo	Face-to-face communication
	Develop a vision and strategy	Provide a rationale for change	Division meetings School professional development time
Mainstream change	Communicate change vision	Communicate strategies	Emails
	Empower broad-based actions	Develop momentum	Staff meetings
	Generate short-term wins	Celebrate short-term wins	Focus groups
	Consolidate gains and produce more change	Problem solve and overcome obstacles	Face-to-face communication
Confirming the change	Anchor new approaches into culture	Celebrate successes	Staff celebration
		Reinforce the change	School policy documents
		Institutionalize the change	School community
		Evaluate next steps	

The communication process will repeat as teachers work through each collaborative inquiry cycle. The plan will be reviewed and updated after each cycle, ensuring that lessons learned are incorporated into the communication plan's next phase.

**Stakeholder Model of Communication**

Klein's (1996) communication model provides structure and clear strategies for each step of implementation; however, it does not account for how complex organizational dynamics can impact messaging. This OIP also will use Lewis's (2011) stakeholder model of communication

to account for the complex social dynamics that exist between various stakeholder groups within Engagement Academy.

Lewis (2019) discussed three purposes of communication in organizational change: managing meaning, managing networks, and managing process. Although all three purposes need to be considered in the OIP, it is in the managing of networks that Lewis's model is particularly useful. Lewis (2007) contended that a stakeholder approach to communication "is about managing potential conflict stemming from divergent interest of stakeholders" (p. 17) within the organization. Such divergent interests need to be accounted for.

Communication plans tend to focus on the formal communication structures within an organization, such as staff meetings. Stakeholder theory considers informal structures and how these can impact formal processes. The informal communication that happens at the watercooler can undo or improve strategies that were communicated through formal methods. Unfortunately, the lead learner is seldom privy to these conversations; however, preparing for their fallout can help manage the implementation of the OIP.

Conducting a stakeholder analysis of an organization helps the lead learner "to develop a clear understanding of the key individuals who can influence the outcome of a change and thus be in a better position to appreciate their position and recognize how best to manage them and the context" (Cawsey et al, 2016, p. 199). Lead learners understand that when it comes to complex organizations, certain individuals possess more status and influence than others. Slabbert and Barker (2014) identified the "strategic stakeholder," an internal or external person or group that possesses a high degree of stakeholder salience and who shares a reciprocal interest with the organization. Lewis (2011) suggested that members of an organization who possess power, legitimacy, and urgency are "definitive stakeholders" (p. 88). These individuals possess

high amounts of social capital and can significantly impact the direction of an organization and should be considered when forming the LLT.

Lewis (2007) stressed the importance of observing how stakeholders interact with one another. Considering communication as “the interactions within the web of definable stakeholder groups” (Lewis, 2007, p. 198) provides a realistic model of communication that aligns with organizational complexities. Understanding the human element in any organizational change is necessary. A stakeholder approach aims to understand this element and ties into the humanistic themes that permeate this OIP.

### **Employing Stakeholder Communication Strategies**

There are specific communication strategies that account for various stakeholder interests at Engagement Academy. The three strategies discussed will help manage the change.

#### ***Strategy 1: Acknowledge Uncertainty in Change***

Uncertainty plays a role in organizational change and cannot be ignored. Klein (1996) suggested that uncertainty in organizational change “provides fertile grounds for rumors, anxiety and ultimately resistance” (p. 32). Some teachers may be comfortable with, and even excited by the adoption of heutagogy. Others will be uncomfortable. Discomfort can originate from not knowing what to do; it can also originate from not knowing how a change will impact one’s role in the organization (Lewis, 2007). Change can cause teachers to question their identity as educators and the emotional impact of this should be considered (Butt et al., 2016). Being aware of individual concerns, hesitations, and obstacles experienced by staff is important, as is paying attention to each team member’s needs. The communication plan needs to build in opportunity for staff feedback and regular check-ins, to ensure that feelings of uncertainty are properly managed. I will accomplish this through regular conversations with staff members, weekly

check-ins with teachers participating in the LLT, and by using tools such as Google forms to seek feedback from staff.

### ***Strategy 2: Build Trust Through Balanced Messaging***

If members of an organization do not trust a leader, they will be less likely to commit to organizational change. Butt et al. (2016) opined that transparent communication strategies can play a role in developing trust between lead learners and stakeholders. Addressing inconsistencies in any change initiative can aid in building trust. In any dynamic change initiative there are inconsistencies and contradictions. Left unaddressed, these inconsistencies can negate employee commitment to the OIP and damage employee morale. Acknowledging competing tensions in an organization can help the organization work towards solutions that satisfy all stakeholders (Schad & Smith, 2019). Discussing weaknesses as well as strengths to a proposed change through two-sided messaging increases the credibility and trustworthiness of the administrator, leading to increased buy-in from employees (Lewis, 2011). When lead learners only communicate the positive aspects of an initiative, perceptions of secrecy and dishonesty surface. When leaders present a balanced message that discusses both positive and negative sides of a change initiative, trust and commitment to change increase.

Chapter 2 addressed some concerns around heutagogy. These concerns should be acknowledged openly to all stakeholders. When the lead learner is the one to point out the negative sides to an initiative, stakeholders will feel they are being given the full and true picture, leading to increased feelings of trust and improved commitment to the OIP (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). It will be my responsibility, as principal and lead learner, to ensure staff receive a balanced picture of heutagogy and the PAH continuum.

### ***Strategy 3: Employ Two-Way Communication***

Traditional one-way communication is hierarchical and contingent on traditional power structures that usurp employee voice. Two-way communication is collaborative, gives voice to teachers, and aligns itself with the principles of distributed leadership and humanism which underlie this OIP. This collaborative communication increases employee trust and leads to an openness to embrace new initiatives (Potnura et al., 2021; Yue et al., 2019) while helping to build relationships among stakeholders (Slabbert & Barker, 2014). It also helps the lead learner understand if a message has been received and whether it has been misinterpreted (Butt et al., 2016). The symmetry of two-way communication can help to develop productive organizational stakeholder relationships that will aid organizational change (Slabbert & Barker, 2014). Two-way communication allows the lead learner to become a more active participant in the communication process (Friedman & Miles, 2004). Through this collaborative dialogue, the lead learner can help to control the message and push back on counter messages.

The most effective form of two-way communication is face-to-face. Face-to-face communication has been related to increased performance and productivity (Battiston et al., 2021; Klein, 1996). Face-to-face communication decreases miscommunication, conflicts, and misunderstandings between team members (Byron, 2008). Face-to-face communication can also alleviate anxiety and improve mental health outcomes, both which increase employee productivity (Pea et al., 2012). I plan on employing regular face-to-face, two-way communication with all teachers of Engagement Academy, giving each teacher an opportunity to present their concerns. This will afford me the opportunity to respond to the concerns of all staff members, particularly the resisters.

## Links to CBAM

The CBAM and stakeholder communication theory complement one another, specifically in acknowledging the human side of change. Both consider the role of employee emotions and uncertainty when faced with organizational change. Hollingshead (2009) discussed how the SoC domain of the CBAM can help to diagnose “types” of implementers: (a) the *resister*; (b) the *cooperator*; (c) the *ideal implementer*; and (d) the *overachiever*. Each is described in Table 9.

**Table 9**

### *Types of Implementers*

Type	Description
The resister	Worried about how to implement innovation
The cooperator	Is open to change but needs more information
The ideal implementer	Has embraced the innovation and is implementing
The overachiever	Is looking to perfect on and improve the innovation

*Note.* Adapted from “The Concerns-Based Adoption Model: A Framework for Examining Implementation of a Character Education Program,” by B. Hollingshead, 2009, *NAASP Bulletin* 93(3), pp. 166–183 (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636509357932>). Copyright 2009 by Sage.

Communication should be tailored to each type of stakeholder. When communicating with the resister, the goal should be helping to alleviate worry and uncertainty. When communicating with the cooperator, educating them about the change should be the focus. For the ideal implementer, communication should celebrate and encourage their participation. Communication with the overachiever should encourage leadership.

The lead learner needs to be aware of how stakeholder groups influence one another. For

instance, the cooperators could be turned away from the innovation if they are influenced by the resisters, or they may be more likely to commit to change if they are in regular contact with ideal implementers. Lewis's (2011) model predicts that stakeholders will not only put their focus on influencing the lead learner, but their energy and attention will also shift to forming partnerships among other stakeholders, including those who are undecided, to combat the change plan. Table 10 demonstrates how stakeholders may counter the lead learner's actions to oppose a change.

**Table 10**

*Lead Learner's Foci Versus Stakeholder Foci*

Lead learner's foci	Stakeholders' foci
Official view of plan/purpose	Alternate views of plan/purpose
Answering questions	Asking questions
Positive selling	Raising new arguments
Gains/losses will benefit organizational well-being	Refutation of some predictions of gains/losses
Blanket message or marketing to specific stakeholders	Sharing targeted messages with other stakeholders for comparison/consistency
Communicating need and/or urgency for change	Supporting, refuting, and/or questioning need, urgency, and efficacy of messages
Communicating "We can do it" messages to stakeholders	Advocating alternative "need" messages

*Note.* Adapted from "Organizational Change: Creating Change Through Strategic Communication," by L. Lewis, 2011, p. 147–148 (<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444340372>).

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The stakeholder communication model forces the lead learner to deal with these concerns in a way that encourages change, by giving leaders strategies to predict where resistance may arise so resistance can be overcome.

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

School improvement is never complete. Although the change outlined in this plan details actions taken over 3 school years (2022–2023 to 2024–2025), there will be work to do beyond this 3-year window. This OIP will see the implementation of heutagogy from Grades 7–9. At the end of the 3-year implementation, an immediate consideration will be the role of heutagogy beyond the intermediate level. If students have a positive experience using heutagogy in Grades 7–9 they will be poised to carry this work into high school. If heutagogy does not create a more engaging and relevant educational experience, then the OIP may continue to focus on Grades 7–9 or abandon heutagogy for a more promising initiative.

Consideration also needs to be given to succession planning. High rates of staff turnover can have a significant impact on whether a change is institutionalized. How to properly institutionalize heutagogy into the school culture is an important consideration so that staff turnover does not undo the work of the OIP.

The adoption of heutagogy will not happen immediately. Teacher-centered modes of instruction are deeply ingrained into the current education system, and developing new approaches where students are given more control will take time and patience. The adoption of heutagogy will be incremental, but incremental changes will compound over time.

As the world moves into the 21st-century and education moves beyond the pandemic, new issues will emerge in education. Whether or not heutagogy solves Engagement Academy’s problem with engagement, it does allow for education to evolve in ways that bring it into the 21st century. Student empowerment, student choice, unique cultural identities, authentic assessment, real-life application, 21st-century competencies, and student entrepreneurship each need to play a role in learning environments. Heutagogy allows an entry point for each of these domains.



## Epilogue

As a new teacher, a well-meaning colleague encouraged me to work hard for two years, save my lessons, and develop a good organization system. Once this work was done, I could then relax for the rest of my career. As an overwhelmed first-year teacher, this advice was appealing.

There have been many changes in education over my 22-year career. It is overwhelming to consider what amazing changes my children, currently in Grades 1 and 5, will see in their lifetimes. Today, as a school administrator, I find myself attempting to bridge the gap between teachers who subscribe to similar philosophies to that of my former colleague, and the educational needs of my own children. Their generation needs teachers who are learning and innovating in their practice, not coasting to retirement on re-packaged lessons that get dusted off every year. The province and the planet need that as well.

Students need to be empowered as partners in their education and a 21st-century education requires a humanist approach. Students will never reach their potential, if schools do not recognize their individual humanity, and schools cannot recognize the humanity of students if schools school structures work to oppress students. As a parent, I want my own children to discover and develop their own unique strengths so they can find their place in this complex and confusing world. As a principal, I have a moral obligation to provide such an education to all of my students.

Heutagogy may not be a cure for all the problems imbedded in our current education system, but it does provide a model for education that is more equitable, more engaging, and that emancipates students from traditional oppressive school structures. Through self-directed learning, students will leave school knowing their selves and their place in the world so they can live happy and fulfilling lives. There can be no greater purpose in education.

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### Appendix A: Forcefield Analysis

Considerations	Change forces	Strength	Resisting forces	Strength
Short-term	Cancellation of exams	M	COVID–19 fatigue	S
			Uncertainty over district direction	M
Medium-term	Student–teacher conflicts	S	Standardized assessment pressures	S
			Teacher efficacy	M
Long-term	Personal fulfillment	S	Lack of time	M
	Sense of internal motivation	S	Lack of resources	M
Systemic	Student interest	S	Loaded curriculum	S
			Teacher workload	S
			Lack of external reward	M
			Traditional school expectations	M
			Expectations from parents	M

*Note.* S = strong force for change; M = intermediate force for change; W = weak force for change.

## **Appendix B: Recommendations From the Truth and Reconciliation Report**

### **From Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015.**

1. We call upon the Government of Canada to repeal Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada. (Section 43 made it legal for teachers to use corporal punishment in schools; Indigenous students were disproportionately harmed by this law.)

2. We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

3. We call upon the federal government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education funding for First Nations children being educated on reserves and those First Nations children being educated off reserves.

4. We call upon the federal government to prepare and publish annual reports comparing funding for the education of First Nations children on and off reserves, as well as educational and income attainments of Aboriginal peoples in Canada compared with non-Aboriginal people.

5. We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:

- Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation.
- Improving education attainment levels and success rates.
- Developing culturally appropriate curricula.
- Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses.
- Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems.
- Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children.
- Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships.

6. We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education.

7. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families.

8. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to

- Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.
- Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.

- Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.
- Establish senior-level positions in government at the assistant deputy minister level or higher dedicated to Aboriginal content in education.

9. We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including

- Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
- Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.
- Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.
- Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.

10. We call upon all levels of government that provide public funds to denominational schools to require such schools to provide an education on comparative religious studies, which must include a segment on Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and practices developed in collaboration with Aboriginal elders.

11. We call upon the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, post-secondary institutions and educators, and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and its partner institutions, to establish a national research program with multi-year funding to advance understanding of reconciliation.