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The Know Better, Do Better Plan for Self and System Transformation

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Abstract

Educational leadership has roots in neocolonial epistemologies and a functionalist paradigm. While Atman Jnana School Board (a pseudonym) has made a commitment to equity by recognizing the need for communities of belonging, leaders unconsciously lean toward the individual over the collective as imparted by these epistemologies and paradigm. Therefore, the problem of practice under investigation is the development of educational leaders' capacity to create communities of belonging and purpose. As principals and vice-principals are pivotal to transforming school culture, this organizational improvement plan proposes addressing the problem of practice by creating a community of belonging with school leaders who want to engage in a process of unlearning, learning, relearning, and co-learning educational leadership. The visceral experience of engaging in this personal and systemic metamorphosis can lead to understanding the process of co-creation so it can be scaled and spread. The implementation of the selected solution requires blending servant and authentic leadership styles, with a strong focus on constructive-developmental theory. This plan proposes that leaders' identity development in places of belonging and connection leads to the district's identity development in a similar vein. Grassroots methodology as a form of discreet activism and self-determination will free leaders to see systems and contexts through a new lens. The change path model can be overlaid with the plan-do-study-act cycle for ongoing monitoring, assessment, and improvement. The application of a critical worldview, transformative paradigm, and anti-oppression lens will serve as an ongoing reminder to centre the voices of equity-deserving groups, without undue emotional labour, at the design stage and throughout the process.

Keywords: belonging, equity, constructive-developmental theory, self-determination, grassroots innovation, educational leadership

Executive Summary

This organizational improvement plan will attempt to address inequity by exploring the need for communities of belonging and purpose, with a focus on principals and vice-principals at the Atman Jnana School Board as the key agents for change. Historically, educational leaders have been trained with neoliberal and colonial paradigms that perpetuate a solution-focused—as opposed to human-focused—design based on their fiduciary role as agents of the board. Current literature posits that school leaders are the key to establishing an inclusive culture and climate at their site but that they do not have the tools required to do this in increasingly heterogeneous schools. The problem of practice under investigation is the development of educational leaders' capacity to create communities of belonging and purpose.

Chapter 1 details the spiral of inquiry that revealed the problem of practice, and it offers the organizational context at the macro, meso, and micro levels. This includes the historical underpinnings of the organization and its connection to colonial constructs. It is followed by the sharing of theoretical worldviews and the leadership lens necessary for change. Chapter 1 concludes by exploring fundamental questions related to unpacking the problem of practice and by examining the potential resistance and determined readiness for change. It ends by describing a hopeful future state. Chapter 2 shares the leadership approaches for change and outlines the change path model that will frame the intended next steps. Three proposed solutions are thoroughly unpacked, and a final selected solution is detailed as well; it combines the positive elements of the previous three and focuses on empowering school leaders as middle managers. The chapter ends by explaining the rationale for this approach. Chapter 3 shares a detailed change-implementation plan that includes goals, a timeline, key performance indicators, and a communication plan. The change path model is overlaid on the plan-do-study-act method of

monitoring and evaluation to make sure that there is transparency and accountability throughout the process. Harro's (2000) cycle of liberation is shared as a powerful tool for realizing internal and interpersonal transformation with hopeful impacts on institutions. The underlying concept is that internal change will lead to external change. Chapter 3 concludes with discussing why change is needed and what future considerations are necessary to ensure the successful transformation of systems.

This plan was written during a time of great social change. While the organizational context is a specific school district, the plan was written so that any group of like-minded individuals experiencing a critical incident leading to cognitive dissonance can come together and be part of a personal and systemic metamorphosis that inspires human flourishing.

Acknowledgements

I humbly acknowledge that I am unlearning, learning, relearning, and co-learning on the unceded, unsundered, and traditional territories of the hənq̓əminəm speaking people of xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) Nation, and səlilwətal (Tseil-Waututh) Nation. I also acknowledge that I live, work, and am in relation with peoples from across many traditional and unceded territories that cover all regions of Turtle Island. These peoples have lived here since time immemorial and are the rights-holders and stewards of these lands and waters. As a settler on these lands, I continuously strive to deepen my understanding of the local Indigenous communities as I am grateful to live on this land. With this acknowledgment comes my commitment to engage in ongoing acts of reconciliation.

One such act is this paper, which could not have been done without the support of many people; indeed, it has taken a community. Some who have helped bring this paper to fruition include Alice, Anna, Anne, Ceth, Denise, Dr. Keith, Dr. Peters, Dr. MacKinnon, Dr. Myers, Dr. Swain, Emily, Harjinder, Jo, Jonas, Leila, Mum & Dad, Rohan, Sharleen, Steve, Suzanne, and Tyson. This list is in alphabetical order as a figurative way of representing a circle of co-learning in which no single person's contribution is more important than another's, but in which each gift came at exactly at the right place and at exactly the right time. This co-learning kept me engaged in the continuous spiral of unlearning, learning, and relearning. Thank you for co-creating this community of belonging and purpose. You are recognized and appreciated.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	II
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VI
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	X
LIST OF TABLES	XI
LIST OF FIGURES	XII
CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM POSING	1
POSITIONALITY	2
ROLE OVERVIEW	2
BELONGING AS A WAY OF BEING	3
POSITIONALITY STATEMENT/SOCIAL LOCATION	4
LENS STATEMENT	6
AGENCY	7
ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT	8
MACRO	8
MESO	9
MICRO	10
LEADERSHIP POP	11
FRAMING THE POP	13
GUIDING QUESTIONS EMERGING FROM THE POP	21
GUIDING QUESTION #1	22

GUIDING QUESTION #2	23
GUIDING QUESTION #3	23
LEADERSHIP-FOCUSED VISION FOR CHANGE	24
CURRENT STATE	24
GAP	25
DESIRED STATE	26
KEY ACTORS	26
KEY PRIORITIES	29
LEADERSHIP CONSIDERATIONS	31
CHAPTER SUMMARY	31
CHAPTER 2: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	32
LEADERSHIP APPROACH TO CHANGE	32
LEADERSHIP APPROACHES AND AGENCY	36
FRAMEWORK FOR LEADING THE CHANGE PROCESS	37
UNPACKING CHANGE MODELS	38
ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE READINESS	46
TASKS	47
FORMAL ORGANIZATION	47
INFORMAL ORGANIZATION	48
PEOPLE	48
SOLUTIONS TO THE POP	49
PROPOSED SOLUTION 1: WAIT AND SEE	49
PROPOSED SOLUTION 2: MASTER’S TOOLS DILEMMA	51
PROPOSED SOLUTION 3: EQUITY LEADERSHIP AS A PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE	52

SELECTED SOLUTION: CO-CREATE A COMMUNITY OF BELONGING FOR LIBERATORY CONVERSATIONS	54
ETHICS AND GRASSROOTS INNOVATION	56
CHAPTER SUMMARY	58
CHAPTER 3: IMPLEMENTATION, EVALUATION, AND COMMUNICATION	59
KEY ACTORS	60
CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	61
STEP 1: SHORT-TERM GOAL	63
STEP 2: MID-TERM GOAL	64
STEP 3: MID- AND LONG-TERM GOALS	66
MANAGING THE CHANGE	67
POSSIBLE IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES.....	68
COMMUNICATING THE NEED FOR CHANGE PROCESS	70
STAKEHOLDERS/KEY INTERESTED PARTIES	75
CHANGE-PROCESS MONITORING AND EVALUATION.....	76
TOOLS AND MEASURES FOR ASSESSING CHANGE	77
REFINEMENT AND COURSE CORRECTIONS.....	80
NEXT STEPS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS	81
DISTRICT-WIDE ASSESSMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY.....	82
REPRESENTATION IN HIRING	82
COMMITMENT BY SENIOR TEAMS TO EQUITY LITERACY/FLUENCY DEVELOPMENT	83
CHAPTER SUMMARY	85
NARRATIVE EPILOGUE	85

REFERENCES..... 87

APPENDIX A: STAGES OF ADULT DEVELOPMENT 108

APPENDIX B: FURMAN’S ETHICAL FRAMEWORK CENTERED IN THE ETHIC OF COMMUNITY
..... 109

APPENDIX C: GUIDING THOUGHTS 110

APPENDIX D: GUIDING QUESTIONS 111

List of Abbreviations

AJSB	Atman Jnana School Board
CDT	Constructive-developmental theory
IDSL	Indigenous decolonizing school leadership
OIP	Organizational improvement plan
PESTLE	Political, economic, social, technological, legal, environmental
PGP	Professional growth plan
PoP	Problem of practice
PVPA	Principal and vice-principal association
SDT	Self-determination theory
SMT	Senior management team

List of Tables

Table 1: Alignment of Change Path Model with District Initiatives and Proposed Initiatives.....	42
Table 2: Benefits and Limitations of Proposed Solutions	54
Table 3: Change Implementation Plan.....	62
Table 4: Key Performance Indicators for Change Implementation Plan	67
Table 5: Change Implementation Plan, Communication Timeline, and PDSA Cycle	74
Table 6: Questions and Methodologies for Evaluation.....	80

List of Figures

Figure 1: Lens of Anti-Opression	11
Figure 2: Visual Representation of Spiral of Inquiry and OIP Framing.....	13
Figure 3: Leadership Approach to Change	36
Figure 4: Selected Solution.....	55
Figure 5: Cycle of Liberation.....	65
Figure 6: Imagining the Future of Knowledge Mobilization.....	73

Chapter 1: Problem Posing

Labelled a reluctant learner at an early age, I realized I wanted to be a teacher when I was nine years old. The impact of that label stayed with me personally in that I did not believe I could be successful. It also stayed with me systemically, as the reputation that passed from teacher to teacher was that I was not smart. As a labelled learner, I felt pushed out even before I was able to actively engage in the system. This continued until one of my high school teachers shared Dr. Maya Angelou's famous quote: "You did in your twenties what you knew how to do, and when you knew better you did better. And you should not be judged for the person that you were, but for the person that you're trying to be and the woman that you are now" (Angelou, 2021). School continued to be a place where I did not feel seen or understood, but the quote kept me inspired. I worked tenuously throughout my school years before gratefully starting my teaching career on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), S^kwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. As a teacher, I would now be able to co-create learning communities where students were seen and understood and where they could flourish.

While I was able to navigate the system as a student, I never felt like it wanted me. I felt excluded. Looking back, I now know that I could have been more successful in my learning if I had simply been seen and heard and if I had felt like I belonged. My experience with systemic exclusion aligns with that of many of the students, staff, and families I have worked with, especially those from equity-deserving groups. This misalignment between self and system is a barrier to flourishing. Therefore, this organizational improvement plan (OIP) seeks to develop a grassroots process to equip leaders to co-create communities of belonging in which students and staff are empowered to co-design the conditions needed for personal and community flourishing.

Positionality

The section of this chapter will review my role and agency in the spirit of self-reflexivity. It is important to outline positionality when embarking on a change, as this understanding delineates the sphere of influence as a change agent. I will outline the overview of my current role given my experience at many levels of the hierarchy. This section will also share some underpinnings of the concept of belonging, which is the way of being that runs throughout this OIP. I will end with my positionality statement, lens, and the agency that brings all these aspects together.

Role Overview

Having experienced a tenuous relationship with schooling, my focus since I started teaching in the mid-1990s has been supporting students on the margins. I have spent my entire career in public education in multiple school districts in British Columbia and for the Education Bureau in Hong Kong because I have recognized education's power to be a great equalizer. Over the course of my career, I have been an elementary and secondary school teacher in regular programming and inclusive education. I have also spent 11 years as a vice-principal, principal, and district principal, and in January 2020, I broke the glass ceiling (Babic & Hansez, 2021; Cotter et al., 2001; Purcell et al., 2010) and became the first person of colour to hold a district management role at AJSB after I was successful in the competition for director of instruction. In August 2022, however, I disrupted the system when I stepped away from the role and asked to be reassigned to a school as a principal again. This decision was not made lightly and is something I continue to ruminate over. Professionally, I not only gave up positionality, power, and financial returns, but I also potentially cut short my career trajectory. In addition, as research shows that representation matters (Gershenson et al., 2016; Lindsay & Hart, 2017), I felt I was letting down

women of colour, as I was the only person representing that demographic on the team. As a self-reflexive leader, I have spent a lot of time thinking about the impetus for my decision. As I left my position during the process of completing this OIP, I knew I would have to rethink it from a new leverage point. I am currently a school-based principal at one of the largest elementary schools in the Atman Jnana School Board (AJSB; a pseudonym used through this OIP). The leadership and agency I possess are significant because of my career trajectory. I recognize and understand the system but also have expansive experience operationalizing the district's vision on the ground. In addition, this year I am the president-elect of the local principals' and vice-principals' association (PVPA), so I will serve as the voice for my colleagues.

Belonging as a Way of Being

The most cited work on belonging is the seminal research by Baumeister and Leary (1995) in which they evaluated the empirical literature and substantiated the hypothesis that the need to belong is a powerful, fundamental, and extremely pervasive motivation. May (2011) took it a step further and suggested that belonging is the missing link between self and society. Human beings need belonging not only to flourish but to survive, as can be seen by the historical use of isolation and exclusion as some of the most severe forms of punishment (Kuurne & Vieno, 2022). That said, there can also be a downside to belonging (Allen et al., 2022; Benson et al., 1988; Maté & Maté, 2022). Maté & Maté (2022) revealed that there are two core human needs—authenticity and attachment—but if a person is in situation in which one need must be chosen, attachment will trump authenticity. We will change who we are to fit into a group, regardless of whether the change aligns with our ethics. In addition, belonging to one group can sometimes entail moving away from another, or othering, which can undo social cohesion (Allen et al., 2022). Belonging as a way of being is embedded into our everyday practices and can be

unconscious. As belonging is key to survival and the missing link between self and society (Allen et al., 2022; May, 2011), purposeful belonging is something we should aim to achieve through an active, conscious, and ongoing process.

Positionality Statement/Social Location

I consider myself a learner leader, and therefore, I used an inquiry model I am familiar with in the redevelopment of this work's problem of practice (PoP) as I had a new leverage point going from a director's role to a school principal. In Halbert and Kaser's (2022) spiral of inquiry model they ask three foundational questions in the middle of the spiral: What is going on for our learners? How do we know? Why does it matter? Embarking upon this degree I was now a student (learner) myself, so I embedded the elements of this OIP within Halbert and Kaser's spiral and reframed those questions: What is going on for me? How do I know? Why does it matter? During this self-reflexive inquiry process, I started by asking what was going on with me. In scanning and focusing, I realized that a shift happened when I took on the anti-racism and non-discrimination portfolio, a field that I had not explored specifically, as my experience and formal education focused on additional language learning and inclusive education. As I unpacked this portfolio and engaged in a steep learning curve, I recognized that I live at the intersection of many identities, some of which come with power and privilege (Azmita & Mansfield, 2020; Crenshaw, 1991; Ghavami et al., 2020) and many of which would be considered on the margins. Identities on the margins are also often equity-deserving groups or form protected classes under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982).

Proud of my cultural background and career in education, I felt that the accomplishment of breaking a glass ceiling would define success for me, but within a short time, I found that what I had expected to achieve was met with many barriers, both visible and invisible. In the

inquiry spiral, the question “What is going on for me?” is followed by “How do I know?,” and I knew because I was questioning my purpose. As I was delving deeper into the anti-racism and non-discrimination portfolio, I recognized that the barriers were microaggressions stemming from unconscious bias. Research shows ongoing microaggressions can lead to decreased job satisfaction, increased burnout, a higher probability of leaving the workforce, and morally distressing situations that remove professional autonomy and throw agency and identity into question (Jameton, 2013; Stelmach et al., 2021 Velazquez et al., 2022. As shared by Brooks (2019), disharmony between the inner and outer worlds is akin to fraud and happens when our souls disappear into our roles.

I thought back to breaking the glass ceiling and wanted to understand what made it different from other types of inequality. Cotter (2001) shares that glass-ceiling inequality is a gender or racial difference that is (a) not explained by other job-relevant characteristics of the employee (implying discrimination), (b) greater at higher levels of an organization than at lower levels, (c) increases as the employee moves up the hierarchy, and (d) increases over the course of a career. I have reflected on my feelings as a student in the system and now an employee at various levels of the hierarchy and know that a truly equitable system is one in which every person at every level of the organization feels a sense of belonging and is seen, heard, and empowered to be an agent of personal and systemic transformation.

As I moved from a school-based leadership role to one at the district, I realized I was forcing myself to go to work for the first time in my career because I did not feel like part of the management team; I did not feel as though I belonged. When I asked to be removed from the role, I said I felt “pushed out,” and looking back, I am surprised those words came to mind. It was not that any one person did anything, but I nevertheless felt an innate feeling of

disconnection. The final question in the inquiry model is “Why does it matter?”; as an educator, I always keep students at the centre, and I recognized that the words “pushed out” were something students had said to me over the course of my career. The qualitative data shared by students are reflected in quantitative data. In British Columbia, the only equity-focused disaggregated data available focus on students with special needs and those who identify as Indigenous. The latest data pull of the completion rates for all residents in AJSB is 91%, but the completion rates for students identifying as Indigenous is 66%, while for students with special needs, it is 78% (Government of BC, 2022). If we want students to stay in school and flourish, we need to create a space in which they want to stay.

I kept noticing the theme of belonging in everything I was reading (Allen et al., 2022; Maté & Maté, 2022; May, 2011), and it aligned with how I was feeling as well. As leaders, we learn about our fiduciary role, academic success, and social-emotional learning, but do we learn how to create spaces and places of belonging? In completing the inquiry process for myself, I recognized that I had to unlearn, learn, and relearn educational leadership, which led me to wondering if I could use my ongoing personal and professional transformation to co-learn with other school leaders who were engaging in this process.

Lens Statement

To unpack how we form belonging, we must understand how we see the world. As stated by Styres (2017), “The only place from which any of us can write or speak with some degree of certainty is from the position of who we are and in relation to what we know” (p. 17). I have always had an ear of empathy when working with students, especially those on the margins, but in taking on the anti-racism and non-discrimination portfolio as a director, I recognized that my personal and professional worlds had intertwined for the first time. While I engaged in Halbert

and Kaser's (2022) spiral of inquiry and reflected on the equity portfolio I had received, a recurring theme was not only an inability to see and understand equity but to understand the bigger picture about why it matters. This approach aligns with a lens of anti-oppression. This lens is framed by recognizing and acknowledging that (a) social differences exist between dominant groups and non-dominant groups; (b) there is a link between personal stories and political structures; (c) power is influenced by social, cultural, economic, and psychological factors; (d) historical and geographical location give meaning to experience and (e) reflexivity/mutual involvement is predicated on values, social difference, and power among people (Burke & Harrison, 2002). Anti-oppressive practice is a strengths-based approach that attempts to separate people from their problems and shift the focus to the circumstances preventing equitable outcomes and opportunities for all (Aqil et al., 2021; Brown 2012) and what actions we can take to mitigate these in our context. The use of this lens is intentional, as the paper seeks to unpack belonging and create intentional spaces where authentic alignment among diverse voices can occur. Anti-oppression represents multiple worldviews and includes feminism, Marxism, post-modernism, Indigenous ways of knowing and being, post-structuralism, critical constructionism, anti-colonialism, and anti-racism (Brown, 2012). In addition, anti-oppressive practices encourage not only self-reflection but ongoing reflection of the lens itself, which is the foundation of this OIP: to continuously strive to transform for personal and societal flourishing (Aqil et al., 2021; Brown, 2012; Burke & Harrison, 2002).

Agency

My agency within this OIP is manifold, as I am a school-based leader in an elementary school, I serve as president-elect of my local association, and I also do presentations and workshops for senior teams and trustees for K–12 districts across the province as well as for

local colleges. These vantages give me multiple leverage points at the micro, macro, and meso levels, and therefore, the organizational context of this OIP will be outlined at all those levels and detailed further in the proposed solutions.

Organizational Context

The organization's context will be delineated through the macro, meso, and micro levels, as in any change process, it is important to have symbiosis among the levels for a better chance of institutionalization of the change (Deszca et al., 2020). Given my agency, I will be focusing on the micro and meso levels of change with the hope that the process can be mirrored at the macro level. By aligning the macro, meso, and micro levels, the first-order change embarked on through the selected solution may result in a second-order change at the systems level.

Macro

At the macro level, the sociological context in which public education exists is tied to neoliberalism. Organizations that have historical roots in neoliberalism could attempt to sidestep conversations about equity, but these conversations are not abating for a number of reasons, most of which could be summarized by recognizing the ongoing lack of accountability practiced by institutions (e.g., police, health-care organizations, courts, big business, etc.). The global COVID-19 pandemic forced accountability by shining a light on the disproportionate negative effects the virus had on already marginalized communities. As an example, in a report released by Centre for the Study of Hate and Extremism, the data showed that almost one of every two Vancouver residents of Asian descent experienced an incident of hate based on their race and that more anti-Asian hate crimes were reported to police in the city of 700,000 people than in the Top 10 most populous U.S. cities combined (Levin, 2021). Globally, people are understanding the collective responsibility needed to unpack and address the historical and ongoing injustice

stemming from racism and to look at the systems that uphold and perpetuate it. Housing, health, education, and policing are just a few of these systems. Lalas et al. (2019) underlined that equity work must focus on repairing harm, uplifting agency, and increasing participation for all. It also means reimagining schools as inclusive and democratic sites in which all members of the community are empowered through collective responsibility; instead of asking what does the economy need from its' workers, equity work asks what communities need from their citizens.

Meso

Looking at the meso level, the AJSB community is a large, urban, and multicultural school district that rests on the unceded and traditional territories of the three host nations: x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh). AJSB currently has almost 100 elementary schools (including annexes) and approximately two dozen secondary schools and adult education centres. AJSB enrolls upward of 40,000 elementary, secondary, and international students. Of those, 44% speak a language other than English at home; indeed, 140 languages have been identified in the schools. There are also over 2,100 self-identified Indigenous students from Nations across Canada (AJSB, 2022). After becoming the successful candidate in the contest for the director of instruction role, I was the first person of colour to be part of the district management team. While representation on the team has grown, the senior management team (SMT) is still largely staffed by people from the dominant culture.

AJSB's current structure is a traditional hierarchy. The board of trustees hires a CEO/superintendent, its one employee. The superintendent collaborates with the secretary treasurer and oversees one deputy superintendent and three associate superintendents; these employees make up the SMT. Directors of instruction are part of the district management team and oversee district principals (dependent on portfolio), principals, and vice-principals. As I

recently left my director role and assumed a principal role, I have been both supervised and supervisor. In both roles, it is challenging to pinpoint the specific leadership approaches at AJSB, as the superintendent changed multiple times in my recent tenure, but the approaches seem to vary among the hierarchical, trait, and distributive styles. Those who are currently in the most senior positions in the district were hired at a time that leadership most reflected the trait approach. The traits a leader exhibits include intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability (Northouse, 2013). The current shortlisting and interview processes that the district uses continue to highlight these traits, and the management structure has therefore not had time to evolve.

Micro

The autonomy given to principals for the operationalization of their schools is reflective of distributive leadership. In this style, there is a delegation of leadership tasks and a distribution of work to schools, which most closely aligns with the leader-plus facet of distributive leadership outlined by Spillane and Diamond (2007). Currently, AJSB has a newly released education plan and an anti-racism and non-discrimination plan, and the Government of British Columbia recently released *Racial Equity Together*, its anti-racism action plan for K–12 (Ministry of Education and Child Care, 2023). With these three recent public documents, the impetus to understand how to lead for equity is timely. Freire and Ramos (1970) shared that all people must actively participate in liberation, but those that are historically underrepresented must be given their voice at the table. Therefore, to address oppression through equity-focused leadership at the micro level, the voices of those that are marginalized must be included, but this must be done without putting the burden of fixing the historical wrongs on them. Therefore, a process for the

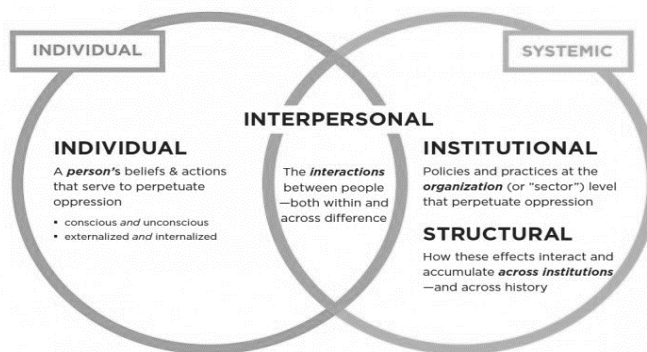
intentional co-creation of communities of belonging and purpose aligns with looking at this problem through the micro, meso, and macro frames.

Leadership PoP

The school board had been in the news for an anti-Black racist incident that occurred in one of its high schools in 2016. It involved a student posting racist videos on social media. The school leaders at the time attempted to navigate the impact of the event on the student and school community. While everyone involved had the best of intentions, the follow-up did not have the restorative impact required. I was working in another district when the incident occurred, so I did not have the details of the event or experiences of those involved. When I returned to the AJSB as a director, one of the portfolio items I was asked to lead was the anti-racism and non-discrimination portfolio. This meant I was responsible for developing a proactive plan for learning in this area and that I was also a key person for following up on racist or discriminatory events. As I was new to this portfolio and was very interested in equipping school leaders with the restorative principles needed to address racist and discriminatory incidents, I took the time to speak with the staff that were involved in the 2016 incident. Understanding that racism can stem from multiple sources, using the lens of anti-oppression, and recognizing the multiple levels of oppression outlined in Figure 1, I wanted to understand the micro context.

Figure 1

Lens of Anti-Oppression



Note. Taken from *The Lens of Systemic Oppression*. (n.d.). The National Equity Project.

Retrieved May 12, 2023 from <https://www.nationalequityproject.org/frameworks/lens-of-systemic-oppression>.

To do this, I conducted interviews with the school leaders with the hope of understanding what they would have needed at the individual and interpersonal levels to feel equipped to react to incidents such as the one in 2016, and I also wanted to see if there were proactive measures that could be implemented to create environments of belonging in which incidents of racism and discrimination did not occur at all (systemic).

As I wanted to have a deeper understanding of the impact of these events on school leaders, I asked questions such as the following: “What emotions surfaced for you during the event?” “What can you tell me about the support you received?” “What were your best experiences with the support received?” “What were your worst?” The idea behind these questions was to engage empathy and unpack what leaders needed to feel supported in addressing racist and discriminatory events at the schools.

At the individual and interpersonal levels, the administrators directly involved felt unsupported and therefore uncertain of how to address incidents of racism at their sites. They also feared being portrayed in the media as their colleague had been, and they further felt that the

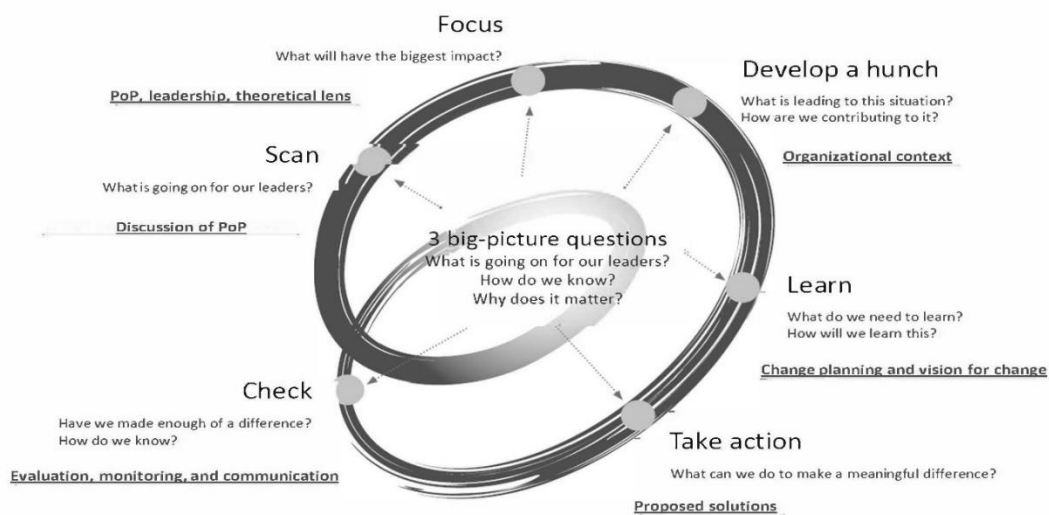
board did not support their colleague. The school continued to work on rebuilding a culture and climate of belonging. While at the structural and institutional levels, the district continues to reassess policies, procedures, and workflow through the lens of anti-racism and decolonization, principals and vice-principals feel they do not have the guidance to create equity-focused cultures proactively or reactively at their sites. Therefore, the problem of practice under investigation is how to build educational leaders' capacity to create communities of belonging and purpose.

Framing the PoP

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I used Halbert and Kaser's (2022) spiral of inquiry to recognize my positionality as a change facilitator for this OIP by embedding the elements of the plan within the spiral. This embedding is outlined in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Visual Representation of Spiral of Inquiry and OIP Framing



Note. OIP = organizational improvement plan; PoP = problem of practice; figure adapted from Halbert, J., & Kaser, L. (2022). *Spiral of inquiry for equity and quality*. Portage and Main Press.

Within the spiral, the developing-a-hunch stage involves answering two questions: “What is leading to the situation?” “How are we contributing to it?” To complete this phase, it was necessary to do a political-economic-social-technological-legal-environmental (PESTLE) analysis to delineate the macro elements in play. Schools do not operate in isolation, so to undergo any change, it is necessary to unpack these elements (Galway, 2013). The worldviews and paradigms combined with my use of the anti-oppression lens required that Francis Aguilar’s traditional PESTLE analysis was modified to include the following elements: political, environmental, social, and historical as they have a direct impact on the PoP. The modification allows for better cohesion between the chosen worldview, paradigm, and lens used for this OIP and will be unpacked along with the chosen worldview and paradigm below.

Worldview and Paradigm

At AJSB, the development of school leaders’ capacity to co-create communities of belonging and purpose is problematized by a hierarchical structure imposed by the structuralist paradigm within the district. This necessitates a thorough examination of the current power structure at AJSB, as it is built on a legacy of colonialism. A critical worldview is well suited for addressing this OIP, as a solution must look at systems through the lenses of history, power, and intersectionality (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013; Squire, 2018). The hoped-for goal is emancipatory social change and equity. Therefore, my research as a means for social emancipation will be informed by the transformative paradigm (Held, 2019; Mertens, 2017). Held (2019) four basic conditions: (a) a historical ontology based on issues of power; (b) an inter-subjectivist, experiential, and transactional epistemology in which knowledge is socially and historically situated, understanding is dialectical, and findings are value mediated; (c) an axiology that positions research as a means for social emancipation; and (d) a dialogic/dialectical methodology

informed by a transformative approach. Mertens (2017) posited that if research is designed to explicitly address issues of equity through the lens of discrimination and oppression, the probability of both personal and social transformation increases. This OIP seeks to empower the personal development of principals and vice-principals, as transformation of the individual will impact the greater community for the collective good. Using a critical worldview and transformative paradigm, principals and vice-principals can recognize their individual positionality and recognize how and when they can leverage it for social change.

To recognize individual positionality requires self-reflexivity, which can sometimes lead to resistance. Constructive-developmental theory recognizes this and gives an opportunity for reframing and better understanding the gap that sometimes exists between intention and impact. Kegan's (1994) constructive-developmental theory (CDT) joins two separate philosophies, those of constructivism and developmentalism. Appendix A outlines the five stages of adult development and the associated traits used to make meaning (Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Kegan, 1994). As this OIP seeks to support the co-creation of communities of belonging and purpose, it is necessary to hold space for multiple ideologies, be attentive to all levels (self, collective, and system), and be able to embrace complexity. These traits are all components of the self-transforming mind. With the first four stages, meaning is made through the container we have created, whereas during the self-transforming stage (stage 5), the container itself goes through an unlearning, learning, and relearning process.

Leadership Approaches

Within this worldview and paradigm, the leadership approaches are key to this work, as social justice, equity, and system transformation require an ongoing acknowledgement of the regulation and constitution of leaders to mitigate the potential of ethical violence in these

conversations (Wang, 2022; Zembylas, 2015). While this stance is in direct relation to Indigenous worldviews, in my close work with the Indigenous Education Department and my ongoing learning of cultural appropriation, I continue to feel hesitant to align myself solely with this approach, as I recognize that Indigenous pathways are rooted in Indigenous worldviews, and I am not Indigenous (Held, 2019; Khalifa, 2019; Romm, 2015). Nevertheless, the concept of a decolonized to leadership resonates with me. While research in this field is only beginning to surface (e.g., Cranston & Jean-Paul, 2021; Lopez, 2020), Khalifa et al.'s (2019) literature review clearly showed that as non-Indigenous people, we will never fully understand the needs of Indigenous communities. Nevertheless, the review outlined five strands of an Indigenous decolonizing school leadership (IDSL) framework: (a) the prioritization of knowledge and self-reflection, (b) the empowerment of community through self-determination, (c) the centring of community voices and values, (d) service based in altruism and spirituality, and (e) approaching collectivism through inclusive communication practices.

While the approach the IDSL framework takes to unpacking educational leadership is a step toward inclusivity, an anti-oppressive lens highlights that inequity is upheld by hidden institutional biases in policies, practices, and processes that privilege or disadvantage people based on different isms and oppression, including policies and practices entrenched in established institutions that result in the exclusion or promotion of designated groups. As Tuana (2014) stated, "Ultimately action will be taken by individuals who are morally literate and who have moved through their sense of moral potency to a position of moral agency" (p. 173). My moral agency compels me to look through a lens of decolonization, anti-racism, and non-discrimination. I know this involves consistently assessing structures, policies, and programs by monitoring outcomes and ensuring they are fair and equitable for everyone. This change in basic

assumptions has also led me to think about my lack of autonomy in my previous role. The feeling that came with the lack of autonomy drives my personal wish for agency in this OIP, as with agency comes passion and power, which I want for myself and for those that I serve. This leads me to another leadership framework that can support this work: self-determination theory (SDT) holds that it is important for leaders to be responsive to those they lead for initiatives to be successful. SDT offers a path for leaders to catalyze attitudinal changes (autonomy), best practices (competences), and enriched community relationships (relatedness; Deci & Ryan, 2000; MacCormack et al., 2021). With both the IDSL and self-determination frameworks, the onus is on personal growth and transformation as it gives agency to principals and vice-principals for the empowerment of their communities.

Political

Politically, AJSB was aligned with organizations around the world in trying to understand the impact of racism in the global post–George Floyd era. To develop a deeper understanding of the district’s current state, a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats analysis was conducted at AJSB during an anti-racism and non-discrimination engagement for all staff, students, and families. To address the issue of trust, a neutral third party, Urban Matters, was hired. The *What We Heard* (Urban Matters, 2021) report shared the experiences and insights reflected in the responses collected throughout the engagement. Six main themes that needed immediate addressing surfaced in the report: (a) expression of identity, (b) sense of belonging and participation, (c) learning and development, (d) experiences of racism and discrimination, (e) truth and reconciliation, and (f) impacts of COVID-19. In a presentation to the board, I disaggregated the data and focused on the identities of those who responded; over 50% of respondents identified as heterosexual, cisgendered, White women. In a district of over 44,000

students, there was about a 3% response rate, and the respondents were not members of equity-deserving groups.

In addition, while the graduation rates of Indigenous students are on the rise, they still do not equal those of non-Indigenous students. While 72% of Indigenous students completed high school in 2020–2021, 90% of non-Indigenous students graduated (Ministry of Education and Child Care, 2022). This disparity continues to be a priority of the Ministry of Education and Child Care.

Environmental

AJSB used recent community engagements with key interested parties to create a new education plan (AJSB, 2021; Urban Matters, 2021). The plan's three goals show the board's commitment to reconciliation, equity, student achievement, physical and mental well-being, and belonging (AJSB, 2022). The commitment to equity was taken a step further by the development and addition of a specific equity statement, but it did not include a framework for building equity-focused leaders. As schools exist to serve students, principals and vice-principals are key drivers in operationalizing district goals; therefore, if principals and vice-principals are supported in developing equity fluency, mutuality posits that they will galvanize their school teams in symbiotic learning. This interpersonal and intrapersonal work can lead to systemic transformation such that every person at every level of the organization understands their role in recognizing systemic oppression and where to leverage their personal privilege for transformation. Currently, principals and vice-principals partake in large-group professional development with the senior and district management teams every month or so. The feedback is that it is a transactional process with little room for transformational experiences.

Social

The *What We Heard* report clearly highlighted the need for the development of an equity-focused stance across the district, which was seen through the responses but also through the lack of them. “Equity” has become a buzzword in education, so it is important to have a collective understanding of the concept. According to Lallas et al. (2019), the major functions of equity are to (a) attend to the needs of traditionally and historically marginalized and deprived populations of students, (b) redress disadvantages in terms of opportunity and social mobility, (c) provide fair and open access to all, and, most importantly, (d) recognize and honour differences and open doors of access and opportunity to everyone by redistributing resources and services, particularly to those in greatest need. To recognize systemic oppression and address it, every individual must develop equity fluency. For a system to transform, those who interact with it must transform. Educators at every level of the hierarchy have the positional power to influence systemic transformation in their local context if a framework for developing equity fluency exists. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1963) wrote from his jail cell, “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly” (para. 4). As the current system is steeped in neoliberalism and a colonial hierarchy, conscious efforts are needed to transform it into an equitable entity.

Historical

Having worked in three districts, I immediately recognized the difference in engaging in transactional and transformational change among the school boards. The speed of and openness to engage in conversations about system transformation seemed to reflect the alignment with the district’s neoliberal structures and practices. It was necessary to understand the system at a macro level, as we need to know where we came from before we can determine where we are

going. As AJSB is one of the older districts, the interplay of the three states (i.e., past, present, and future) mattered in understanding the possible historical reasons for the gap, which helped to refine the PoP so it could successfully serve as a catalyst for innovative and achievable change. In 1872, the Government of British Columbia passed the Public Schools Act (British Columbia, n.d.), which explicitly stated that all public schools would be officially non-sectarian; this statement distinguished the province from all others in Canada at the time. The act also stated that public schooling would be free. This provincial milestone set the stage for the beginnings of the district, and three key moments stand out:

- In 1872, the first school was built, 14 years before the city was incorporated (AJSB, 2023)
- In 1903, the district appointed the first superintendent (AJSB, 2023)
- In 2016, the district appointed its first female superintendent (AJSB, 2023).

In addition, it was during the 1890s that the district began developing the characteristics of a typical urban school system, which included:

- a hierarchy with a superintendent at the top and orders flowing from the top to the bottom;
- clearly defined differences in the roles of superintendents, principals, assistant principals, and teachers;
- graded schools in which students progressively moved from one grade to another;
- a graded course of study for the entire school system to ensure uniformity in teaching in all grades in the system; and
- an emphasis on rational planning, order, regularity, and punctuality (AJSB, 2023).

In 1872, the province was a progressive frontrunner because it established public schools as non-sectarian, but it seems to have rested on its laurels since then. Given that the district is among the most diverse public school systems in Canada (AJSB, 2022), I question why it was not until 2016 that the first diverse (as defined by gender in this case) superintendent was appointed. I would also note that the governance structure developed in the 1890s is still in place, as the district continues to have the superintendent at the top and orders flowing from top to bottom. These are a few of the many facts depicting an organization that has been rooted in colonialism for generations, which is important to recognize in ascertaining where this PoP can be leveraged successfully.

Guiding Questions Emerging from the PoP

The development of educational leaders' capacity to create communities of belonging and purpose is a complex problem when viewed through a systems lens. The idea of co-creation means to step away from the focus on transactional or product-oriented goals and, instead focus on the process itself, one that could be specific to each site. Greenhalgh et al. (2016) conducted an overview of co-creation designs from multiple systems. Greenhalgh found that all co-creation models have significant and sustainable societal impacts if the three guiding principles are followed: (a) that a system's perspective is taken with emergence, local adaptation, and non-linearity; (b) that it is grounded as a creative enterprise with human experience at the core; and (c) that there is an emphasis on the process, especially with respect to leadership style and governance. Education is constructed within a neoliberal system, and to unpack it through the lens of anti-oppression outlined in Figure 1, these three principles of co-creation may be in contrast with current structures. This potential dichotomy leads to three major lines of inquiry that underpin the PoP: What impact, if any, will there be on a sense of belonging in sharing

transactional and transformational learning between the leadership team at the district level and at the school level (individual, intrapersonal, and systemic)? How can principals and vice-principals leverage their own associations to address the hierarchical approach to leadership and instead pursue the diversity of leadership that best reflects the membership? Will working collectively with like-minded principals and vice-principals build the psychologically safe environments of belonging needed to engage in these conversations? This will be unpacked further in the sections below.

Guiding Question #1

Regarding the first question, AJSB has announced itself to be championing equity and is encouraging principals and vice-principals to incorporate goals such as equity, belonging, anti-racism, and decolonization into their annual professional growth plans (PGPs), as school leaders are integral to creating inclusive school environments (Faas et al., 2018; Ryan, 2007). Recently, the district team requested that all principals and vice-principals share their PGP goals and questions, telling them that they would be put into appropriate groups to undertake this learning. However, there are several issues with this approach. Elementary school leaders will not be grouped with secondary school leaders. Principals and vice-principals have no autonomy or agency over the development of the groups or the model of learning shared, which runs counter to equity-work principles. School leaders are beholden to the district as gatekeepers of their learning. As Erfan (2021) eloquently professed, “In organizational settings, a developmental analysis often turns our ideas of power and hierarchy upside down. It exposes, for example, the inefficacy and short-sightedness of the archetypal strongman leader who may be sitting at the helm.” (p. 113).

Guiding Question #2

Regarding the second question, currently principals and vice-principals in British Columbia belong to their local association as well as to the British Columbia Principals and Vice-Principals Association. The provincial organization is currently undergoing its own transformative work to centre equity by sharing workshop series, such as Leading for Equity in 2021, and having a resource page on its website. I reached out to the organization recently and spoke to the president, who said they were working closely with the Ontario Principals Council to develop a diversity, equity, and inclusion plan to support and better reflect the diversity of their membership. Working at the school-leader level could be seen as a social movement, and within that, it is not necessarily the structure or design of the movement but the quality of participation, ideas, and action that matter (Furman, 2004; Leask et al., 2019; Van Til et al., 2008).

Guiding Question #3

Regarding the third question, conversations about equity require psychologically safe environments, as they often involve a pedagogy of discomfort with the sharing of lived experiences. “Psychological safety” is defined as the feeling that it is safe to take interpersonal risks (Edmondson, 1999). To have the agency to choose allies, critical friends, or affinity groups in learning can allow leaders to co-design norms for their group that can create spaces of belonging in which transformation can happen (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Gray et al., 2018).

These three questions lead to the learn stage of the spiral of inquiry outlined in Figure 2. The questions “What do we need to learn?” and “How will we learn this?” will be outlined in the following section, which unpacks this OIP’s leadership-focused vision for change.

Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

This PoP is set within neoliberalism and a functionalist paradigm that underpins the school system and the organization. Neoliberalism is at cross purposes to equity, as in a neoliberal system, the focus is on the individualistic benefits of education rather than the collective good, which strays from an equity-focused mindset (Coleman, 2021; Picower & Mayorga, 2015). This manifests in potential disparities between organizational values and the values of those within organizations and is evidenced through tensions such as those between hustle culture and alignment culture, transformational and transactional philosophies, culture fit and culture add, and approaches to and understandings of equity. In a neoliberal system, there is an ingrained societal suspicion that intentionally supporting one group hurts another, but as shown through research on the curb cut effect and universal design for learning (Al-Azawei et al., 2016; Blackwell, 2017; OECD, 2018), not recognizing and uplifting those who have been most marginalized has determinantal effects on economic growth, prosperity, and national well-being, and when there are conscious efforts to support groups that have been historically marginalized, the new systems benefit all. To unpack the stages of change for the future state of organization, I spent time unpacking the current state of the district to understand the gap between the two and the steps needed for successional implementation of the selected solution.

Current State

At the meso level, the district is attempting to include diverse voices at the table, but if the decision-making structure does not change, the inclusion of diverse voices could be considered tokenism. Therefore, the current hierarchical top-down approach to decision-making must evolve to reflect the changing times by mindfully amplifying representation and making space for diverse voices to not only have a seat at the table but to have decision-making ability as

well. That said, as stated by Fullan (2015), “Top-down leadership doesn’t last even if you get a lot of the pieces right, because it is too difficult to get, and especially to sustain, widespread buy-in from the bottom” (p. 24).

Gap

There is currently a disconnect between AJSB’s leadership structure and the inclusive leadership design needed for principals and vice-principals to lead equity-focused schools. The literature review done by the Canadian Association of Principals and Alberta Teachers’ Association (2014) reveals that the job of the principal has become more demanding, ambiguous, and stressful, and one area of focus is the changing educational landscape with its emphasis on transforming systems from oppressive to equitable, as it is recognized that people across all social identity groups thrive when they feel empowered to leverage their voice to motivate social change for equity (Deci et al., 2000; Gonzalez et al., 2020). Due to inadequate training and direction, leaders at all levels of the organization do not feel confident or able to undertake equity work with the teams they support, as they feel that they do not receive sufficient professional development from the district leadership team (Pollock et al., 2014; Wang & Pollock, 2020). Without a framework and training, principals and vice-principals can exhibit signs of moral distress and a lack of self-determination regarding the disconnect between what they want to do, what they can do, and what they know how to do (Jameton, 2013; Stelmach et al., 2021).

Desired State

While I believe there is a gap in the decision-making structure at the senior level, my vision of improving the organization focuses on the micro level to offer opportunities for a deeper learning of anti-racism and equity to principals and vice-principals so they have the tools

they need to feel empowered to embark on equity work in their schools and build culturally affirming spaces in which all students, staff, and families feel welcome. The most common way of describing belonging in educational settings started with the work of Goodenow and Grady (1993), which references a student's feelings of being accepted, respected, and valued. The recent pioneering work by Gray et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of school belonging, positioning it as a fundamental human right.

Key Actors

Being mindful of the lens of anti-oppression outlined in Figure 1, it is necessary to unpack the individual, intrapersonal, institutional, and structural (systemic) drivers, as equity work recognizes the interplay between these systems. In addition, as I am currently a school-based leader but have experience at all levels of the system, this PoP aligns with my agency, as I have deep understanding and experience at the institutional and structural levels. The AJSB has multiple stakeholders that influence and are influenced by the work of the district through committee meetings, engagements, advisory groups, and other activities. Three main actors will help drive the change sought by identifying this PoP. The first two are the elected board of trustees and SMT, which are the institutional and structural drivers. The board members function as a conduit between the SMT, the Ministry of Education and Child Care, and the public and are considered the best-placed people to understand their respective communities' particular strengths, challenges, and demands. School trustees are expected to listen to their communities, guide the work of their school district, and set plans, policies, and the annual budget. With that in mind, at the December 2019 board meeting, the motion passed to build an anti-racism and non-discrimination strategic plan (AJSB, 2019). While this motion signalled a commitment to equity, threats to its success include the hierarchical structure of the organization and the lack of

representation/diversity at the senior level. Equity seeks to bring all voices to the table, especially those that have been historically marginalized, but the current structure does not allow for this.

The passing of this motion shows the commitment to anti-oppression work, which can be seen as fertile ground in which a solution to the PoP can be designed. That said, it is one thing to design something and another to operationalize it. Recognizing that structural change needs individual and intrapersonal competence, the ideal future state would see every person at every level of the organization begin to develop equity fluency. A strong place to start this work is with the school-based leaders, as in the district, they are key to navigating the interplay between the individual, intrapersonal, instructional, and structural levels. Principals and vice-principals have direct responsibility for staff and students, so they have an immediate zone of proximity in which to leverage change; they are therefore the key actors in this PoP. In a report that outlined a systematic synthesis of 2 decades of research on how principals affect students and schools, Grissom et al. (2021) found that for an individual student, the biggest affect is their teacher, but for the entire school, the principal's effectiveness is paramount. In fact, they found that a 1 standard deviation increase in principal effectiveness increased typical student achievement by 0.13 standard deviations in math and 0.09 standard deviations in reading. Supporting principals and vice-principals in unlearning, learning, and relearning educational leadership will not only allow them to be role models in schools for this work but will also increase their overall effectiveness as leaders.

In *Organizational Theory for Equity and Diversity*, Capper (2019) asked an insightful, anchoring question: "How does the identity formation of the educational leader and other stakeholders at the individual level inform the organizational identity of the education setting as it evolves towards equitable ends?" (p. 215). Freire and Ramos (1970) stated that "no pedagogy

- An organization's social justice identity can be informed by the staff, students, and educational community.
- Identity formation can be ongoing.
- In turn, a leader's identity formation along multiple dimensions influences leadership practices along these dimensions.
- As leaders develop their identity in one dimension, they might (or might not) deepen their development in other dimensions (Capper, 2019).

The PoP aligns well with Fullan's (2015) leadership from the middle strategy, as it is a strategy that mobilizes school-based administrators and networks of schools through capacity building, which allows them to become an effective partner upward and downward with the goal of greater system performance through coherence, capacity, and commitment (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2019).

Key Priorities

To reach a desired state of school communities of belonging and purpose, the first key priority is engaging in a process of unpacking educational leadership by unlearning and existing knowledge frameworks. As the key change driver is school-based leaders, interested parties will work through the process of developing their critical consciousness. In her latest book, Lopez (2020) asserted that while colonialism may have ended, it is still alive in schools; it needs to be named and disrupted, and school leaders must be supported so they can successfully engage in doing so. As an example, in my current school there is a district classroom for students with specific learning challenges. When disaggregating the student composition, I noted that 30% of the students in the program self-identify as Indigenous, whereas only 3% of the total school population does. The over-representation of Indigenous students in this program could act as a

catalyst for unpacking program referrals. Engaging in conversations of unlearning and learning will enable principals and vice-principals to intentionally challenge colonialism and neoliberal practices that drive historically underrepresented groups further to the margins (Cranston & Jean-Paul, 2021; Lopez, 2020; Wilson, 2008). The lens of anti-oppression outlined in Figure 1 shows the need to understand ourselves and our biases so that we can be self-aware in our interactions at an interpersonal level, in turn making us able to challenge the systemic and institutional status quo.

The second priority is to create a transactional document that captures the traits and characteristics and/or process guidelines needed to engage in this work. Capper's (2019) premise of mutuality posits that the process of identity development is not done in a vacuum and that it could be informed by all those involved; therefore, the second priority is to deconstruct and reconstruct traits, competencies, and leadership characteristics and to surface the common ones needed for transformational work. Leaders need to feel empowered to challenge the assumptions, values, rules, roles, and structures on which education is built, and mutuality holds that district directions can evolve through the identity development of leaders. Looking through the lens of constructive-developmental theory (Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Kegan, 1994) and as summarized in Appendix A, as leaders deconstruct the neoliberal paradigms on which educational leadership is built, they will organically go through a process of making meaning of new paradigms. These stages are the instrumental mind (or rule-bound self), self-authoring mind (or reflective self), and, finally, the self-transforming mind (or interconnecting self; Stewart & Wolodko, 2016). Working in tandem, the two priorities can galvanize school leaders to undergo a transformational process that results in a transactional legacy document that could mobilize future leaders.

Leadership Considerations

In actioning any PoP, it is important to consider leadership at the macro, meso, and micro levels. Unpacking this will lead to a greater chance of success. While in most cases this would be looked at from the top (macro) down (micro), focusing on the micro is key, as the selected solution is based on the principles of co-design (Greenhalgh et al., 2016) outlined earlier in this chapter. School leaders will go through a process of meaning making that will impact the meso level. This will also impact the macro as the PoP is in alignment with the district's education plan goals of belonging (AJSB, 2022). As the change facilitator, I will recognize school leaders as key change agents in this process, which will bring both the education plan goal and selected solution to the PoP to fruition.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 of this OIP outlined the PoP, which is the disconnect between AJSB's current leadership structure and the inclusive leadership design needed for principals and vice-principals to feel equipped to lead equity-focused schools. The organizational context is shared and situated within the global and local political frames. The use of the critical worldview and transformative paradigm is used as a frame for operationalization via the IDSL framework and self-determination leadership approaches.

Chapter 2: Planning and Development

The desired state for schools is one that offers equitable life chances to all students, to do this we must focus on those that have been historically marginalized. Because equity work is about people, equitable organizations must become human centred, as such organizations put the people most impacted by the system at the centre of the solution to the PoP (Greenhalgh, 2016; Kamanda et al, 2013; Magalhães, 2018). As the current system is based on a neoliberal structure, school leaders need to have a more robust understanding of leadership. As outlined in Chapter 1, this OIP's PoP is the development of educational leaders' capacity to create communities of belonging and purpose. Chapter 2 discusses the operationalization of hopeful changes to this situation. As I recently moved from a district role to a school-based role, I will implement the continuous learning cycle model with like-minded leaders by using high-leverage practices with the hopes of spreading and scaling. This approach will put to good use my experience at the grassroots/local level in schools as well as my experience at the systems level from my time at the district. I will explain my blend of authentic and servant leadership style as an impetus for developing the self-transforming mind, and I will highlight why using Deszca et al.'s (2020) change path model will address the evolutionary nature of this organizational change. I will conclude by offering three solutions to the PoP and by underscoring a measure that has the greatest chance of spreading and scaling.

Leadership Approach to Change

As I engaged in my personal spiral of inquiry and reflected on my job change, I intentionally spotlighted the development of my leadership identity through the lens of constructive-developmental theory. As a director, I felt I lost my sense of self. Making meaning through CDT, I recognized that engaging in this self-transforming epistemology allowed me to

be responsive to the relational context and recognize the interplay of multiple systems, which allowed me to reframe my perspective based on incoming data (Kegan, 1994; Stewart et al., 2016). It allowed me to know myself in a way that allowed me to serve. I became aware that my leadership style is predicated on the idea that I want to serve with a heart of authenticity, which involves me engaging in an ongoing process of self-reflection. Northouse (2013) posited that “people feel apprehensive and insecure about what is going on around them, and as a result, they long for bona fide leadership they can trust and for leaders who are honest and good” (p. 308). To be honest and good, leaders must be authentic—they must know themselves (Duignan, 2015; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Pavlovic, 2015). I began teaching in 1995 and taught for 13 years before embarking on the administrative part of my career. As a teacher, I had very high expectations of my students based on their strengths, goals, and vision for their future. My students were always successful, and when I met with them in term conferences, they would tell me they felt safe to thrive, as they always knew what I was doing, why I was doing it, and how to ask for help. As I stepped into the management arena, I attempted to do the same with the staff that I supervised, which served me well as a school-based principal. The staff I worked alongside in schools also commented that they felt supported and understood and that they appreciated my transparency and authenticity.

I recognize that to be an authentic leader is to engage in ongoing self-reflection, and I recognize that I do this within the confines of a dominant culture. Apple (2017) stated that “the educational crisis is real—especially for the poor and oppressed. Dominant groups have used such ‘crisis talk’ to shift the discussion onto their own terrain” (p. 507). As someone who not only does not identify with but is also not seen as part of the dominant culture, I found myself examining that statement and questioning whether the paradigms created within the dominant

culture can do the work that needs to be done. These thoughts brought me to Bouck (2011), who described the development of his personal praxis as follows:

As I began the process of evaluating my own identity, I became aware that for the past few years, I had been involved in a process of deconstructing my beliefs and values and in uncovering my involvement and participation in traditions and systems that while not obvious or deliberate, often served to support inequity and injustice. (p. 201)

I see the legacy of colonialism and societies steeped in Eurocentric values through many lenses: as a settler in what is now known as Canada, as a South Asian woman whose country of origin has a history steeped in British rule, and as a public-school teacher in Hong Kong while it was transitioning away from British rule into the Special Administrative Region. Because of their independence and colonization, I palpably felt the conflict my colleagues had with the political authority of China as well as their history as an Asian nation and their sense of values. Kernis and Goldman (2006) suggested that authenticity can be broken down into four separate but interrelated components: (a) awareness, (b) unbiased processing, (c) behaviour, and (d) relational orientation. While I engage in authentic leadership, I am determined to be culturally humble in my approach, and the authentic leadership approach allows space at the table for all voices, values, and visions. Part of my impetus for moving from a district role to a school-based role was the need for self-determination and my own desire to belong. There is an inherent overlap between SDT and authentic leadership. Deci and Ryan (2000) shared that people are authentic when their actions reflect their true or core self—that is, when they are autonomous and self-determining. SDT holds that people are authentic when they can be themselves, when they have a sense of belonging where they can show up as their full self (Ryan, 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Authentic leadership acknowledges that every one of us lies at the intersection of

our identities (Crenshaw, 1991; Ghavami et al., 2020). Currently, society is organized primarily according to a Eurocentric value system; therefore, the places and spaces we have power to leverage are currently aligned with our proximity to power, which is, in fact, our proximity to the dominant culture. However, when a manager and those they supervise are of the same culture, it is easier to find alignment, as the power base chosen by the manager is understood and expected by those they lead (Mittal & Elias, 2016, Pavlovic, 2015).

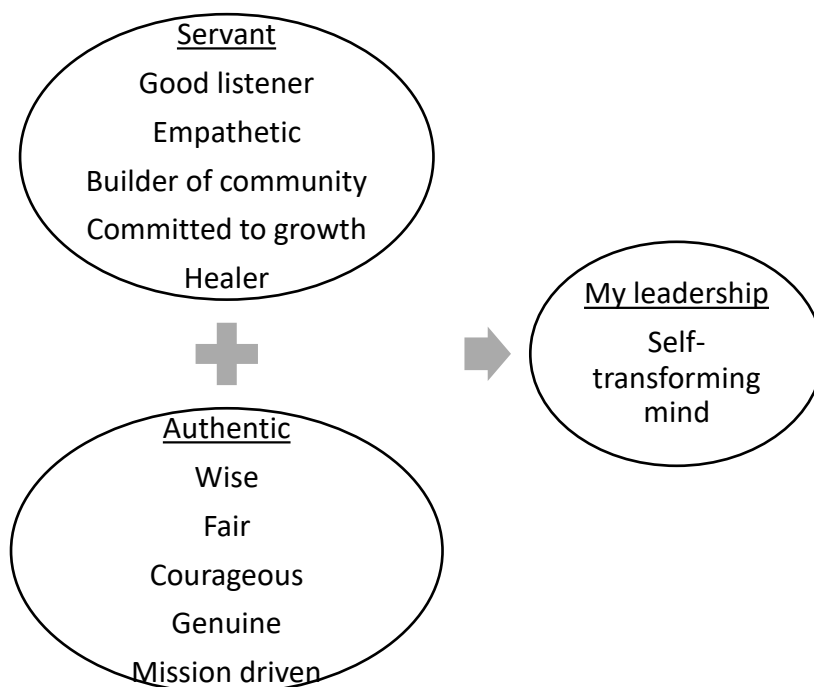
As I was growing in the understanding of my leadership approach, I also felt opposed, and I questioned whether the paradigms created within the dominant culture reflected me. These thoughts brought me back to Bouck (2011), as he described his development as a scholar-practitioner as a practice of uncovering personal involvement in systems that uphold inequity through unintentional or unconscious means. This resonated with me in my readings of the paradigms, but it also gave me clarity as to why I was feeling challenged, and with that insight, I also recognized that I see myself as a servant leader, as that role is closely aligned with the concept of equity and social justice. Greenleaf (1970) developed the idea, positing that a servant leader is a servant first and a leader second further clarified that the best test for recognizing servant leadership is unpacking whether the leaders themselves have become more autonomous in undertaking the work and what has been their effect on the least privileged. Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) suggested that most people see their work as a job, a career, or a calling. I was drawn to education as a calling; therefore, my lens centres those that I serve, and I must strive to understand if the systems within which I work marginalize or elevate those that I serve. I must also work to dismantle the systems that marginalize and strengthen those that I elevate. My leadership approach is a combination of both the servant and authentic leadership styles, with the underlying assumption of ongoing self-reflection outlined in Figure 3 below. The self-

transforming mind based on constructive-developmental theory, as outlined in Appendix A, is one that can see the gaps in personal beliefs and value systems and is open to others.

Transformations occur when individuals can take a lens to which they were subject and regard it objectively (Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Kegan, 1994; Lewin et al., 2019). As authentic leadership itself emerged from a transformational foundation, it has four core components: (a) self-awareness, (b) internalized moral perspective, (c) balanced processing, and (d) relational transparency (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). These components align well with Stage 5 of constructive-developmental theory, outlined in Appendix A.

Figure 3

Leadership Approach to Change



Leadership Approaches and Agency

This OIP is predicated on the premise of co-creation, and the three principles of co-creation (Greenhalgh, 2016) detailed in Chapter 1 put the emphasis on process, especially as it

relates to leadership style and governance. The idea of co-creation means stepping away from the idea of product and engage instead in a process that would be specific to each site. To create my leadership approach, I blended the tenants of the servant and authentic leadership models with the goal of developing a self-transforming mind, as this aligns well with the lens of anti-oppression taken in this OIP. The change facilitator for this PoP is investigating school leaders' lack of capacity to co-create communities of belonging and purpose, and this blend of leadership approaches will help enact this change. In addition, my approach also aligns with the proposed IDSL and SDT leadership frameworks outlined in Chapter 1. With both frameworks, the onus is on personal growth and transformation. The crucial piece in this is agency, or the practices individuals undertake to shape themselves in a particular way. I will centre my own influence and agency as an authentic and servant leader by modelling my spiral of ongoing construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction toward a self-transforming mind. Ultimately, I will use my platform and position to engage like-minded leaders in this process by being a wise and mission-driven community builder to enact the selected solution to this PoP. In doing this, the hope is to inspire other school leaders to do the same for themselves and with the communities they serve.

Framework for Leading the Change Process

The type of change embarked on began as reactionary and is now more anticipatory (Khaw et al., 2022; Deszca et al., 2020). Since 2020, there have been shifts in the world both locally and globally as well as politically and socially, and they are compelling systems to respond collectively and urgently. The global movement in response to the murder of George Floyd in 2020, the finding of unmarked graves at the former residential school on the Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc First Nation in 2021 (which will be followed by more truths revealed, as further ground-penetrating radar projects are underway), and the increase in anti-Asian racism since the

start of the pandemic in 2020 (Levin, 2021) are events that combined with AJSB's mandate to create an education plan and an anti-racism and non-discrimination strategic plan, morphing the anticipatory approach into a reactive change process. The initiatives' coming together is forcing an overhaul of the system as a whole and the unpacking and embodiment of new core values. The opportunity is the creation of a system-wide equity statement led by the SMT that will serve as a vision to inspire and motivate. Preparing for a change requires planning and thoughtfulness. It is timely that this PoP has inequity at its core, as AJSB's current strategic planning cycle ended in 2021 (AJSB, 2016), and the engagement process had begun for the 2022–2026 cycle (AJSB, 2021). At the same time, the board is also engaged in developing Years 3–5 of the anti-racism and non-discrimination strategic plan based on findings from the engagement process conducted by Urban Matters and shared at the policy and governance meeting in December 2021 (AJSB, 2021). The initiation of organizational change begins with a vision that must be followed by direction toward it (Burke, 2018; Khaw et al., 2022). One of the key pieces in the development of the anti-racism and non-discrimination strategic plan was the creation of an equity statement or vision. At the same time, during the development of the education plan, a draft equity statement was also developed. The term “equity,” much like terms such as “social justice” and “diversity,” can be problematized, which the team recognized when the two groups creating equity statements in silos had no congruence (Capper, 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2007). When this realization occurred, the problem became an opportunity to create a vision for the future as a whole system.

Unpacking Change Models

Individual and organizational identity formation with the goal of realizing social justice is foundational to this OIP (Capper 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2007). This aligns well with the idea that

the creation of a system-wide equity statement can serve as a vision and that the education plan and the anti-racism and non-discrimination plan can be used to provide the necessary direction to realizing this vision (Burke, 2018; Khaw et al., 2022). The selected solution for this OIP fits nicely into these steps, but to meet the vision, it is important to land on an appropriate change model, especially given the bottom-up framework of the selected solution.

One approach to consider is Lewin's stage theory of change (Burnes, 2020; Hussain et al., 2018). This model presents change as a three-stage process. The first stage is unfreezing, which refers to having those engaged in the change look within, providing an opportunity to examine beliefs and assumptions, perhaps beginning with unconscious bias. Often, there is an imbalance in the system or crisis that provides the reasoning for this change to occur (Deszca et al., 2020; Harro, 2000; Khaw et al., 2022). The potential new systems, beliefs, and core values coming out of this change state will comprise the second stage: moving from the present state to the desired state. The final stage calls for refreezing, which is the time in which the new (or desired stage) becomes the norm. This simple view of change is very appealing, and the model works well at the system level, meaning it suits this OIP's PoP; however, the model will fall short when it comes to pushing for deeper organizational change. In addition, as the solution to this PoP is predicated on the ability to recognize inequity, the targeted approach should highlight the voices that those systems impact; hence, a change model that can support the grassroots, or bottom-up, focus of the change is desired, whereas Lewin's model is better aligned with top-down change.

In looking at equity-seeking work, it is imperative to hear from communities that have been historically marginalized. Developing core values in a system that has senior leaders representing only the dominant culture makes collecting those voices an integral and necessary

part of the work (Stelmach et al., 2021; Van Til et al., 2008; Voet, 2014). A change model that could be used is Tams and Gentile's (2019), as it gives voice to values. This model was developed as an opportunity for people to gain confidence in speaking their values when challenged at work, and its foundation is empowering. This approach teaches participants to unpack and recognize their own core values and, with that knowledge, recognize the commonality of core values. The strength in this process is making the implicit, or internal, moral compass explicit and public (Greenhalgh, 2016; Furman, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2017). The benefits are transparency and the recognition of shared understanding for all involved. The steps in this process include the following (Tams and Gentile, 2019):

- clarification and articulation of one's values,
- post-decision-making analysis and implementation plan, and
- speaking one's values and receiving feedback.

While this change model centres on the individual and while the PoP is in need of organizational and system-wide change, this approach could still be useful. One of the assumptions of this training is that the more people are trained to speak up based on their core values and beliefs, the more systems and structures will change. Therefore, empowering individuals to have a voice will see the necessary changes made through the organization and to the system (Capper, 2019; Mertens, 2017). The drawback of this approach is the size of AJSB. The school leaders' associations have over 400 employees, and to complete this process in an equitable way by stressing the importance of seeking voices that have been historically underrepresented would take a significant amount of time. As the change process undertaken is reactive in nature, the urgency of the process must be prioritized and does not lend itself well to this approach.

Finding a change model that best aligns with this PoP is imperative for success, though it must be understood that no one path will be a perfect fit, as change is an evolving process. As addressing the PoP requires building community, looking at a model that has that as a foundation is key (Furman, 2004; Stelmach et al., 2021; Voet, 2014). Deszca et al.'s (2020) change path model is predicated on organization-level change and combines process and prescription. As the key drivers for this systemic change are the principals and vice-principals, the organizations that will be highlighted are the PVPAs. There are four stages to this model: awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization. The strength of this model is that it begins with a conscious understanding of the organization's current baseline through intentional internal and external data collection. That step is followed by a deeper dive and analysis (mobilization), which is then followed by acceleration through action planning and implementation. Success is assessed through the institutionalization of the new desired state via ongoing monitoring to show accountability. While this model lends itself well to a PoP requiring organizational change, a few inherent flaws stand out and will be discussed below, as will potential mitigators.

Change Model and Leadership Approach

As this OIP is grounded in the self-determination and agency of school-based leaders, it is imperative that the chosen change model is aligned with the worldviews, theoretical paradigms, and leadership approaches discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. The desired state that is foundational to this OIP is one that challenges neoliberal paradigms; therefore, a change model that gives educators ample opportunity to discuss their ethical responsibilities and agency in relation to the socio-ecological challenges emerging within their local context is key (MacCormick et al., 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Using the change path model will give principals and vice-principals an opportunity to participate in a process of unlearning, learning,

relearning, and co-learning, and it aligns well with the work that the district is already doing, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Alignment of Change Path Model with District Initiatives and Proposed Initiatives

Change path model	Current district initiatives	Proposed PVPA initiatives
Awakening	Completion of anti-racism and non-discrimination engagement	Share data from engagement plan with association at regular meeting as an agenda item
Mobilization	Report shared at public board meeting	Bring together like-minded admin to explore the themes presented in report
Acceleration	Report used as backdrop to further develop anti-racism and non-discrimination strategic plan with working group	Bring together elementary and secondary associations to further unpack and surface key leadership development
Institutionalization	Sharing of operationalization of strategic plan goals with field	Share guiding principles with district team

Note. PVPA = principals' and vice-principals' association.

One of the common themes I heard as a director was that leading equity-focused schools is very complex. For this reason, I chose the change path model, as it is both comprehensive and straightforward (Deszca et al., 2020), and the district vision aligns directly with the leadership from the middle strategy (Fullan, 2015; Fullan & Quinn, 2016), as the lessons learned from the PVPA group can be leveraged to the SMT, the bigger PVPA group at the elementary and secondary level, and the province's PVPA organization. In addition, the change path model lends itself well to a servant and authentic leadership approach, as overlapping these two centres are the voices of those we are hearing from, allowing us the opportunity to highlight those we are not hearing from. The four stages of the change path model: awakening, mobilization, acceleration and institutionalization will be outlined in further detail below.

Awakening. The awakening stage constitutes a deep dive into the internal and external environments of an organization. At the district level, AJSB has completed this step via successful bids through a request for proposals process. This allowed for a neutral third party to look at factors that are priorities for staff, families, and community members. The anti-racism and non-discrimination engagement process was undertaken by Urban Matters (2021), and the education plan knowledge-gathering process was undertaken with the assistance of Charles Ungerleider, Managing Partner and Director of Research for Directions Evidence and Policy Research (AJSB, 2021). After the engagement process, the authors shared the themes that arose. The receipt of the reports showed a clear weakness of this change model: the difficulty in addressing culture and power imbalances. For example, even just one data pull from the Urban Matters anti-racism and non-discrimination engagement report shows that most respondents identified as White, cisgendered, and straight (AJSB, 2021). As the information was presented, this flaw in the engagement process was highlighted. While the development of the engagement process tried to predict and mitigate barriers such as language, COVID-19, and distrust of the system, the final numbers showed that most of the participants represented the dominant culture. The most powerful drivers for change tend to come from outside an organization (Descza et al., 2020), and for this OIP, the Urban Matters (2021) report established a sense of urgency for principals and vice-principals to work together to learn to lead the creation of spaces for those who interact with the system to feel safe sharing what they need to share (Michalski et al., 2020; Wang, 2022; Wang & Pollock, 2020). This stage will be underpinned by the following guiding question: How can principals and vice-principals leverage their own associations to overcome the hierarchical approach to leadership and instead reflect the diversity of leadership that best reflects the membership?

Mobilization. The district is currently in Step 2 (mobilization), and the groups are using these reports to dive deeper into the themes and unpack more specifically what needs to be changed as well as the vision moving forward. During the current work in the mobilization stage, the district is putting the spotlight on who has been at the table, who needs to be at the table, and what can be done to create a safe space where silent voices are heard (Wang, 2022; Wang & Pollock, 2020). Currently, this change process is vacillating between mobilization and acceleration, but the time taken to do the mobilization with due diligence and equity at the centre will allow for success in the acceleration and institutionalization stages. During the overlap of the mobilization and acceleration stage, the development of a system-wide equity statement was discussed and is now being operationalized. The two departments coming together to make a statement for the entire district will support the next two stages of change and will also give the ownership of vision to the field. While the district has already begun to embark on this change, it is imperative in this work to have ongoing reflection and to deliberately take time out for equity pauses. At the same time, it is important to not fall into the trap of remaining in the pause state (mobilization) and instead continuing to work toward acceleration for the goal of institutionalization (Dugan, 2021; Valdez et al., 2020; Zembylas, 2015). The framing of this OIP is in response to the acceleration stage. If the end goal is to create safe spaces in which historically underrepresented groups can share what they need to feel a sense of belonging with the organizations they interact with, how do we create the safe spaces in which those we serve can do this? The PVPA can use this time for community building with individuals who not only have an interest and background in educational leadership for equity but also spend time modelling it by creating intentional representation within the PVPA group. Leaders with intersectional identities will be centred and supported, and their voices will be amplified

(Cranston & Jean-Paul, 2021; Lopez, 2020). Diverse voices and perspectives are value added in unlearning, learning, and relearning, and this step of the change process will help answer what is needed to engage in this work with the following underlying guiding question: Will working collectively with like-minded principals and vice-principals build the psychologically safe environments needed to engage in these conversations?

Acceleration. The original engagement that Urban Matters (2021) undertook showed a recurring theme to address: staff, students, and families do not feel they belong or have purpose within the school system. Investigating and addressing why this aligns with SDT and constructive-developmental theory, both of which are implicit in an authentic leadership style, this OIP seeks to support administrators in deconstructing and reconstructing educational leadership for the purpose of building communities of belonging; accordingly, it leans on a grassroots design (Borregard, 2019; Kamanda et al., 2013; Stremersch et al., 2022). The hope is to address the gap between what the community needs to feel a sense of belonging and purpose and to arrive at a means of creating environments that foster these feelings. To create spaces and places of belonging, being authentic in accessing data through relationships and interpreting them without bias will allow for the fruition of solutions that will best address this gap.

Acceleration is the opportunity to share big and small wins, which will help build momentum (Deszca et al., 2020). Regular communication strategies will be shared in Chapter 3 of this OIP, but the goal for this stage is to build the elementary leaders' collective responsibility and invite the secondary leaders to participate. The idea is to continue reaching out to key interested people with the purpose of building community. The same guiding question underpins this stage of the process: How can principals and vice-principals leverage their own associations to overcome the

hierarchical approach to leadership and instead reflect the diversity of leadership that best reflects the membership?

Institutionalization. The following guiding question underpins this section: What impact, if any, will there be from having an authentic connection between leadership at the district level and leadership at the school level? Currently, the district team is drafting the next stages of its anti-racism and non-discrimination strategic plan, which it is developing to operationalize the goals that were put forward by the anti-racism and non-discrimination advisory committee (AJSB, 2022). The operationalization would support the movement from acceleration to institutionalization. At the micro and meso levels, the robust learning opportunities for like-minded educational leaders to unlearn, learn, relearn, and co-learn educational leadership could happen concurrently (Cranston & Jean-Paul, 2021; Leask et al., 2019). The desired state would be the alignment of locally developed, equity-minded leadership traits and/or process that support the acceleration of the strategic plan goals and are developed for school leaders by school leaders. According to Lamoureux (2021), “Our schools must become places of healing. If school was used as a weapon against children in the past, it is possible that the same institution can be a place of healing. This is the kind of healing where every child can walk through the front doors and experience safety no matter what is happening outside or at home. This way schools become places of healing and empowerment” (para. 5). The symbiosis of the macro, meso, and micro gives a push toward this transformation, as it is addressed on multiple levels.

Organizational Change Readiness

In thinking about readiness, the first place to reflect is on the considerations for change. Cawsey et al. (2016) suggested becoming clear on four main questions: What is the need for this

change and the dimensions that underpin it? Have the perspectives of the internal and external stakeholders been considered, and what are they? Can a collaborative solution be developed even in the context of differing perspectives? Has a messaging and communication plan been co-developed to encourage and support readiness and willingness for change? 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.

Tasks

Tasks looks at what needs to be done and how it will get done. The task stemming from this OIP is the co-creation of communities of belonging and purpose, and as mentioned earlier, school-based leaders are key to building these inclusive environments. Ascertaining readiness, in this case referred to as "interest," is based on data already collected through an opportunity for principals and vice-principals to incorporate anti-racism/equity-focused goals into their PGPs last year. Outside facilitators who work in other districts and identify as racialized leaders came to work alongside school-based administrators who may have been undertaking this learning for the first time. It was voluntary, and the hope was that approximately 10 administrators would sign up; however, approximately 60 people participated in all three sessions, and the sessions went from creating a PGP goal to how to incorporate that learning into a school growth plan goal.

Formal Organization

At the macro level, two ministry committees that formulated *Racial Equity Together*, British Columbia's anti-racism action plan, conducted a district-wide engagement on anti-racism and non-discrimination with the help of a neutral third party from the district level. A neutral

third party was hired with the hope that the lack of trust in the system would be mitigated by having an outside organization lead the process. The data from this was disaggregated to reflect who in fact shared their voices. It is noted that the need for an equity pause to unpack the data is a more transparent way of moving forward.

Informal Organization

Research has shown that psychological safety is a precursor to adaptive, innovative performance at the individual, team, and organization levels (Ashauer & Macan, 2013; Edmondson, 2018). To begin the process of organizational and individual identity development, it is imperative that an assessment of current psychological safety parameters is undertaken; therefore, an assessment tool that uncovers the current level of safety felt by the employees. Guarding Minds at Work (2016) is a Canadian online tool that was established in 2007 and has been updated as recently as 2020. This tool can be used to effectively assess and address the psychosocial factors known to have an impact on organizational health, the health of individual employees, and the financial bottom line. The psychosocial factors outlined in the tool are based on grounded theory (Chun Tie et al., 2019; Noble & Mitchell, 2016), which uses real-world data to unpack current phenomena. This approach also aligns well with the report sanctioned by British Columbia's Office of the Human Rights Commissioner (2020), which unpacks the use of the grandmother perspective in data collection.

People

The data received through the anti-racism and non-discrimination engagement primarily featured voices of cisgendered, heterosexual women who identified as White (AJSB, 2019), while the voices of Indigenous and Black people only accounted for 3% to 5% of total respondents (AJSB, 2019). Going back to Freire & Ramos (1970) and Desjarlais (personal

communication, February 22, 2021) and the importance of empowerment of the individual, we must be mindful that equity work is not done to the marginalized by top-down experts, as that could be taken as another form of oppression. This brings me back to the question Capper (2019) posed and her premise that there are no studies that examine the evolution of personal identity development alongside an organization's identity development toward social justice. I concur with her notion that the development of educational leadership through the lens of identity would support the development of an organization's social justice identity, but to do this, the parameters for open discussion must be developed. As the district data showed a lack of representation for equity-deserving groups, another facilitator of change must be developing trust, and a precursor to trust is safety.

Solutions to the PoP

In summary, Nadler and Tushman's congruence model (1980) recognized leadership as the most impactful and readily influential. The formal organization's structures have rolled out strategic plans but have not yet operationalized them. As such, focusing change efforts and potential solutions on school leaders as the key actors of change is relevant and aligns with the ethic of community and grassroots innovation discussed in Chapter 1. The proposed solutions are summarized in Table 2 on page 62 and discussed in detail immediately below.

Proposed Solution 1: Wait and See

In June 2022, the AJSB rolled out the three goals from its anti-racism and non-discrimination strategic plan and its education plan, and earlier this year, the Government of British Columbia (2023) released *Racial Equity Together*, its anti-racism action plan, which outlined six key areas of focus: (a) community voice, (b) removing barriers, (c) raising awareness, (d) collaborative change, (e) capacity building, and (f) school support. As resolving

this PoP is based on capacity building for school support, a proposed solution is to wait and see how the district rolls out the government's plan and how the plan aligns with the district's actions.

There are no required resources to implement this solution at this time, but it should be acknowledged that there are only a few people who oversee the equity work at AJSB. To have high impact in operationalizing these strategic plans, a coordinated development and implementation plan is needed. Therefore, at some point during the rollout process, further specialized staffing may be needed. This budget item may need to be added during the district's upcoming fiscal planning.

While being in alignment with the district's vision is one way of ensuring success (Deszca et al., 2020; Errida & Lofti), there are a few limitations to this solution. In developing the goals, the district incorporated a wide variety of key interested parties as well as representation across equity-deserving groups, but there was no focus on school leaders, who are in the environment closest to students. While the next stages of the strategic plan could incorporate strategies for school leaders, this would involve waiting for the plan to be released and then seeing if concurrent training sessions are part of the rollout plan. We know that schools are not meeting all students' needs now, so the time to start creating environments of belonging is now (Urban Matters, 2021). In addition, this potential solution runs counter to the anti-oppression lens, as it would be a top-down model and maintain the current hierarchical structure, which does not allow opportunities for leaders to work with other leaders in a supportive and accountable community of learners. This leads to the second proposed solution, which is detailed below.

Proposed Solution 2: Master's Tools Dilemma

Having a top-down approach as the genesis for change is remaining within the functionalist paradigm. The term “master’s tools” is often used as a metaphor for conventional theoretical and methodological approaches, and the phrase “dismantle the master’s house” is often used as a metaphor for dismantling intersectional structures and systems of oppression that create and sustain inequity (Aqil et al., 2021; Bowleg, 2021). There are many challenges to dismantling a colonial system that has existed for over 130 years, and the work entails confronting issues, asking challenging questions, and disrupting privilege. It is important to include the voices of those for which the system needs to transform. In my director role, I heard the lived experiences of staff, students, and families and noticed a pattern of discontent from those in equity-deserving groups. Those who approached me told me they did so because they trusted me, as I represented a group they were part of (female, racialized, etc.). While I could understand their frustration and wanted to help, there was no outlet for these concerns that they felt safe with. A proposed solution is creating roles within each stakeholder group that represents equity-deserving groups (liaison). In my current role as principal, I can leverage my local and provincial organizations to advocate for a diversity, equity, and inclusion role on their executive. This position would serve as a conduit for street data and a basis for change. The position could also be the champion for leading the unlearning, learning, relearning, and co-learning of educational leadership as a proposed solution to this PoP.

As this could also be considered a grassroots initiative, no particular resources would be needed for this solution at the outset. That said, as each stakeholder group would put into place a liaison for its group, supports such as paid programming or professional development for the liaison, support for the liaison to use work hours to support other group members, and emotional

support as needed would require buy-in from the SMT. Therefore, financial resources and sound psychological safety emerge as key considerations within this solution.

The limitation to this solution is that while we want to include, centre, and amplify voices, we also want to make sure the impact is not further burdening groups that have been historically marginalized (Aqil et al., 2021; Bowleg, 2021). In addition, as with Proposed Solution 1, this would take time and buy-in. The PVPA itself is a hierarchy, so a process would be required to create the position and elect someone to fill it. Once elected, the same feelings people have of not trusting the system might permeate the new role, defeating the reason for which it was created. Creating a role in an existing hierarchy could be replicating the same colonial system, which would not be liberating. To truly liberate the system, we want like-minded people to come together with a common interest, which leads to Proposed Solution 3 in which all employees are offered deep learning opportunities in anti-oppression and liberation.

Proposed Solution 3: Equity Leadership as a Professional Competence

For equity work to be done through a lens of collective responsibility, it is necessary to offer opportunities for a deeper learning of anti-oppression. To do this, the work must be highlighted as a professional competence. Much of the anti-oppression work done in the district since September 2020 has leaned heavily on a tripartite framework for equity and justice.

McManimon and Casey (2018) looked at the work through the following lenses:

- Personal: One's own mental terrain
- Local: One's own context
- Structural: Systems that regulate lives and society

An adapted model of this has been shared with school-based administrators and includes guiding questions in each area; the symbiotic nature between the three levels, especially for those

in leadership positions, was emphasized (see Appendices 2 and 3). With the development of critical consciousness at the personal level, leaders will be able to assess their local-level context through this lens and inspire change without having to wait for top-down (structural) change to happen. This also aligns well with the anti-oppression lens. As Northouse (2013) stated, leaders “attempt to raise the consciousness in individuals and to get them to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of others” (p. 280). Leaders would be inspired to do their own learning about topics that affect schools’ and students’ success, such as systemic racism, history, implicit/unconscious bias, and leadership theories. As the leader learns about these topics, their context will take on new meaning, and entry points into local-level change will become clearer. This critical consciousness-based theoretical framework is based on transformative potential. I believe that this transformative leadership approach will be successful, as it offers leaders an opportunity to move at their own pace for their own learning. Jemal (2017) stated succinctly that to achieve “the ultimate goal of incorporating transformative potential, a critical consciousness-based theoretical framework into urban education is threefold: (1) to objectify and address issues of systemic inequity, (2) to produce an informed and civically engaged student body with the capacity to transform individuals, families, communities, institutions, and sociopolitical systems, and (3) to raise the critical consciousness of educators who are responsible for producing the leaders of the future” (p. 15).

To fully implement this solution would require an investment of financial and time resources. A budget would be needed for researching, sourcing, and employing someone to support the development of the curriculum/continuum for equity leadership to support the desired future state. In addition, additional financial and time resources would be needed for the

assessment of current leadership skills and abilities and to provide subsequent mentoring and coaching to support movement on the equity continuum.

The limitation of this solution is the difficulty of finding like-minded individuals with whom to do this work; further, this solution still puts the onus on the leader to create the solutions and engage in a learning curve without a roadmap, and it is imperative that there is a champion who understands and can engage and lead the work.

Table 2

Benefits and Limitations of Proposed Solutions

Proposed solution	Actors involved	Benefits and limitations
Wait and see	SMT, ministry	While a benefit could be potential alignment of ministry, district, and schools, the hierarchical approach does not align with the grassroots design and ethic of community needed for true communities of belonging and purpose as set by this OIP.
Master's tools dilemma	Leads from each stakeholder group	While there would be a delegated person for each stakeholder group who would provide a sense of psychological safety and guidance, the work would be placed on one person who could be designated by the same hierarchical process this OIP is looking to overcome.
Equity leadership as a professional competence	SMT, district, principal, director of instruction	A benefit is having a cohesive and comprehensive curriculum/continuum to give leaders the same language, vantage point, and direction. The limitation of this solution is that it is still a top-down/specialist structure and does not have the lens of co-creation, which is imperative to addressing this PoP.

Note. SMT = senior management team; OIP = organizational improvement plan; PoP = problem of practice.

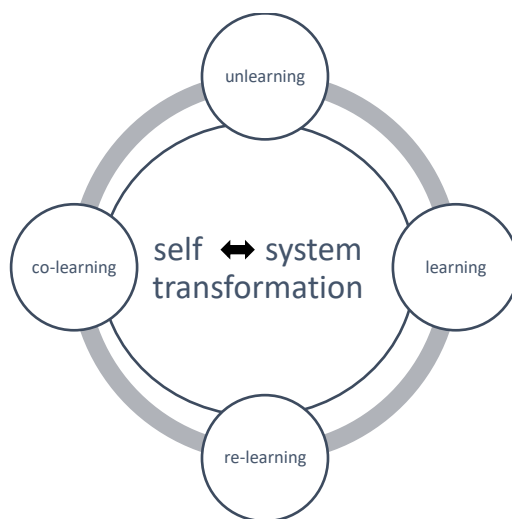
Selected Solution: Co-Create a Community of Belonging for Liberatory Conversations

The selected solution is a hybrid of Proposed Solutions 1 and 3 as outlined in Figure 4 (see below). The elements from Proposed Solution 1 are the connection to the district and alignment with the district's education and anti-racism and non-discrimination plan by focusing on communities of belonging. As mentioned earlier, alignment with the district vision is an

indicator of success, and creating a community of belonging in support of district goals aligns well with discreet activism (Ryan, 2016; Ryan & Tuters, 2017). As educational leadership is steeped in neocolonial and functionalist paradigms, administrative training traditionally focuses on management skills, with little attention to equity, oppression, or liberation (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Fallon & Paquette, 2013). While the proposal does not wait for information from the district and ministry, the early alignment with district goals will be a foundation for success. Leaders will be part of a community of belonging of like-minded learners while deconstructing and reconstructing educational leadership (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Selected Solution



School leaders are the impetus for change in schools; therefore, without school leaders, no change can be successfully implemented. Focusing on school leaders is where the power to change systems lies. That said, in the current hierarchy, leaders are not seen as agents of change and are in fact taught about their fiduciary role. This solution allows for robust professional learning opportunities that enable school leaders to develop their self-transforming mind and

critically reflect on how the system impacts others in unequal ways (Green, 2017; Lewin, 2019). In addition, the concept of mutuality can be explored throughout the process as we assess ourselves as individuals in the system, including our interactions with it. In so doing, we learn both how we are being transformed and how we are transforming (Capper, 2019; Mertens, 2017).

The public school system has many different leadership structures. There is the system, but each school also has a leadership structure; therefore, principals and vice-principals are in the prime positions of creating a culture and climate of belonging at their schools and motivating and inspiring staff to do the same (Borregard, 2019; Furman, 2004). In a low-bureaucracy model, the transformational leadership behaviour of direct supervisors is a crucial condition for employee support of this work (Voet, 2014). This must be done at the local level through a human-centred design that entails autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and positive relationships (Anitha, 2020; Greenhalgh, 2016). This solution proposes bringing together school-based administrators to unlearn, learn, and relearn educational leadership with like-minded colleagues in a community of belonging in support of the district goal of belonging. The connection between the organization and the people that it serves needs deep examination, and the way to start is with deep examination of ourselves. The goal is seeking a self-transformative mind because it is in this place that we can see how the system and individual interact for transformational change (Capper, 2019; Lewin et al., 2019; Mertens, 2017).

Ethics and Grassroots Innovation

The selected solution to this PoP aligns with grassroots innovation, which is the voluntary generation and development of innovations by any member of an organization, regardless of

their position or seniority (Borregard, 2019; Kamanda et al., 2013; Stremerach et al., 2022). From an organizational perspective, grassroots movements gain their power not from an appointed role or authoritative position in a hierarchy but from a shared moral imperative and social capital in which the organization and stakeholders (key interested parties) must work collaboratively to cultivate a sense of belonging and purpose within the community (Frick & Frick, 2010; Northouse, 2013). As outlined in Chapter 1, belonging as a way of being is central to this OIP, and the desired state is the co-creation of communities of belonging and purpose. Weaving ethics directly into participatory decision-making (or grassroots innovation) can help traverse this change, and therefore, the role grassroots leaders play in affecting change must come via ethical decision-making models (Furman, 2004; Starratt, 2003).

The “ethical leaders, in this professional context, are those who are justly. They are viewed as caring, honest, and principled persons who make balanced decisions and who communicate the importance of ethics and ethical behaviour to their followers” (Ehrich et al., 2015, p. 199). The most familiar framework when considering ethics in education is Starratt’s (2003) tripartite model, which entails three interconnected forms of ethics: one of care, one of justice, and one of critique. Therefore, instead of choosing a particular ethic, they should complement and enrich one another (Ehrich et al., 2013; Starratt, 2003). Shapiro and Stefkovech (2001) expanded on this to include the ethic of professionalism, claiming that educators must keep students at the centre of ethical decision-making processes.

Furman (2004) took this one step further to include the ethic of community at the core, which aligns with the grassroots approach of the selected solution to this PoP. This is outlined in Appendix B. “In its simplest terms, an ethic of community means that administrators, teachers, school staffs, students, parents, and other community members interested in schools commit to

the processes of community” (p. 221), which aligns with the concept and principles of grassroots innovation. In addition, the use of this ethical paradigm is consistent with the chosen leadership approaches, which are focused on serving the needs of the team as a servant leader and an authentic leader who models the continuous spiral of unlearning, learning, and relearning toward a self-transforming mind with community.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 reviewed leadership approaches to addressing the PoP. As this OIP is grounded in community, the authentic and servant leadership approaches are key to moving change forward. The need for change came from a reactionary response to an event, which since that time, has become shown the need for an anticipatory approach. Lewin’s stage theory (Lewin et al., 2019; and Tams and Gentile’s (2019) giving voice to values were unpacked in Chapter 2 alongside Deszca et al.’s (2020) change path model to determine which would align best. As the change path model is predicated on organization-level change and combines process and prescription, it aligns with the transformational and anticipatory type of proposed change. This chapter concluded with the alignment between the selected solution based in grassroots innovation and the alignment with an ethical paradigm. Chapter 3 details how the proposed change will be implemented, monitored and evaluated, and communicated.

Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication

The focus of this chapter is the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the solution outlined in Chapter 2: developing the equity fluency of school-based leaders for the purpose of building communities of belonging. As the solution is predicated on the promise of middle managers (principals and vice-principals), the implementation plan requires a bottom-up methodology (Deszca et al., 2020; Hargreaves & Denis, 2019). The communication plan follows this same route by starting with school-based leaders and moving up and down the hierarchy. After exploring these elements, this chapter concludes with considerations for next steps.

Resolving the PoP represents an attempt to address inequity by creating communities of belonging; the invisible driver known as colonization must be acknowledged. Colonization is the birthplace of all forms of oppression and serves as a historical link to many isms, such as racism, ableism, and mentalism, which are invisible drivers that serve to keep populations marginalized. As Young (1990) stated, “There is a growing underclass of people permanently confined to lives of social marginality, most of whom are racially marked. . . . Marginalization is perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression” (p. 53). If certain populations continue to be underserved, and systems are created to keep them as such, the invisible needs to be made visible in the quest for equity, as revealed by the PoP. As stated by Case et al. (2012), “Although discrimination and privilege are divergent outcomes created by each form of systematic, institutionalized oppression, the two are inseparable as codependent structural forces” (p. 4). It is imperative that there is collective understanding of this interplay for the PoP to be successfully resolved.

Aligning the change implementation with organizational purposes is an indicator of success (Deszca et al., 2020; Errida & Lofti, 2013). Therefore, this potential solution aligns with both the Ministry of Education and Child Care’s direction and the district’s new education plan.

The province recently shared *Racial Equity Together*, its new K–12 anti-racism action plan, which recognizes the importance of equity fluency in leaders for the development of welcoming spaces, or spaces of belonging (Ministry of Education and Child Care, 2023). In addition, AJSB has made a public commitment to equity in 2022 by releasing an equity statement, education plan goals, and the anti-racism and non-discrimination plan goals, all of which amplify equity (AJSB, 2022). These were bold and courageous statements that received unanimous support from the board, but since that time, there has been little shared to operationalize them on the ground. Block (2018) argued that without personal transformation, systemic change will have no real impact on institutions; therefore, mobilizing those who will enact these policies and commitments is key.

Key Actors

As the selected solution is grounded in grassroots innovation, the key actors/drivers in this PoP are the school-based leaders in the district. As mentioned earlier, the research report that Grissom et al. (2021) released showed that while the biggest affect for an individual student is the teacher, for the entire school, the effectiveness of the principal is paramount. The data pull of 1 standard deviation increase in principal effectiveness increased typical student achievement by 0.13 standard deviations in math and 0.09 standard deviations in reading; framed another way, if a less effective principal was replaced with an above average principal, it would result in 2.9 months of learning in math and 2.7 months of learning in reading. Resolving the PoP also aligns well with Fullan's (2015) leadership from the middle strategy, as it is a strategy that mobilizes school-based administrators and networks of schools through capacity building, which allows them to become effective partners upward and downward with the goal of greater system performance through coherence, capacity, and commitment. Principals and vice-principals can

set a tone of equity and excellence in their school and leverage both up and down within a hierarchy, making them well-placed to be the key agents for this change.

Grassroots design necessitates that the focus is on the process, rather than product, and relies on emergence throughout that process (Greenhalgh, 2016; Leask et al., 2019). In addition, as the overall desired state is communities of belonging and purpose, it is necessary to take the time to uncover the shared moral imperative and acquire the necessary social capital, which involves working together to cultivate that desired feeling of belonging and purpose. This should not come from an appointed role or particular position in the hierarchy (Frick & Frick, 2010; Northouse, 2013). Therefore, leveraging the local elementary PVPA is how this begins. The process will begin with a call to interested elementary PVPA who want to engage in this process. As I am currently the president-elect of this association, I can use the position to motivate, inspire, encourage, and champion the start of this spiral, and as the circle expands, the incoming leaders will arise through emergence (Leask et al., 2019; Watkins et al., 2018).

Change Implementation Plan

This OIP's vision for change emphasizes the importance of leadership, and school principals are tremendous change agents because they hold the institutional power required to instigate and sustain change in school culture (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Deszca et al., 2020). In embarking on equity work, there is a common trap in the idea that organization-wide training will fix the problem and create behavioural and systemic change (Choudhury, 2015; Dugan, 2021; Lopez, 2020), but short bursts of mandated training can lead to what is being called "recreational anti-racism" and not give leaders the skills needed to navigate and decode topics such as inclusion, equity, justice, and decolonization (Kahn, 2017; Petersen & Chenault, 2023). To develop equity fluency, the same dedication and time are needed as when developing any

new literacy. Research has shown that adults need about 360 hours to develop basic proficiency when learning English as an additional language (Malone et al., 2005) when the drive and desire to learn is inherent. Schools are becoming more heterogenous, and school leaders must be responsive to this diversity for all students to thrive. Riehl (2000) conducted a review and summarized three administrative tasks for becoming successful inclusive leader: (a) fostering new meanings of diversity, (b) promoting inclusive school cultures and instructional programs, and (c) building relationships between schools and communities. She established that discursive practice could support the meaning-making needed to fully understand the work school principals must do to create cultures and climates of belonging. In addition, the selected solution to the PoP is to create a community of belonging to foster liberatory conversations that create opportunities for deconstructive and reconstructive meaning-making (Drago-Severson, 2013; Kegan, 1994).

Deszca et al.'s (2020) change path model has elements that address the evolutionary nature of most organizational change; it also has many predictors of success predicated on organizational-level change and combines process and prescription, as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3

Change Implementation Plan

Change path model	Goal	Activity	Timeline	PDSA cycle
Awakening	Reflect on verifiable phenomenon	Step 1: Sharing of data from the anti-racism and non-discrimination engagement Posting the K–12 anti-racism action plan	Short (April 2023)	Plan
Mobilization	Create a community of belonging (elementary	Step 2: Callout for interested principals and vice-principals to work together	Mid (June 2023)	Do

	P/VP interested in liberatory conversations)			
Acceleration	Share learnings and activities once per month at Flashback Friday meetings Connect with secondary group Align with secondary P/VP	Step 3: Regular meeting timeline established Development of core values and capacities for transformation	Mid (winter 2024)	Study
Institutionalization	Alignment between micro (personal), meso (schools), and macro (district)	Step 4: Development of locally constructed equity leadership standards and sharing with SMT	Long (spring 2024)	Act

Note. PDSA = plan, do, study, act; P/VP = principals/vice principals; SMT = senior management team.

Step 1: Short-Term Goal

Following the change path model, Step 1 is defined as the awakening stage, and it constitutes a deep dive into the internal and external environments of an organization. This step has been completed by AJSB through successful bids in a request-for-proposal processes. The step allowed for a neutral third party to look at factors that were priorities for staff, families, and community members. The disaggregated data and themes arising from them were shared with school-based leaders and were a call to action for many principals and vice-principals to create a professional learning community using *Racial Equity Together* and the district's education plan as foundational documents to seek alignment with the organizational goals. The group will meet regularly and begin with setting accountable space norms and delving into transformation as people and leaders.

Step 2: Mid-Term Goal

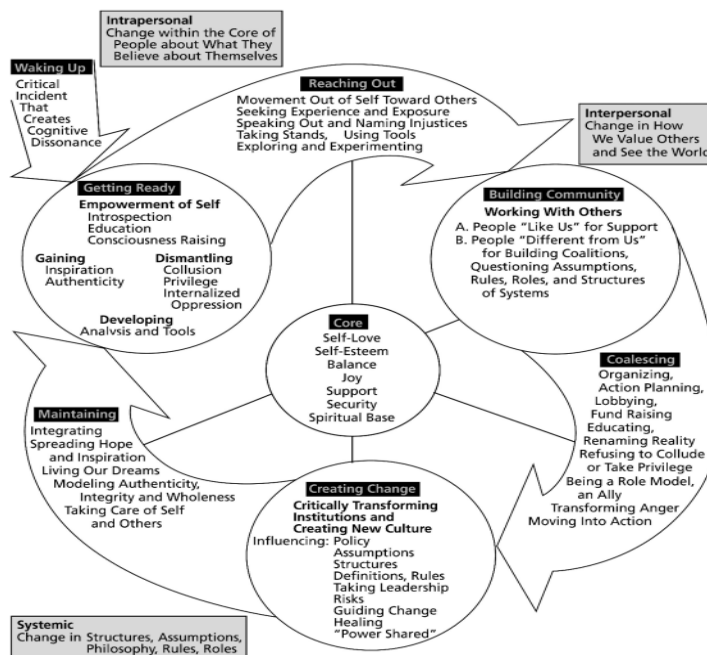
Undertaking equity at a systems level can seem overwhelming and undoable, but the undertaking can be broken down according to questions. Block (2018) suggested that the first question in designing for community is where to start the change, and the answer is that change starts in the room you are in. Therefore, Step 2 of the process is creating regular meeting times and co-designing PGP goals. As mentioned, to understand equity, one must understand inequity and where it stems from, undergoing an ongoing cyclical process of internal and external deconstruction and reconstruction with a professional learning community, which can begin to reveal themes of the potential leadership capacities needed for this work. To embark on a process of liberating the system, we must start with liberation of our own mind, and to do this, discursive dialogue is needed. While the specific activities taken on by the PVPA community of belonging will be co-designed and co-created, there are a few starting places that will be outlined here. To engage in unlearning, learning, and relearning, it is important to first establish psychological safety as well as norms for learning. Interpersonal and intrapersonal work can surface the pedagogy of discomfort (Dugan, 2021; Zembylas, 2015), so it is imperative to engage in a foundation setting. As mentioned earlier, *Guarding Minds at Work* (2016) is a free assessment of psychological safety that the group can begin with. Concurrently, the group can work together to establish norms. While there is not much research on norm setting, there has been a movement away from guaranteed safe spaces to unpacking the idea of brave spaces. Both of those ideas are well intentioned, but given that we are the only experts on our own lived experiences, we are unable to guarantee a safe space, and by doing so, we are setting the group up for failure. Creating a brave space is the next iteration of norm building, but it puts the onus on equity-deserving groups to be “brave” and share their experiences. This could lead to undue emotional

labour and potential burnout, fatigue, and moral distress (Jameton, 2013; Stelmach et al., 2021). Currently, many organizations are framing spaces of accountability with the recognition that how we enter a space is dependent on our lived experience and determines how we interact with it. The invitation to enter a space with that understanding allows for a group to make participatory accountability a reality (Kamanda et al., 2013; Komporozos-Athanasiou et al., 2017).

As part of the assessment process, *Guarding Minds at Work* (2016) shares a report to address the problem spots across the dimensions of psychological safety. During Step 2 of this process, the PVPA community of belonging can work on the mitigating factors and building this accountable space. Once that is established, the next step for the group is to work on unlearning, learning, and relearning educational leadership. A proposed model for this is Harro's cycle of liberation as outlined in Adams (2000; see Figure 5). It starts with a key moment, the waking-up stage, when a critical incident impacts the individual in such a way as to create cognitive dissonance. The individual is motivated to learn more. The model is also based on the core of the individual, which aligns well with the core human needs (Maté & Maté, 2022) and the change path model, as both start with an "a-ha" moment of awakening. During Step 2, the PVPA group will start with intrapersonal work in the recognition of their waking-up moment, and personal learning can be outlined in the transactional document—the PGP—required by the district, which aligns with district priorities in pursuit of liberatory goals, another form of subtle activism (Ryan, 2016; Ryan & Tuters, 2017). As individuals gain a critical understanding of oppression and their role in upholding systems of oppression, they will reach out to others in the pursuit of social change.

Figure 5

Cycle of Liberation



Note. Taken from Bobbie, H. (2000). *The Cycle of Liberation*. In M. Adams, W. J Bulmenfield, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zuniga (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice* (pp. 618–625). Routledge.

Step 3: Mid- and Long-Term Goals

The third step of this OIP is motivating more leaders to join the community of belonging. Members of this group can share highlights once a month at already established Flashback Friday meetings. The personal disruptions that led to personal transformation can serve as inspiration for others to get involved. At this time, members of the elementary association can reach out to the secondary association to explain the process undertaken to grow the community of belonging to include secondary like-minded leaders. This would be considered the reaching out and building community part of Harro's cycle of liberation (2000) in Figure 5. While the long-term goal would be to co-create a transactional document that describes the process of building a community of belonging and purpose to share with the SMT, this would have to

emerge from a member of the group and may change during the community-based participatory process. Table 4 outlines the key performance indicators that will serve as benchmarks to keep the plan on track and assess whether it needs refinement.

Table 4

Key Performance Indicators for Change Implementation Plan

Goal	Key performance indicators
Short term: Create a community of belonging (elementary P/VP interested in developing equity fluency)	Baseline number Establish regular meetings Independent and group goals
Mid-term: Share learnings and activities once a month at Flashback Friday meetings	Increase membership by at least 10%
Mid-term Align with secondary P/VP	Commitment to meet once per term (both groups) Increase membership by at least 10%
Long term	Create locally developed equity leadership standards/process to share with SMT (institutionalization stage from grassroots)

Note. P/VP = principals/vice-principals; SMT = senior management team.

Managing the Change

This solution would be considered a grassroots initiative, as rather than wait for the district to dictate the work, interested learners would be coming together to unpack their personal and professional identities as well as what resources and skills were needed to create this community of belonging and how it could be scaled and spread to other schools. This leads me back to the leadership paradigms that support the work and evolution of the PoP, as mentioned earlier leaders must be responsive to those they lead for initiatives to be successful. To be responsive to those that we serve, it is imperative that we recognize in ourselves where we are in our own personal development. Rooke and Torbert (2005) articulated the seven action archetypes of

adult development theory: (a) opportunist (deeply concerned with their own needs, tries to win any way possible), (b) diplomat (focuses on conforming to the rules and norms of the organization or peers), (c) expert (motivated to gain mastery and expertise, values logic, and respects other experts), (d) achiever (driven by goals, achievement, and meeting the standards they have set for themselves), (e) redefiner (inspired by meaning and purpose, challenges the status quo to find new ways), (f) transformer (generates organizational and personal transformations, sees the system they are in), and (g) alchemist (leads with fluidity, sees the interdependent nature of things, integrates wisdom and a global conscience). The framework of SDT aligns with adult development theory (and offers a path for leaders to catalyze attitudinal changes [autonomy], best practices [competences], and enriched community relationships [relatedness; MacCormack, 2021]) as well as constructive-developmental theory (Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Kegan, 1994). Relating and acknowledging autonomy in conversations with administrators is providing equity-focused support to them as leaders who will hopefully inspire equity-focused leadership in schools that will lead to equity-focused teaching and learning. The benefits of giving principals and vice-principals tools to begin their independent journey into equity-focused leadership will empower leaders to shift perspective and notice which paradigms and values are being centred and which are not. It will allow administrators a chance to learn and unlearn at their independent/personal level, which will energize change at the local level by enabling leaders to work alongside their staff in this journey with confidence.

Possible Implementation Issues

There are many limitations to this plan, but there are also hopeful mitigators. To begin with, the equity-themed professional learning community needs a champion, someone who has already begun their equity literacy development and who could support the facilitation and

growth of the group. As this would be the first group of this kind to create a community of belonging and develop guidelines for leaders by leaders, the emotional and time labour needed to engage in this work must be acknowledged. Engaging in liberatory practices is not a new endeavour in organizations, and in my personal experience, it often starts with motivation and commitment but tends to lose steam, especially as the school year draws to a close and many transactional deadlines must be met. A mitigating aspect of this would be to align the work with PGPs. When the district allows time for PGP work, the PVPA community of belonging can work together. In addition, with this intentional alignment with a district requirement, the group could also use professional development funds for resources, workshops, facilitators, or time release. Another limitation that has been raised is the potential pedagogy of discomfort that could arise when the PVPA community begins its regular meetings. Even when discussions are grounded in accountability and are liberatory in nature, topics relating to oppression can be polarizing. For example, even the use of the term “BIPOC” (Black, Indigenous, people of colour) can elicit an emotional reaction. Some people use it, others feel that it lumps different groups into a monolith, and still others feel it does not center the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action, using “IBPOC” instead. To manage these potential conversations, the group needs an experienced facilitator to do a lot of groundwork in Step 1 by building accountable spaces and addressing psychological safety.

Another potential limitation to this solution is that the group would also need to be prepared to be courageous and bold, as it would be embarking on liberatory conversations without clear direction from the district. When the proposal for bringing together a group of interested leaders was shared, a principal stated that “equity work was district work, and the approach should be one size fits all” (Anonymized personal communication, 2023), to which

another principal responded that “equity is everyone’s work” (Anonymized personal communication, 2023). Therefore, the PVPA community of belonging may not have support from its peers. Members would have to enter the group with the belief that liberatory conversations within a like-minded community will be empowering and inspiring and that sharing personal and professional transformative moments at the Flashback Friday meetings once a month will grow the group and inspire other wake-up calls. Finally, in Step 3, it is expected that during these liberatory conversations, guiding principles, traits, and leadership standards will surface and turn into a foundational document for school leaders by school leaders. The document can then be shared with the SMT. Another potential limitation is that the district may not be supportive of the suggestions or ideas from the PVPA community of belonging. That said, while it may *feel* like a potential limitation, the leading from the middle concept that this OIP is based on has seven guiding principles: (a) being responsive to diversity, (b) being collectively responsible, (c) taking initiative, (d) seeking integration, (e) ensuring transparency, (f) practicing humility, and (g) sharing design (Hargreaves & Denis, 2018). This selected solution aligns with all these principles, as principals and vice-principals will be engaged in liberatory conversations in psychologically safe environments where they can deconstruct and reconstruct educational leadership and share the positive impacts of this work on themselves and their schools, which will empower leaders to continue these conversations and engage in personal and structural transformation.

Communicating the Need for Change Process

In 2020, as per board motion, the district undertook facilitating mandatory anti-racism training for all 9,000 employees (AJSB, 2019). This served as a foundation for understanding, as AJSB took a further bold step and co-created, alongside community, three separate media

releases that showed a firm commitment to fostering equitable life chances for all students: the education plan goals (2021), the anti-racism and non-discrimination plan goals (2022), and an equity statement (2022). All of these were met with unanimous support from the board.

However, after the mandatory training day and release of these documents, there have been very few conversations about how leaders are to unpack them in their local context: the schools. The equity statement commits to creating learning environments in which every child feels a sense of belonging and can pursue multiple pathways that honour their authenticity and will be informed by humility and accountability (2022). Since the equity statement was released, many principals and vice-principals have encountered conversations in their schools that could be unpacked through the lens of equity (e.g., fundraising, pay-for-use hot lunches, and mini-school programs), but they have no clear direction, standards, or tools with which to do the work.

As an example, in a recent survey sent out to the group, the following question was asked: “Have you been able to organize a lunch program at the school through the lens of equity?” There are over 200 members of the group, and not one could answer the question. In fact, some responders mentioned that they had never even recognized that a pay-for-lunch program in schools is inequitable. The gap in communication was apparent, and the lack of an accompanying rollout plan rendered the new equity policies and procedures mute.

Building Awareness

Recognizing this gap, it is imperative that the change communication plan is comprehensive and timely and that it arises from the people leading the work. While principals and vice-principals feel empowered to delve into these conversations at their sites, they do not know where to start. Communication activism research, a relatively new field, can be of help. The premise is that the scholars/leaders work with communities to design and facilitate

collaborative communication interventions that seek to accomplish social justice goals (Breede, 2017; Carragee & Frey, 2016). The field has a foundation in social science and leans heavily on participatory research and cooperative inquiry, which aligns well with the principles of knowledge mobilization (Lavis et al., 2003; Randall, 2020) and grassroots methodology (Kamanda et al., 2013; Stremersch, et al., 2022). It supports this OIP's selected solution well, as the latter aligns with the three of the former's defining characteristics. First, the focus is on social justice, with attention to issues of oppression, power, and structural inequalities. Second, the selected solution highlights a social justice intervention in the grassroots development of a guidebook for the identity development of leaders. Finally, the selected solution emphasizes that partners with collective actors be connected and recognize the importance of uplifting oppressed communities (Carragee & Frey, 2016; Leask et al., 2019). These descriptors align well, as the selected solution aims to uplift the voices of those doing the work, making this ongoing inquiry foundational to district development.

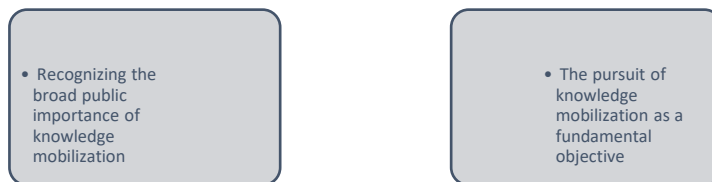
Communicating the Path of Change

This brings me back to the recognition that to do equity work well, equity must be embedded into all aspects of the design, including, most importantly, the dissemination of information. Recently the British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care shared its K–12 anti-racism action plan, which the local elementary principals and vice-principals took as an opportunity to form a professional learning community to discuss the plan and the other equity pieces recently shared by the board. While some colleagues suggested waiting for the district to share next steps, others suggested that it would be more meaningful for the next steps to come from the field. Therefore, rather than waiting for the district to release equity-based leadership skills and standards, some like-minded leaders were seeking forums of

participatory and liberatory conversations. It is important in activism that there is transparency, regularity, and positivity in communication during the design stage and throughout the process. This is a necessity to mobilize groups for social change. Figure 6 outlines the steps of how engagement from the design stage is empowering and aligns with SDT, giving leaders agency in their own learning (Deci & Ryan., 2000; MacCormack et al., 2021).

Figure 6

Imagining the Future of Knowledge Mobilization



Note. P/VP = principal/vice-principal; PVPAs = principal and vice-principal associations; AJSB = Atman Jnana School Board. Adapted from Randall, J. (2020). *Imagining the future of knowledge mobilization: Perspectives from UNESCO chairs.*

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350734817_Imagining_the_future_of_Knowledge_Mobilization_Perspectives_from_UNESCO_Chairs

The leaders within this community of belonging have agency, as participation in the group is voluntary and the learning is based on their own encounter with cognitive dissonance. The shared vulnerability of the moment of cognitive dissonance can engage leaders to move

from their zone of achieved development to the zone of proximal development. It is imperative to engage the participants in the creation of the communication plan and development of the goals of the professional learning community. Table 5 shares a hopeful plan for this work with estimated timelines and modes of communication.

Table 5

Change Implementation Plan, Communication Timeline, and PDSA cycle

Timeline	Goal	Key performance indicators	Communication plan
Short (February 2023) Plan	Create a group of key interested parties of elementary P/VPs interested in developing equity fluency	Baseline number Establish regular meetings Independent and group goals	Share activities, agendas, and schedule of meetings with the bigger P/VPs through already established, weekly written communication
Mid (June 2023) Do and study	Share learnings and activities and ask for feedback	Increase membership by at least 10%	The elementary P/VPs have weekly Friday meetings on teams; once-a-month learnings from the equity-focused PLC will be shared alongside an anonymous form for input for future meetings
Long (June 2024) Act	Align with secondary P/VP Locally developed process/standards	Commitment to meet once per term (both groups); increase membership by at least 10% Create locally developed equity leadership standards to share with SMT (institutionalization stage from grassroots)	Invitation to meet with the secondary P/VPs group working on a similar initiative Share the themes and queries that have come up in both groups to create baseline competencies needed to engage in authentic equity-focused dialogue

Note. PDSA = plan, do, study, act; P/VPs = principals and vice-principals; PLC = professional learning community; SMT = senior management team.

Stakeholders/Key Interested Parties

There are many key interested parties—audiences—acknowledged within this solution and communication plan, and it is necessary to be cognizant of the questions that may arise. The first key interested party is the principals and vice-principals. There are still leaders who feel that equity work should be led by the SMT at the district level, but this idea falls into one of the equity traps that suggests leaders possess all the equity knowledge. The current SMT does not have a champion or subject matter specialist in reconciliation or diversity, equity, and inclusion, and most of its members have not been school-based leaders so do not have the street data (Safir & Dugan, 2021) to recognize the equity-focused issues percolating at schools. Therefore, recognizing the audience and starting this work at the grassroots level with school-based leaders is brave work, and putting a call out for a professional learning community is imperative. In collaborating with this audience, it will be necessary to establish accountability norms that will respect the lived experiences of those who are attending.

The AJSB has two local PVPAs: secondary and elementary. While the elementary administrators are grappling with equity issues, such as pay-for-lunch and choice programs, the secondary group is grappling with graduation ceremonies, mini-schools, graduation rates, and timetabling. While the specific issues may not always be the same, leaders want to know how we can create a framework that allows for equitable chances for all students. Inviting the secondary group into the conversation is key to this work, as it shows a common purpose. Engaging the group by highlighting that although the specific equity issue may be different, the skills and background knowledge needed to engage families, students, and staff will overlap. In addition, the secondary leaders are already cognizant that there is an urgency at secondary schools to

engage in this work, as many staff are teaching courses on social justice, and students are empowered with this knowledge.

Another key interested party in this work is the senior team. While it is not common for a locally based professional learning community to engage in transformative work in the hopes of creating a transactional legacy, it aligns with grassroots movements and discreet activism (Ryan, 2016; Ryan & Tuters, 2017). Before leaving my directorship, I held the equity, anti-racism, and non-discrimination portfolio, and I would field at least three significant queries a day regarding these issues. School-based leaders would reach out, as they felt frozen and scared of making a wrong move. In my current role as principal, I lean heavily on my personal and professional learning journey to unpack and understand equity work, and I therefore feel equipped to engage in these conversations at my school. I think back to my role as director and recognize that I was not fully aware of what was needed as a school-based leader, and the transactional documents I created were not necessarily what was needed. Therefore, using a professional learning community is a discreet form of activism, as it reduces visibility but increases credibility (Ryan, 2016; Ryan & Tuters, 2017). Sharing these transformational learnings in the form of transactional guidelines with the senior team through existing hierarchical structures will support the goals outlined in the education plan.

Change-Process Monitoring and Evaluation

To get to the root of inequity, it is necessary to undress and unpack the macro, political, and economic context of the education system, not only locally but globally. As resolving this PoP is predicated on achieving equity, using an anti-oppression framework provides the opportunity to be critical, reflexive, and transformative at the personal, professional, and

structural levels. The key to an anti-oppression framework is that it can be applied at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels and gives people the tools needed to better understand how power and privilege work within society at all different levels (Aqil et al., 2021; Brown 2012). It can also empower the development of practices that can shift our societal dynamics in ways that decrease and eliminate oppression (Aqil et al., 2021; Brown 2012). A grounding in anti-oppression equips practitioners with tools to recognize the impact of present and historical contexts, foster critical self-reflection, and use it to address systems of oppression.

Tools and Measures for Assessing Change

Critical self-reflection is key, as equity work involves a personal transformation (Block, 2008) with no finish line. Therefore, ongoing monitoring on a non-linear continuum is necessary, and using the spiral model allows multiple entry points into continuous learning (Halbert & Kaser, 2022; Harro, 2000). In undertaking an evaluation process when addressing equity, unpacking and addressing personal transformation is integral. Therefore, as we are unpacking the spiral as leaders, we are also unpacking spirals as humans. Consistent and transparent monitoring and evaluation processes are critical components in driving organizational change (Bhawra, J., 2019; Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Ongoing monitoring is integral to authentically pinpointing movement along a change continuum (Deszca et al., 2020). As this OIP relies heavily on the concept of mutuality and the reciprocal impact of personal and systemic transformation, it is important to take a comprehensive inquiry approach to monitoring by asking questions and being curious. Curiosity is the key to transformation, and liberation is the key to anti-oppression.

Freire and Ramos (1970) conceived of critical consciousness while working with adult labourers in Brazil. Freire realized that inequality is sustained when the people, especially those who are most affected by it, are unable to decode their social conditions. Freire proposed a cycle of critical consciousness development that involved gaining knowledge about the systems and structures that create and sustain inequity (critical analysis), developing a sense of power or capability (sense of agency), and, ultimately, committing to acting against oppressive conditions (critical action). This understanding leads to the following question: Can personal growth/development of critical consciousness be measured using human-designed metrics, and can the change process fit into the chosen plan-do-study-act framework? The framework's process (Taylor et al., 2014) includes four general steps: (a) plan (identify what is not working well with evidence and develop a solution), (b) do (implement the solution while measuring progress), (c) study (analyze progress measures to determine if continued implementation is suitable or if the solution requires adjustment), and (d) act (adopt, abandon, or adapt the solution). While we know that inequity is upheld by the structural conditions that make up many institutions, we do not know how to measure how it is showing up in our educational settings and what we are doing about it. This PoP will need evaluation methods that assess the personal transformation and whether the inner growth is leading to the necessary local (school) and structural (district) change needed.

Resolving this PoP is reliant on key interested principals and vice-principals working together to understand equity and belonging by unpacking their personal location and identity. As each leader's equity fluency develops, the purpose becomes sharing the inequities they see in their schools and working to find common themes they can examine and address together. Using the street data (Safir & Dugan, 2021) gathered through this process, it is hoped that the group

will be able to create a transactional document with guiding principles and leadership qualities needed to engage in these conversations. The reliance on street data is key, as these data refocus the work from the top down to the student up, with classrooms, schools and systems built around students, staff, and families' brilliance, cultural wealth, and intellectual potential (Safir & Dugan, 2021).

Through this collaborative inquiry model, participant observers co-construct the entire research process. This involves building relationships and trust, negotiating roles and boundaries, and learning from colleagues. This inquiry can lead to the professional and personal growth of leaders while also enhancing their ability to be reflective practitioners. Further, its aim is to compel participants to make data-informed decisions that improve practice (Cooper, 2006; Safir & Dugan, 2021). One evaluation metric that can ensure that equity is at the centre of this change effort is keeping critical questions at the core. While it is imperative in this process that the professional learning group co-construct next steps from the design stage, some proposed ideas are shared for the purposes of this paper. Some critical questions that the key interested group can raise to help ensure equity is at the centre of all change efforts and that also make up the baseline of the planning stages of the plan-do-study-act cycle are:

- Have you named the root causes of the inequity in play? If you cannot name it, you cannot measure it, target it, or dismantle it.
- What would be different if you centred the experiences of equity-deserving groups instead of conducting business as usual?
- What would it look like if power in decision-making, planning, implementation, and evaluation was distributed equitably?

- How will you assess whether any groups are unintentionally impacted in a negative way by the policy or practice?

At every meeting of the administrator group, members can share their learnings in addition to the baseline data. This would act as the do and study aspects of the plan-do-study-act cycle. Moving through the formative stages of do and study, the summative piece of act—adopt, abandon, or adapt the solution—will be uncovered. There are many questions that can be asked along the way, and Table 6 and Figure 1 outline some of these.

Table 6

Questions and Methodologies for Evaluation

Context	Independent/personal	Local (school)	Structural (district)
Questions (check, study)	See Appendices C and D	Has the initiative changed the environment through its activities? Did the components produce their intended impacts for beneficiaries?	Has the initiative produced changes to policy or practice that address oppression? Did the infrastructure or supports achieve their objectives for sustainability and equity? (Institutionalization stage)
Methodologies	Self-reflections	Theory of change, surveys	Theory of change, case studies, practitioner data collection
Summative (next steps, act)			

Refinement and Course Corrections

As the monitoring and evaluation plan is based solidly on an inquiry approach, the plan will undergo continuous refinement based on input from the student up (Dugan & Safir, 2021).

As an example, the transactional end goal of this group is to create guiding principles or

leadership qualities that support ongoing conversations about equity and that give teams the fortitude to act. During the meetings, the group could decide that this is not the transactional piece needed, abandon it, and come up with a different plan. Another example could be that the guidelines could be developed and only shared in house, as the psychological safety needed to share this with the senior management team may not be in place (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson, 2018; Wang, 2022). Psychological safety would be necessary within the group as well; therefore, as an adaptation to the solution, the group could decide to split into affinity groups based on identity markers. There are several ways that the initial gathering of data through the monitoring stage could be used to address the next steps in the ongoing process of transformation at the personal, local, and structural levels.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

During the process of completing this OIP, the PoP that the plan is seeking to address has changed many times, as has my job. As a person who had been coyly nicknamed “Dependable Deena the Rule Follower,” I was aware that since I accepted the anti-racism and non-discrimination portfolio over 3 years ago, it was the first time I had felt so disconnected from the organization that I served, which was leading to indicators of moral distress (Jameton, 2013; Stelmach et al., 2021) and symptoms of burnout (Arvidsson et al., 2019; Turhan et al., 2022). The selected solution speaks to ongoing self-reflection and the development of a critical consciousness, and I intentionally have done this myself. I noticed that as I embarked on the work in this portfolio, an ongoing personal transformation was occurring simultaneously, and as I developed my critical consciousness, my view of the work that needed to be done and how it needed to be done was changing. While this OIP was written with the ethic of community at the

core some recommendations that could potentially happen concurrently would expediate this change.

District-Wide Assessment of Psychological Safety

When investigating the status quo, it is imperative that psychological safety is in place. As mentioned earlier in the paper, dismantling systems involves disrupting existing power structures, which often invokes a pedagogy of discomfort (Zembylas, 2015). While a proposed action is for the PVPA community of belonging to engage in this assessment, as this is a free resource and cost neutral to the district, it can be spread and scaled as a district-wide initiative. I believe it would give more credence and buy-in to the work the district is trying to undertake, as the tool can assess psychological safety across 13 domains and then provide a summary report, resources, and tools for addressing shortcomings and developing next steps. Assessing psychological safety is a helpful tool in this work, as psychosocial factors also support certain basic human needs, such as those Maté and Maté (2022) outlined. The organization can be seen to have a crucial role in at least protecting and possibly promoting the following:

- dignity and respect for the person (the need for a sense of self-worth, self-esteem, and inclusion);
- security, integrity, and autonomy of the person (the need to feel safe both physically and psychologically); and
- organizational justice (the need to feel that one belongs to a community in which there is respect for due process and fair procedures).

Representation in Hiring

Many organizations that are committing to equity are recognizing the need for representation at all levels. While structures such as collective agreements and hiring policies are

in place, there are also data that show that racial matching makes a difference to life chances for students. A recent study examining the school records of more than 100,000 Black elementary students in North Carolina found that having just one Black teacher in Grades 3, 4, or 5 could reduce the drop-out/push-out rate for low-income Black students (Gershenson et al., 2016). The same researchers also found that Black students in high school have a stronger expectation of going to college if they have a Black high school teacher. As mentioned, current systems such as collective agreements, seniority-based hiring, and generalist teachers do not easily lend themselves to representation in hiring. Therefore, organizations can make a commitment to representational hiring by updating recruitment and retention practices that allow for a more inclusive and comfortable interview experience for equity-deserving candidates through strategies such as

- developing interview questions that seek to culture add as opposed to culture fit so candidates feel comfortable bringing their full selves to the table and
- developing a variation on cluster hiring practices to look for synergies among candidates.

These strategies can function alongside the current work of modernizing collective agreements by overlaying human rights considerations for equity-deserving groups under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982).

Commitment by Senior Teams to Equity Literacy/Fluency Development

As the Ministry of Education and Child Care only recently released *Racial Equity Together*, the anti-oppression work is just beginning. There are many other community-building approaches, such as creating employee resource groups, implementing spaces for affinity groups, or identity-matching mentorship programs, but all of these would need not only the support of

the SMT but also a deep and profound understanding of equity. If the SMT is deeply committed to engaging in liberatory practices, a few other proposed solutions could be undertaken with ease:

- the co-design of yearly training/recommitment to creating spaces of belonging through anti-oppressive practices for school leaders, senior management, and parent advisory committee chairs (this would allow for school teams, family teams, and district teams to all be on the same page);
- empathy exit interview with employees from equity-deserving group(s) who leave the organization (this hopeful practice would encourage growth in the organization to better serve all employees);
- mentorship for leadership for underrepresented groups on senior teams, which could become a budget item at the systems level (people from equity-deserving groups who are interested in leadership roles can be paired with retired leaders to participate in leadership growth); and
- cyclical positioning on teams (as mentioned earlier, there is often a disconnect between the macro, meso, and micro levels of a system. Having left district roles to return to a school, I have first-hand experience in terms of operationalizing policies, procedures, and documents that I created in the school where I currently work. Looking back, I can see what I would do differently. I use this information when asked to present at different boards and audiences. Having all employees on district teams, especially those that report to senior teams, return to schools on a cyclical timeline would allow policies and procedures to have ongoing human-centred design).

All the solutions listed above are predicated on senior leadership teams understanding equity and liberatory design as this is imperative for transformation to begin.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 presented the change path model in conjunction with the plan-do-study-act cycle and the spirals of inquiry. The methodology aligns closely with discreet and communication activism, as it centres the voices of those who will be doing the work of building communities of belonging through the development of equity literacy and fluency. While there are many proposed suggestions to the evaluation, monitoring, and communication plans, it is imperative that the group members are co-constructors of their learning and monitoring plan from the design stage. Within the context of this OIP, communication channels were identified to share milestones and wins with all stakeholders of the organization for transparency (Chen & Reigeluth (2010). This chapter concluded with next steps and future considerations, which include assessing psychological safety, acknowledging and actioning the benefits of representation, and the senior team's making a commitment to the development of equity fluency and literacy.

Narrative Epilogue:

This OIP does not have a conclusion, it is an ongoing spiral of new beginnings.

This OIP emerged from a problem of leaders trying to create communities of belonging within a functionalist paradigm. However, historic events such as the pandemic, the murder of George Floyd, and ongoing ground-penetrating radar work on former sites of residential schools have led to a wake-up call that has seen people unpack their core beliefs. Many leaders are undergoing personal transformation and are recognizing that schools have not modernized to meet the needs of the communities they are meant to serve. To address this concern, this OIP

proposes having interested principals and vice-principals create, participate in, and design a community of belonging to unlearn, learn, relearn, and co-learn educational leadership. In other words, the selected solution to oppression is engaging in a liberatory conversations process. This hopeful approach aspires to build empathy in school-based leaders by engagement in a community of belonging so it can be scaled and spread to their schools.

It is often said that small incremental changes are the easiest way to transform, as you can always revert. Although irreversible, sometimes a more comprehensive change is needed in the form of a metamorphosis. While a butterfly can never go back to being a caterpillar, the metamorphosis allows the caterpillar to grow wings and fly. In “Research as Ceremony,” Wilson (2008) stated that “if your research has not changed you as a person, you have not done it right” (p. 135). As I write these final words, I cannot think of a more fitting quote with which to describe the spiral of inquiry that I embarked on throughout this program. I can now reflect on myself and who I was at the beginning of this journey, and I know that I have applied Wilson’s (2008) synergistic transformative principle in the spirit of mutuality between self and system. I see not just small changes but a metamorphosis that has allowed me to fly alongside those who have also embarked on this journey of liberation.

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Appendix A: Stages of Adult Development

Kegan's stage of adult development	Typical ages	Associated traits
Impulsive mind (first-order consciousness)	2 to 6 years	Idea of durable objects un(der) developed, mystified when others have different opinions, need to be repeatedly reminded of rules
Instrumental mind (second-order consciousness)	6 to 12 years (and some adults)	Tendency to view relationships in utilitarian terms, limited ability to take other's perspectives, seeks out and follows unchanging and universal rules
Socialized mind (third-order consciousness)	Post-teens (and most adults)	Oriented to maintaining affiliation with one's tribe; capable of goal setting, planning, and self-reflection; able to think abstractly and reflect on others' actions
Self-authoring mind (fourth-order consciousness)	Variable (approximately 35% of adults)	Identifies values and aims to contribute meaningfully; able to recognize need for and to nurture affiliations; self-guided, self-evaluative and responsible
Self-transforming mind (fifth-order consciousness)	Variable (less than 1% of adults)	Able to regard multiple ideologies simultaneously, able to think systemically and embrace complexity, attentive to multiple levels (self, collective, systemic)

Note. Adapted from Kegan, R. (1994). *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*.

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Appendix B: Furman's Ethical Framework Centered in the Ethic of Community

Note. From Furman, G. (2004). The ethic of community. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 42(2), 215–235.

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Appendix C: Guiding Thoughts

INDIVIDUAL	INTERDEPENDENT	INSTITUTIONAL
<p>I understand privilege and know where I have it and how I can use it.</p> <p>I am unpacking my own unconscious bias.</p> <p>I often operate outside my comfort zone. I choose to go there. My own discomfort is my indication that I am doing it.</p> <p>I am patient but persistent. I am often frustrated and overwhelmed but recognize that real change takes time.</p> <p>I learn about the difference between cultural sensitivity, cultural awareness, cultural competency, and cultural humility. I strive to have cultural humility.</p> <p>I am curious and recognize that each individual has a story that I may not know.</p>	<p>I think about design interventions.</p> <p>I ask specially focused questions about students not previously served in school.</p> <p>I learn from students; I respond to students. I seek out ways to stay informed and feel the feelings of racialized and marginalized students and how they experience school.</p> <p>I learn from students.</p> <p>I facilitate partnerships that serve the students in the community.</p> <p>I identify counteracting bias and stereotyping in learning materials and use them in our programming and interventions.</p> <p>I check that all students are reflected in my practice. I ask who is at the table but also who is not, and I get them there.</p>	<p>I identify racial inequities and disparities.</p> <p>I learn about systemic racism.</p> <p>I look at the systems within my context.</p> <p>I ask how the policies either help or harm marginalized/racialized students.</p> <p>I identify appropriate placements, assessment procedures, practices, and systems.</p> <p>I work collaboratively to continually improve the practices within my context.</p>

I am curious and recognize that everyone has a story that I may not know.

Appendix D: Guiding Questions

INDIVIDUAL	INTERPERSONAL	INSTITUTIONAL
<p>Can I define race, racism, anti-racism, and intersectionality?</p> <p>Do I continue to learn and unlearn about race, racism, and anti-racism?</p> <p>Can I identify my own privilege?</p> <p>Do I use my privilege to lift others up?</p> <p>Do I unpack my own unconscious bias?</p> <p>How often do I choose to operate outside of my comfort zone?</p> <p>Do I exercise patience with myself and others when working toward change?</p> <p>How often do I speak or act in ways that demonstrate cultural humility?</p>	<p>How often do I ask focused questions about students who are underserved in school?</p> <p>Have I used empathy to guide my interactions with my racialized students?</p> <p>What does it mean to belong?</p> <p>What partnerships am I building to strengthen my teaching practice?</p> <p>How often do I intervene when resources and programming present a single story or bias?</p> <p>Do I ensure that the identities of my students are positively reflected in my practice?</p>	<p>Do I take the time to learn about systemic racism and how it is manifested in my environment?</p> <p>Do I take steps to correct oppressive systems at work in my various contexts, even if they are small steps?</p> <p>Do I consider who the policies are uplifting and who they are oppressing? When I do, what do I do?</p> <p>What lens do I apply when using and creating assessments, procedures, practices, and systems?</p> <p>Who can I learn from in my work environment? Have I reached out to this person?</p>

MY COMMITMENT TO BEGIN THE WORK:

Individual: How often do I lead with curiosity when I am interacting with others?

Local: What is one way I can change my practice to better serve those with whom I work?