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Cultivating Compassion: School Discipline Through a Lens of Equity, Wellbeing, and Decolonization

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Abstract

Punitive and exclusionary discipline practices cause harm to elementary aged students weakening their connection to school. Such practices are reactive in nature and fail to understand the needs of students who demonstrate challenging behaviour. This organizational improvement plan provides a framework to reimagine school discipline through a lens of equity, wellbeing, and decolonization. It is an invitation to look under the surface to better understand students who struggle with behaviour in elementary classrooms. The school discussed is a large, suburban public school in British Columbia serving students in kindergarten through to grade seven. A conceptual change model, the transformative wheel, is applied to the problem of practice blending the work of transformative learning theory, compassionate systems leadership, and Indigenous ways of knowing. The change model and suggested strategies align with the BC Teaching Standards and BC Mental Health in Schools Strategy. Three solutions are presented, each built around the development of a school-based learning team or professional learning community and an established vision for change. The solutions include building professional capacity, embracing Indigenous wisdom, and recognizing systemic inequities to improve practice. The chosen solution blends professional development and Indigenous knowledge to create a community of care built on the premise that all children belong, and that school communities benefit when students with challenging behaviour are wrapped in love and support and pulled closer rather than pushed away.

Keywords: School discipline, transformative learning theory, compassionate systems, student behaviour, equity, decolonization

Executive Summary

Adelaide Elementary is a large elementary school, located in a suburban community of British Columbia. The needs of the school community have shifted significantly in recent years, with a greater number of students facing adverse childhood experiences such as abuse, neglect, or family breakdown. Surveys conducted through the University of British Columbia in kindergarten, grades four, and seven indicate that approximately 30% of students are considered vulnerable based on two or more risk factors that impact their wellbeing (Human Early Learning Partnership [HELP], 2021a, 2021b). These needs have been intensified by the COVID-19 global pandemic which has placed emotional stress on the community, and significantly impacted the structures and freedoms of elementary school life.

The staff at Adelaide Elementary are thoughtful, caring, and compassionate, though they are feeling overwhelmed by the spike in challenging student behaviour. It is not uncommon for teachers to have multiple students who struggle to self-regulate and engage in behaviour that can disrupt learning or cause room evacuations (SD, 2022a). While staff teach with good intentions, the approaches used to support children with challenging behaviour are fragmented. Staff respond with strategies ranging from punishment to compassion. Approaches are influenced by personal biases, varying levels of knowledge related to student behaviour, and outdated beliefs that punishment or exclusion are necessary steps in school discipline (Goodman, 2017).

The problem of practice explored in this organizational improvement plan is the use of punitive and exclusionary discipline that harms children, especially those at the margins. Punitive and exclusionary practices are built on a colonial model that favours some and shames others (Styres, 2017). Greene (2005) believes that children who misbehave are the most misunderstood children in the school system. A shift in thinking is needed to see challenging

behaviour as a stress response rather than non-compliance (Delahooke, 2019). When educators recognize that children do well when they can, they are more likely to wrap children in support rather than punish them (Greene, 2005). Punishment and exclusion weaken the connection between students and school, and lead to a long list of negative consequences including reduced graduation rates, increased connections with the criminal justice system, unemployment, and a negative impact to physical and mental wellbeing (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2017; Nelson & Lind, 2015; Tanase, 2021). Additionally, schools in Canada fail to recognize inequities in school discipline as Black students and Indigenous students are three to four times more likely to be suspended from school (Sanders, 2022), and students with learning disabilities are two times more likely to be suspended (Sullivan et al., 2014). Research related to understanding student behaviour has exploded in the last decade, yet a gap exists between theory and practice as many teachers completed their professional training before these advances in neuroscience, social emotional learning and trauma-based practice occurred (Greene, 2016). Hope exists, as research indicates that educators who are trained in these areas not only see a reduction of challenging student behaviour in their classrooms, but they also report feeling less stressed (Martinez, 2016). Schonert-Reichl (2017) confirmed that students' and teachers' stress levels are positively correlated, and improved practice can reduce cortisol levels in both students and staff.

To address the problem of practice, a conceptual change model has been developed called the transformative wheel of change. This 12-step model is built around the spokes of a Red River Métis cart symbolizing four core values: courage, collaboration, creativity, and connection. The model integrates compassionate systems leadership, transformative learning theory and Indigenous ways of knowing. A visual of this model is provided in Figure 3. The model is used in alignment with the existing learning team model at Adelaide Elementary, that allows

educators to apply for funding in September, create a vision for change, act, and report out at year end to share learning in a broader context within the Wahkohtowin School District.

Three potential solutions are explored to address the problem of practice. The first solution addresses the knowledge gap by focussing on building professional capacity. With this solution, the school-based learning team would meet regularly, invite educators to participate in workshops, and would share out to the school community through staff meeting presentations, parent information sessions, and available communication channels such as school newsletters or weekly emails. The second solution shifts perspectives and looks to Indigenous ways of knowing to understand student behaviour. Indigenous cultures believe every child has unique strengths and that communities have a collective responsibility to take care of all children, built on foundations of equity and inclusion (Battiste, 2010). They model restorative approaches to work towards healing and repairing relationships after harm is done (Brokenleg, 2015). This solution aligns with changes to the BC teaching standards that now require all teachers to embed Indigenous pedagogy within their practice (BC Teachers' Council, 2019). The third solution explores the deeply embedded systemic inequities that exist in elementary school discipline. While this solution is the most transformational of the three, it may be best implemented in future years after the first two solutions are implemented, and awareness of inequities expands.

The chosen solution is a blend of solution one and two, weaving together Indigenous wisdom with professional development. The transformative wheel of change will guide this work to expose inequities, collaborate with staff, students, and families, amplify student voice, listen deeply, create new practices, and share successes. This organizational improvement plan outlines the path forward for implementing such change, cultivating compassionate and reimagining school discipline through a lens of equity, wellbeing, and decolonization.

Land Acknowledgement

I gratefully acknowledge that I live, learn, and play on the shared, traditional, and unceded territories of the Kwantlen First Nation and the Katzie First Nation. I am of Métis heritage on my mother's side. My great-great-grandmother, Adelaide, beaded beautiful bags for the children in her community, which are now on display at the Glenbow Museum in Manitoba. She comes from the last generation of our family able to freely celebrate our Métis culture. To honour her, and her love for children, I have used the pseudonym 'Adelaide Elementary' throughout this organizational improvement plan. As I wrote, I thought of all my Indigenous ancestors whose voices were silenced. I thought of my mom and her siblings who were told to hide their Indigenous identity. It is my hope that this work honours their voices and recognizes the solutions and wisdom that rest in Indigenous knowledge. May we share our stories and walk forward together. Wahkohtowin.

Personal Acknowledgements

Melinda Gates once said that the strength of a community can be measured by the way it treats its most marginalized citizens. Likewise, I believe the strength of a school can be measured by how it treats its most marginalized students. When we lean in, and listen with curiosity rather than judgment, we can learn from those whose needs we fail to meet. As an educator, I am grateful to my students who have trusted me with their stories. Their courage and vulnerability have helped me grow, and motivated me to engage in this work, attempting to lead system change by reimagining school discipline.

When this journey began in 2020, our cohort was told that we would need to make significant sacrifices, forgoing social commitments with friends and family so that we could meet the demands of a doctoral program. In a strange twist of fate, the world came alongside, aligning a global pandemic with our three-year journey. All social events were postposed, granting us time to read, write, and learn. We graduate as the world re-opens and returns to a new normal. I am grateful to have spent these years learning with a cohort of talented educators, especially my 'Square Squad' – Kristen, Paige, and Shendah. Through laughter and tears, we made it. Thank you to our outstanding professors for their leadership, especially Dr. Erin Keith and Dr. Katie Maxwell whose guidance and gentle nudges gave me the creative freedom to find my voice and align my writing with my authentic self.

Finally, I am grateful for my circle of support, including my school community, friends, and family. To my sons Jaden and Cole, thank you for your patience and humour. To my husband Shawn, I could not have done this without you –thank you for your love, encouragement, patience, tea deliveries, and constant reminders to hit file—save.

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List of Acronyms

BC	British Columbia
CASEL	Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
CPED	Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate
CSL	Compassionate Systems Leadership
EDI	Early Development Instrument
FPPL	First Peoples' Principles of Learning
HELP	Human Early Learning Partnership
KMb	Knowledge Mobilization
MDI	Middle Years Development Instrument
MHiSS	Mental Health in Schools Strategy
OIP	Organizational Improvement Plan
PoP	Problem of Practice
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
SD	School Document
SDD	School District Document
TLT	Transformative Learning Theory
WSD	Wahkohtowin School District

Glossary of Terms

Educators: all staff members working directly with students including teachers, education assistants, school counsellors, youth workers and school leaders.

Marginalized students: students who face systemic inequities based on their identity or those who are denied opportunities theoretically available to all students (Aguilar, 2020). Student may be marginalized based on many factors including poverty, race, ancestry, disabilities, or family structures (Gehl, 2022).

Opportunity gap: the difference in resources and opportunities afforded to mainstream students in comparison to the resources and opportunities afforded to marginalized students (Aguilar, 2020).

Relational discipline: Discipline that strengthens relationships, repairs harm, and embeds Indigenous ways of knowing. Relational discipline is not punitive or exclusionary and incorporates an understanding of behaviour research and effective practices (Keels, 2021).

Underserved students: students from marginalized groups who have been historically underserved in schools. Aguilar (2020) suggests replacing the label *at-risk* with the label 'underserved' as this shifts responsibility to the oppressive system rather than blaming individuals.

Vulnerable students: students who score low on two or more risk factors that impact their wellbeing using the Early Years Development Index and Middle Years Development Index (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2021a).

Wahkohtowin: a word of Cree origin that reflects the aspirations of this OIP: kinship, interconnectedness, community, relationship, and connection (Boysis, 2019). Wahkohtowin is used as a pseudonym to protect the identity of the school district discussed in this OIP.

Chapter 1: Reimagining School Discipline

At Adelaide Elementary (a pseudonym), punitive and exclusionary discipline practices are used to correct student behaviour. While good intentioned, these strategies do more harm than good as they are based on a colonial model that assigns blame and shame, negatively impacting the wellbeing of students (Desautels, 2020). Marginalized students who face social injustices are disproportionally subjected to punitive and exclusionary practices (Salone & Abdulle, 2015; Shields, 2018; Stanforth & Rose, 2018). These approaches leave students yearning for wholeness and belonging as the assigned consequences of punishment or exclusion work against students' natural desire to connect (Stein et al., 2020). Advancements in neuroscience dispute the outdated assumption that punishment is effective (Desautels, 2020). Despite this, a gap exists between research and practice. This organizational improvement plan (OIP) will outline how the staff at Adelaide Elementary can reimagine school discipline through a lens of equity, wellbeing, and decolonization. Chapter one will ground the problem of practice within the local context, describe the interwoven personal and organizational leadership approaches, and set a vision for change inspired by hope for an equitable future.

Positionality and Lens Statement

Personal Leadership Position

A leader's positionality statement provides insight into how they see the world. Grain (2022) describes positionality as an explicit recognition of identity, drawing attention to privileges or barriers one faces and providing a glimpse into how one moves in the world. Crenshaw (2018) uses the term *intersectionality* to describe the overlapping social categories that make each individual unique. In this section I will outline my intersectionality, and how I walk in this world as school leader, social justice advocate, and woman of Métis ancestry.

Indigenous Ancestry

As a Métis woman, I lean into Indigenous leadership to guide my practice. Indigenous leadership focuses on connections, harmony, and serving the greater good (Julien et al., 2010). Indigenous pedagogy reminds leaders that learning is holistic and that for children to flourish, their physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional needs must be tended to (Katz & Lamoreux, 2018). While I am a citizen of the Métis Nation of BC, my ancestry was disguised during my childhood. My grandparents pretended to be Italian to protect their children from racism. I walk in both worlds, raised in the dominant white class while actively reclaiming Métis knowledge. My work towards decolonization is both professional and personal as I seek transformative change in schools while simultaneously unlearning and learning my family's personal story.

Critical Worldview

My leadership perspective stems from a critical worldview seeking equitable learning environments for students at the margins. The critical paradigm calls for action, believing there is hope for improved social conditions (Alvesson & Deetz, 2006). As Capper (2019) notes, those influenced by critical epistemologies feel a divine responsibility to strive for social justice. Leadership for a socially just society requires educators to look critically at their school organization to see how the system can shift to disrupt oppression (Chunoo et al., 2019). When I enrolled in Western University's Doctor of Education program, I wrote the names of five students on a sticky note and placed it next to my computer. Each of these five students have the type of story that keeps educators up at night – stories plagued with external challenges and misunderstandings within our schools. The names of these five children serve as my reminder that I have a responsibility to seek out voices from the margins and dedicate my leadership to improving the school experience. These students are my why.

Social Justice Advocacy

I am deeply influenced by my social justice work in the community listening the stories of unhoused citizens on Vancouver's poorest streets. Thirteen years ago, I planned a one-day fieldtrip with my students. Rather than handing out food or clothing, my students and I decided to give something to the homeless community that they could then give to others. We decided to make blank handmade greeting cards and invite people living on the streets to write to loved ones. Our hope was that at least one person would write a card to friends or family they had lost touch with that we could mail on their behalf. What was meant to be a three-hour trip spiralled into a decade of giving. The project has helped over 800 people living on Vancouver's streets write to family they have lost touch with (McIntyre, 2019). My students and I have coordinated face to face reunions and sent messages of love around the world helping marginalized citizens repair broken relationships (Pontenfract, 2019). We listen deeply, and then, with permission, I write and speak about personal stories to shift the perception of homelessness (Blakeway, 2019).

While I began this work with the intention to serve, I have gained more than I could have imagined by listening to the stories from the margins. This has helped me grow as a transformative leader. Safir and Dugan (2021) confirm that leaders must choose the margins, embrace vulnerability, listen, uncover, reimagine, and act if they hope to pursue equity. The stories from those cast aside to the fringes of society remind me that we all want the same thing – we want to be seen, we want to be loved, and we want to connect. Equity work in schools has the power to change the trajectory for our underserved students. When students are seen, acknowledged, and understood, they will rise (Carrington, 2020). Melinda Gates eloquently states "Every society says the outsiders are the problem, but the outsiders are not the problem. The urge to create the outsiders is the problem" (Gates, 2019, p. 259). This OIP will address the

urge to create outsiders through punishment and exclusion and suggest compassionate solutions that reimagine school discipline through a lens of equity, wellbeing, and decolonization.

Personal Leadership Lens

While I am trained in compassionate systems leadership (CSL) and use the CSL tools within my work, I am inspired by transformative leadership theory (TLT). Both leadership approaches consider all voices, though TLT is rooted in a quest for equity (Shields, 2020). These approaches blend seamlessly providing leadership tools using the head and the heart. Principals in the Wahkohtowin School District (a pseudonym) were invited to attend CSL training with Peter Senge and Mette Boell from the Center for Systems Awareness (Senge et al., 2019). I was fortunate to train in 2020, learning how to use CSL tools to solve leadership challenges. System thinking aligns with the critical paradigm as it considers all voices, is rooted in compassion, and examines the impact of actions on all stakeholders (Marion & Gonzales, 2014).

While the essence of the critical worldview is raising consciousness and awareness, TLT seeks to shift individuals at their core, therefore shifting future behaviour (Wang et al., 2019). Shields (2010) defines TLT as a process that begins with questions of justice and democracy, critiques inequitable practices and offers the promise and hope of an equitable future. Elements of TLT can include a shift in thought, feelings, actions, consciousness, or worldviews (Hoggan, 2016). Freire (1998) eloquently notes, "education is not the ultimate lever for social transformation, but without it, transformation cannot occur" (p. 37). As a school leader, I hope to help others shift their perception and understanding of children with challenging behaviour. I am fortunate that my role as a school principal provides the scope and agency to lead this change.

Role and Responsibilities

As a public-school principal, I am granted the authority to oversee the daily operations of the school (BC School Act, 1996). I plan staff meetings, determine the content of weekly communication, support school growth goals, interact daily with staff, students, and parents, and lead a professional development committee. I oversee management and leadership of the school. These responsibilities, aligned with a warm, collaborative school culture, offer me the agency necessary to lead transformative change. When school leaders apply TLT, they have the potential to create more inclusive and equitable learning environments (Shields, 2010).

As a social justice advocate, it is my responsibility to think critically about whose voices are heard, confront inequities, and consider how I can amplify voices from the margins (Chunoo et al., 2019; Ryan & Tuters, 2016). While the title of principal offers power and agency, it can also serve as a blind spot given the inherent privileges that come with leadership roles (Grain, 2022). I hope to lean into the discomfort that arises from listening to those with differing perspectives. Shields and Gélinas-Proulx (2022) explain that while we can attempt to understand the conditions in which our students live, our own power and privilege creates an implicit bias. A deep commitment to self-reflection and *two-eyed-seeing* will remind me to pause and question if all voices are being heard. Two-eyed-seeing weaves the strengths of Western and Indigenous pedagogy, paying particular attention to the interconnectedness of the community and the impact of decisions (Wright et al., 2019). Indigenous cultures believe the foundation of learning is rooted in inclusion and equity, and that the spirit of each child should be nourished (Battiste, 2010). This dual perspective guides my leadership blending an understanding of the past with hope for an equitable future.

Organizational Context

Adelaide Elementary is a large elementary school in Wahkohtowin, a suburban community in the province of British Columbia. Adelaide Elementary is a public school governed by an elected school board and the BC Ministry of Education.

School Context

Adelaide Elementary is a dual track French Immersion and English school serving students in kindergarten through grade seven. The demographics of the community have shifted significantly in recent years with the school experiencing rapid cultural diversification (School document [SD], 2022c). Over 30 home languages are spoken amongst the student body and children come from a range of family structures. This is a significant shift given that just five years ago the student population was predominately white (SD, 2022c).

The demand on educators to diversify instruction has become increasingly complex. In 2018 only 3% of students had a special education designation (SD, 2018). Today, close to 15% of students attending Adelaide Elementary have a special education designation from the Ministry of BC noting physical, cognitive, or behavioural challenges (SD, 2022d). In addition, the district philosophy of French Immersion programming has shifted to one of inclusion. While this means that all students are invited to learn in two languages, this shift requires French Immersion teachers to diversify their teaching to meet the needs of a broader student population. Tension exists as some French Immersion educators believe students with challenging behaviour would be better served in the English track. This puts pressure on teachers in the English track who are already working with complex classroom compositions.

Each year, the Wahkowtowin School District (WSD) partners with UBC to assess the wellbeing of students using the Early Years Instrument (EDI) and the Middle Years Instrument

(MDI). The EDI and MDI measure students on a variety of factors known to impact wellbeing including school connectedness, relationships with peers and adults, communication skills, physical development, cognitive development, social emotional development, and a sense of belonging (HELP, 2021a). Data from the EDI and MDI indicate that approximately 30% of students at Adelaide Elementary are ranked as vulnerable. To be ranked as vulnerable a student must score low on two or more factors that impact wellbeing (HELP, 2021b).

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed additional stress on students leading to an increase in challenging student behaviour (Johnson, 2022). The pandemic has exacerbated wellbeing issues and luminated how inequities in schools and communities profoundly affect those at the margins (Harris and Jones, 2020). As such, students are carrying toxic levels of stress into our schools (Desautels, 2020). There has been a significant rise in the number of students who demonstrate challenging behaviour, with upwards of twenty students per day being removed from class or sent to the office for discipline (SD, 2022a). Challenging behaviour can be defined as any repeated pattern of behaviour that disrupts the learning environment or engagement with peers and adults (Smith & Fox, 2003). Educators are craving a calmer environment that better meets the social emotional needs of both students and staff.

Despite the growing complexities, the school culture is warm and inclusive, and it is evident that the adults care for children. Over 90% of students surveyed believe the adults in the building care about them (HELP, 2021b). Staff are most accepting of children whose behaviour aligns with the code of conduct. Tension exists and beliefs collide when some staff suggest that children with challenging behaviour would be best served outside the classroom or at another school. This approach leads to *othering* where certain students are thought of as different and less worthy of inclusion (Stanforth & Rose, 2018). The WSD does not have an elementary

behaviour program so there is no alternative place for students to go. Othering assumes the individual chooses their behaviour and should therefore be excluded, ignoring underlying systemic issues that may cause the behaviour (Stanforth & Rose, 2018). When students are continually asked to leave the room, the relationship between teacher and student erodes, and yet research indicates that this is the relationship that needs to be protected as children behave best when the relationship between the teacher and student is strengthened (Tanase, 2021).

Teachers throughout the school district, are noticing a rise in challenging behaviour. Teachers were recently invited to attend a four-part learning series on understanding and responding to student behaviour. Despite this series being offered after school during teacher's personal time, registration filled within minutes, speaking to the appetite for change (School District Document [SDD], 2022d). Dissatisfaction with the status quo serves as a powerful change driver (Gaubatz & Ensminger, 2017).

District Context

The WSD mission statement promises to value all children and support their academic and social emotional development (SDD, 2022c). Despite this, discipline policies allow for both punitive and exclusionary practices which do little to value children or support their development (Greene, 2016). Likewise, teacher training programs offer little instruction on managing student behaviour allowing educators to develop classroom management techniques based on a blend of experience, training, personal values, and beliefs (Stanforth & Rose, 2018). This leads to fragmented behaviour management approaches across the school and district. Teachers feel caught in the middle as the WSD teachers' union advocates for exclusion of students if they deem their behaviour to be unsafe, yet current research shows the most effective practice to shift student behaviour is to foster a spirit of inclusion, nurturing relationships (Desautels, 2021).

When it comes to school discipline data collection, the WSD takes a colour-blind approach. Gregory et al. (2021) note that school discipline reform can only be successful when it is linked with cultural relevance and bias awareness. What gets measured matters as it affects direction and outcomes (Deszca et al., 2020). In Canada, Black students and Indigenous students are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled (Sanders, 2022). The district principal of Safe and Caring Schools estimates that over 90% of students suspended from school have a ministry special needs designation and individual education plan (personal communication, September 3, 2022). Sullivan et al. (2014) confirm this is not surprising as students with disabilities and students of colour are the most likely to be suspended from school. Principals hold the responsibility of maintaining order within the school and overseeing student discipline decisions (BC School Act, 1996). Shields (2020) notes that it is of utmost importance that school leaders identify and address their implicit bias, reject deficit thinking, and ensure that social class and poverty do not colour thinking (p. 55).

To better understand the experience of marginalized students, the WSD participated in a yearlong equity scan in 2021 (SDD, 2022a). The final report is a call to action highlighting a need to break down existing power structures that perpetuate inequities. Traditional school discipline is based in a structural functionalism model where a code of conduct dictates consequences rather than considering individual circumstances or the responsibility of the system itself for favouring some students over others (Riehl, 2000). Riehl (2000) claims that principals can get stuck in a mindset of structural functionalism, seeking consistent discipline practices, yet Shields and Gélinas-Proulx (2022) offer hope suggesting school leaders can become agents of change seeking equitable discipline that considers individual circumstances and experiences rather than using a one for all approach.

The WSD superintendent has dedicated a portion of monthly principal meetings to professional learning about equity. Given that the WSD currently operates with a policy driven focus, considerable thought will be needed to not only address what needs to change, but how systems can be reimagined through a lens of equity. Riehl (2000) confirm this shift can be difficult if school leaders are steeped in a structural-functionalist perspective that views existing structures as legitimate and that adopts a managerial orientation instead of a socially transformative one. As school leaders dive into equity work and discover their own biases and privilege, they will be better able to recognize inequities. This necessary shift aligns with provincial mandate to prioritize mental health, and the push for transformative leadership that looks to the margins to improve school conditions (BC Ministry of Education, 2020).

Provincial Context

In 2020, the BC Ministry of Education introduced the Mental Health in Schools Strategy (MHiSS) requiring school districts to prioritize the mental health of students and educators (BC Ministry of Education, 2020). The MHiSS includes three components: mental health curriculum, capacity building and leadership training in CSL. Although school leaders in the WSD have completed CSL training, they are at the beginning stages learning how to weave tools into daily practice. Leaders are scheduled to meet five times a year to discuss how this shift can occur (SD Calendar, 2022). Fortunately, the values of CSL align with my problem of practice, and the suggested tools will be useful in the change implementation plan.

The requirement to build capacity in educators aligns with a new teaching standard introduced by the BC Teaching Council in 2019. Teachers are required to meet all standards as part of their licensing in British Columbia (BC Teachers' Council, 2019). The newest standard, Standard 9 calls on all teachers to embed Indigenous ways of knowing into their curriculum and

pedagogy. Indigenous pedagogy calls on leaders to connect through story, strengthen relationships, flatten power structures, and develop a collective responsibility to take care of one another within community (Styres, 2017). While educators do many of these components naturally, they are walking delicately to prevent further harm. Educators will need encouragement and support as they move forward towards decolonization. "Decolonized education is about renewal, restoration, and hope. It is about finding new leadership approaches for engaging students, communities, and educators to bring about transformative change" (Lopez, 2020, p. 69). Educators at Adelaide Elementary have selected *Indigenous Ways of Knowing* as professional development topic for the 2022-2023 school year (SD, 2022b). This commitment to learning alongside the WSD's prioritization of equity work makes this an opportune time to reimagine student discipline. Likewise, the theoretical frameworks guiding the work of the WSD are shifting to align theory and practice.

Theoretical Frameworks and Aspirations

The theoretical framework guiding the WSD is in flux. The WSD is at a tipping point, swaying between past practice in the interpretive paradigm and new aspirations seeking equity through the critical paradigm. An interpretive paradigm seeks cohesiveness and leads with a desire to understand the social world *'as is'* (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) whereas the critical paradigm seeks to *disrupt* the current state to better serve those at the margins (Blackmore, 2013). The WSD superintendent models interpretivism and meets with partner groups including parents, teachers, administrators, trustees, and students to guide decisions, however students are invited to the table much less than with the past superintendent (SDD, 2022g). Two newly elected trustees who joined the Wahkohtowin School Board in November of 2022 built their

campaign platform on a promise of increased student voice in decision-making, therefore a tilt towards a critical paradigm may be on the horizon.

While the WSD 2021 equity report calls for transformative change, it will be interesting to see how the district leadership team balances the needs of hearing *all* voices and honouring its commitment to strengthen *marginalized* voices. The current superintendent of schools has restructured leadership meetings to include an equity component and all principals have been given a copy of *Street Data* to begin to think about transformative change (Safir & Dugan, 2021). While system change has not yet happened, the conversation has begun. I am hopeful the momentum will shift from conversation to action. Discussing inequity without disrupting power leads to social disengagement and unconscious wallowing in privilege (Capper, 2019). As a social justice leader with a critical worldview, I am cautiously optimistic that system-wide improvements are on the horizon, and I am hopeful that the WSD's reflexive state will include a review of policies and practices related to student behaviour.

In a recent conversation with the deputy superintendent of schools, it was recognized that whether a child is suspended from school depends more on the leadership philosophy of the school principal than the actions of the child (personal communication, September 14, 2022). While WSD policy requires discipline to be fair and just, the process that follows a breach of the code of conduct and the resulting consequences are at the mercy of the school leader to navigate (SDD, 2022f). Greene and Haynes (2021) confirm this is an all-too-common problem noting a school administrator's perspective on discipline is a key factor determining the outcome of school office referrals. However, Greene and Hayes (2021) provide hope, highlighting that school administrators have agency in altering discipline policies that are not working for students. While my OIP will focus on change needed at Adelaide Elementary, future

consideration is needed at the district level to reimagine school discipline across all schools, paying particular attention to equity. The district leadership team recognizes and appreciates the development of this OIP and has invited me to have future conversations on how this work could become the catalyst for district-wide change.

<div align="center">**Leadership Problem of Practice**</div>

A gap between the current state and the goal state specific to a workplace problem is referred to as a problem of practice (PoP) (CPED, 2022). At Adelaide Elementary, a gap exists between the current approaches used to address challenging behaviour and the desired state where challenging behaviours could be met with safe and connected responses. Failing to understand the underlying causes can lead to well-meaning solutions that do not effectively solve the problem (CPED, 2022). Before determining solutions, it is important to thoroughly examine the problem itself to understand guiding questions and the vision for change.

Problem of Practice

The problem of practice to be addressed is the systemic inequities rooted in school discipline. Elementary aged children with challenging behaviour are subjected to punitive and exclusionary practices which negatively impacts their wellbeing and weakens their connection to school. Students at the margins are most susceptible to discipline as their unmet needs often present as challenging behaviour (Greene, 2016). These approaches, rooted in colonialism, seek fault, assign blame, and reinforce systems of power and further disadvantage already marginalized students (Eyllon et al., 2022). Punishment and exclusion can lead to long term consequences such as lower graduation rates and an increased likelihood of exposure to the criminal justice system (Mergler et al., 2014). This well-known trajectory, coined *the school to prison pipeline* (Dutil, 2020; Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Irby, 2014; Mergler et al., 2014; Salole &

Abdulle, 2015; Skiba et al., 2014) sheds light to the bleak future following a school experience plagued with colonial discipline. Punishing individuals while ignoring system failures does little to prevent recurrence (Boleman & Deal, 2017). In fact, blaming, shaming, and punishing children increases the frequency of unwanted behaviours (Shanker, 2020), indicating that such methods are both harmful, and ineffective. Colonial practices not only harm the student who is receiving discipline, they also harm the other students. Perry and Morris (2014) measured collateral damage and found that when a child is excluded, the anxiety level of the classmates rises as they fear similar consequences and feel a sense of loss as a member of their community is missing. The problem of practice that will be investigated is the systemic inequity within elementary school discipline that harms children, especially those at the margins who are most susceptible to punitive and exclusionary practices.

As a school leader, it feels unethical to perpetuate a consistent, one size fits all school model without considering individual circumstances, or current research on why challenging behaviour occurs. Figure 1 draws attention to the gap between the current and desired state.

Figure 1

Gap Analysis of Discipline Practices

Note. This figure shows current practices in comparison to a research based desired state.

Fortunately, new research provides hope. Over the last twenty years, research on student behaviour has exploded with new information on brain compatible learning, social emotional learning, trauma-informed practice, and positive mental health strategies (Shanker, 2020). A resurgence of Indigenous pedagogy provides methodology to support the whole child (Chrona, 2022a). The foundation of effective discipline is based in the creation of warm school cultures built on trust, affirmation, and caring relationships (Carrington, 2020; Desautels, 2020, Perry & Morris, 2014). Brokenleg (2015) confirms children in crisis need to be wrapped in support, noting that sending a child away from a classroom or home from school teaches unbelonging. Punitive and exclusionary practices shatter a student's sense of safety (Desautels, 2020). It is critical to revamp outdated practices that do not align with educators' core values of equity, inclusion, and compassion (Causton & Macleod, 2020). Principals can guide professional development, initiate school improvement, shape school culture and serve as social justice advocates (Chunoo et al., 2019; Ryan & Tuters, 2016). This OIP will address steps that can be taken to better meet the needs of students with challenging behaviour and foster an equitable, compassionate school community where every child belongs.

Framing the Problem of Practice

Solutions are needed to help all students develop the competencies necessary to manage emotions and thrive in relationships with self, others, and the community. However, one of the most common mistakes when addressing a problem is to jump to solutions before understanding how the problem came to be (Hathaway & Norton, 2018). Examining the magnitude, importance and urgency of a problem helps determine the potential time and resources needed to close the gap between the current and desired state (Hathaway & Norton, 2018). A look into the historical context of the WSD explains how this PoP came to be.

Historical Overview

Historically, schools in the WSD, including Adelaide Elementary, relied on school-based codes of conduct and district-based discipline policies to maintain order and correct student behaviour. Prior to 2013, the district policy was entitled 'The Good Discipline Policy' and required educators to provide discipline as a prudent parent. Discipline was considered fair and just if it was applied consistently to all students (SDD, 2012). Teachers and administrators applied punishment or exclusion with the belief that such consequences would correct behaviour. Individual circumstances were not considered, and progressive discipline escalated for repeat offenses as outlined in the school code of conduct (SDD, 2012). In 2013, the WSD updated its policy manual, and replaced the 'Good Discipline Policy' with a 'Safe and Caring Schools Policy' (SDD, 2022f). While input was collected from all stakeholders, the policy change was not developed through a social justice lens, or the understanding that colonial practices focussed on power and shame cause harm to marginalized students. The policy protects students who know how to behave while failing to address the social emotional needs of those who struggle. The punitive and exclusionary nature of safe and caring school provisions harm marginalized students prompting additional alienation, disengagement, and a lack of hope for the future (Salone & Abdulle, 2015). Despite policy change, student behaviour infractions are on the rise (SD, 2021c). Reviewing this policy through the critical paradigm would amplify voices of students at the margins and give greater understanding into what the education system could do to meet the needs of underserved students. Merely applying consequences to symptoms of behaviour while failing to understand the student experience masks untold stories. Andreotti (2021) identifies the denial of the magnitude of complex problems as one of the major pitfalls of colonial leadership, noting that the search for simple solutions to make the individual feel-good

fails to address the root causes of complex predicaments. Schools have historically applied consequences to gain control rather than looking inward to determine if the system itself could be responsible for harm (Irby, 2014). Making decisions based on the dominant voice aligns with the interpretive paradigm that seeks balance rather than disruption (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Such actions ignore the complexities of systemic problems and prohibit change. The lack of understanding of student behaviour has been recognized as a missing component of the WSD social emotional learning (SEL) framework (CASEL, 2021).

The WSD was one of the first districts in BC to develop a district-wide SEL framework (SDD, 2021b). The initial framework included five pillars: school culture, student wellbeing, adult wellbeing, parent relationships, and evidence-based practices. Teachers, education assistants, counsellors, youth workers, principals and district leaders worked collaboratively to support professional learning in each of these areas. Upon reflection, and with consultation with SEL experts from the University of British Columbia and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the WSD recognized two significant gaps – a missing pillar understanding and responding to student behaviour, and the pitfalls associated with a one size fits all approach to SEL that failed to consider equity (CASEL, 2021). Recognition of these omissions led to two decisions: in 2021 the WSD participated in a district-wide equity scan capturing the experience of Indigenous students and educators (SDD, 2022a). While the equity scan did not include all marginalized groups, the results from Indigenous learners indicate there is much work to be done to overcome oppression. The second decision was made recently, where I was invited to lead a district-wide learning series reimagining school discipline. This will be open to all educators to reduce professional development barriers.

Professional Development Barriers

The educators at Adelaide Elementary have varying levels of training regarding student behaviour ranging from no training to masters' level coursework. A gap exists between research and practice, leaving educators to rely on their personal beliefs, experience, and training. The approaches used are fragmented and widespread ranging from punitive to compassionate. Some teachers continue to send children to the hallway, advocate for exclusion and support suspensions, while others lean towards compassionate approaches such as restorative conversations. While education assistants receive some training, the noon hour supervisors who are responsible for student behaviour during the lunch hour do not receive any training related to behaviour. This training discrepancy makes responses to student behaviour ad hoc at best.

Responses to behaviour also depend on the social emotional competencies of staff. Even skilled educators can have bad days. Research confirms the stress levels of students and teachers are positively correlated, therefore when one rises, the other is likely to follow (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Education is a human profession built on relationships, and emotions are always at play. If the wellbeing of students is the goal, the wellbeing of educators must be one of the strategies (Carrington, 2020). When educators are overwhelmed and focused on what is wrong rather than what is right, children's success is impacted. In fact, the most important factor influencing marginalized students' success is the educator's willingness to reject deficit thinking (Shields, 2018). Aguilar (2020) describes deficit thinking as an oil spill, "it coats every organism, it obscures beauty, it does great harm to the environment, and it's tedious to clean up" (p. 59). To create socially just schools, educators must focus on equity, wellbeing, and decolonization (Fullan 2021; Lopez, 2020). This is heartfelt work. As school principal I need to support the

wellbeing of staff so that they can support the wellbeing of students. When I lean into Métis values, I am reminded of the importance of relationships, reciprocity, and resilience.

In Métis culture, the dandelion symbolizes resilience (UnRuh, 2021). The Métis, once known as the forgotten people, survived in two worlds, like dandelions—facing adversity yet blooming through the cracks. In our schools, children with challenging behaviour are our dandelions, blamed for their inability to flourish and subjected to punitive and exclusionary practices. Appendix A visually represents my PoP. On the left you will see the perpetual inequities that exist when we view children as weeds. The right shows the beauty that emerges when we see every child as a flower. This OIP will look to shift educators' perception of students with challenging behaviour. Children, like adults, express feelings of abandonment, grief, frustration, and confusion through behaviour (Desautels, 2020). Behaviour is a window, inviting educators to see beneath the surface. Compassionate systems leadership (CSL) provides the tools necessary to lean in, uncover stories, and recognize root causes of behaviour. Application of CSL tools will be further discussed further in chapter two and three.

Analysis Using a Medicine Wheel

While Western pedagogy and colonial school discipline is hierarchical in nature, and asserts power over children, the Indigenous worldview is holistic and sees the entire community as responsible for strengthening children through respect and inclusion (Julien et al., 2010). The purpose of education from an Indigenous worldview, is to nourish the learning spirit (Battiste, 2010). Indigenous teachings focus equally on teaching the heart and teaching the mind (Tanaka, 2016). Decolonizing school discipline will not only help Indigenous students, but it will also help all students, as Indigenous values contribute to strong communities and an elevated collective conscience. Forbes (1973) maintains that incorporating Indigenous values such as living in

harmony with nature, respecting animals and the planet, and valuing community and collectivity would decrease societal problems. To visualize the harm of punitive practices and the urgency for change, I have used a medicine wheel to analyze the current state. It is believed that holistic wellbeing is achieved when the needs of each of the four corners are met (Katz & Lamoureux, 2018). These include the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional (Julien et al., 2010). Current practices can break a student's spirit as they promote unbelonging, erode a sense of safety, and weaken relationships (Brokenleg, 2015). Figure 2 depicts this analysis.

Figure 2

Medicine Wheel Analysis: The Harm of Colonial Discipline

Brokenleg (2015) states that colonial discipline push children away when they misbehave and weaken their connection to school. Indigenous discipline recognizes misbehaviour as a need to pull children closer.

Exclusionary discipline does not reduce misbehaviour and erodes a sense of safety for the child (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

Spiritual
Belonging & Connectedness

Physical
Basic Needs, Safety & Security

Mental
Mental Health Problem Solving

Emotional
Relationships with Others

If the underlying cause of dysregulated behaviour is mental health distress, punitive and exclusionary discipline will worsen both mental health and behaviour (Keels, 2021).

Discipline is most effective when it emphasizes the significance or relationships and repairs harm. When educators are calm, they can help co-regulate a child (Desautels, 2019). Exclusionary practices harm relationships.

Note. The medicine wheel visually depicts the harm of punishment and exclusion.

This analysis visualizes the harm done to students mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health, and emphasize a need for change. This need is supported by internal and external data.

Relevant Internal and External Data

Internal and external data validates the urgency for transformative change. The middle

years development index (MDI) indicates that only 75% of grade four students and 55% of grade

seven students feel a sense of belonging at Adelaide Elementary (HELP, 2021b). Behaviour

referrals to the office have jumped by 50% in the last three years (SD, 2022a). Approximately

75% of students referred to the office are children with special needs designations associated

with mental health and behaviour (SD, 2022d) indicating that challenging behaviour may be a

stress response because the expectations exceed the child's self-regulatory abilities (Delahooke,

2019). Likewise, the equity scan completed in 2021 revealed some disturbing trends.

Stories of Inequity

The WSD equity report shared one example of a student subjected to racism being asked

to apologize for her anger (SDD, 2022a). Another example describes a child who was moved to

an alternate school for fighting after being subjected to racial slurs. The white principal refused

to hear her story noting that school racism has not occurred since he became the principal (SDD,

2022a). These examples are direct from students and speak to the untold stories, and the

desperate need for equity work.

In Canada, children of colour are three to four times more likely to be suspended than

white children and children with disabilities are two times more likely to be suspended than

those without disabilities (Gregory et al., 2021). Suspensions increase the likelihood of grade

retention, academic failure, and delinquency (Greene & Hayes, 2021) and contributes to the

school-to-prison pipeline (Dutil, 2020; Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Irby, 2014; Mergler et al., 2014;

Salole & Abdulle, 2015; Skiba et al., 2014). Being away from school compounds existing social,

economic, and health disparities and increases the odds that a child will drop out of school

(Gonzáles et al., 2019). Depriving a child from their education impacts not only impacts their wellbeing, but it also puts them at an increased risk of chronic health diseases, economic instability, and a lower life expectancy (Gonzáles et al., 2019). These startling statistics can serve as a catalyst probing guiding questions to support organizational change.

Guiding Questions

The overarching question, stemming from my PoP is: What steps can be taken to shift the perception of children with challenging behaviour, decolonize school discipline, support the professional development and wellbeing of educators, and create an equitable and compassionate school community where every child belongs? As a transformative leader, grounded in Indigenous pedagogy I have critical hope for our future. Grain (2022) defines critical hope as a space in which complexity exists, where struggle is recognized yet a vision for change co-exists. The concept of critical hope was first introduced by Freire (1998), rooted in his quest for liberation from oppression, and grounded in trust that social justice advocates could develop a critical conscious to recognize inequalities while also holding onto critical hope for change.

It takes courage for educators to embrace critical hope, challenge outdated practices, and accept that there may be a better way (Grain, 2022). Transformative learning theory (TLT) raises awareness, helping adults recognize social injustices so that they can unlearn practices that may perpetuate inequities and learn new practices that better serve students, especially those at the margins (Shields, 2020). TLT provides a lens of equity by asking critical questions such as: Who is advantaged and who is disadvantaged? Who is marginalized and who is privileged? Who is excluded and who is included? Whose voices are being heard and whose have been silenced? (Shields, 2020, p. 11). Given this, one guiding question will be: What systems will be established

to support transformative learning so that educators can recognize systemic inequities and personal biases, unlearn harmful practices and learn new ways of being to better serve students?

A colonial mindset that uses punishment to shame children is not only outdated, but also completely out of touch with current research. Desautels (2020) questions whether the education system has lost its way, noting "we have grasped at fixes while forgetting that human behaviours area always communicating a desire to connect, feel better and recalibrate toward equilibrium" (p. vii). The research on behaviour suggests that behaviour is a symptom of an underlying story (Delahooke, 2019). Stories are a powerful way of nurture relationships, teach reciprocity (Kovach, 2021). How might educators listen for stories, teach through stories, strengthen relationships through stories and celebrate stories of success? To address racism and Eurocentrism, educators must offer two-eyed seeing normalizing Indigenous knowledge within the curriculum, making equity and inclusion foundational for all learners (Battiste, 2010). Indigenous pedagogy offers solutions and it is time we move from *learning about* Indigenous cultures to *learning from* Indigenous cultures (Chrona, 2022a). Given that BC teaching standard 9 requires teachers to embed Indigenous ways of knowing, a second guiding question is: How can Indigenous pedagogy help educators decolonize school discipline practices, strengthen relationships, understand the power of story, and eliminate systemic inequities?

Nurturing the heart and mind of students, especially those with challenging behaviour, can take a toll on the wellbeing of educators. Schonert-Reichl (2017) confirmed through spit tests that cortisol levels of teachers and students are positively correlated. Stress is contagious and educators cannot support the wellbeing of students if their own wellbeing is jeopardized. A third guiding question is: What can be done to support the wellness of educators so that they have the capacity to show up daily and support the social emotional development of students?

Lastly, it is important that consideration is given to the concept of *othering*. Othering occurs when educators make divisions between children who belong and children who don't (Styres, 2017). Addressing inequity takes courage as it challenges powerful forces that perpetuate the status quo or hold competing interests (Shields & Gélinas-Proulx, 2022). While good intentioned, educators often suggest a child should be excluded from classes or activities because they believe the child would be best served elsewhere (Stranforth & Rose, 2018). The teachers' union advocates for exclusion to ensure safe work environments, while research on best practices supports inclusion. Exclusion may create safer classrooms and ease the demands of classroom management; however, this is done at the expense of our most vulnerable children. It takes moral courage to act with clarity, conviction and stand for systemic change. Pondering these guiding questions sets my leadership-focused vision for change.

Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

I envision a school where all stakeholders are grounded in the belief that every child belongs and share a collective responsibility to take care of each other. I envision a way of being where behaviour is met with curiosity rather than judgement, and the stories of our students guide our instruction so that all students can see themselves reflected in their learning. Kovach (2009) highlights that education is a powerful tool that can violate or transform. Andreotti (2021) has a similar vision, noting "from the day our children are born, their education should prepare them to become healthy and wise elders and good ancestors for all relations" (p. 153). Likewise, Safir and Dugan (2021) question the purpose of education. "Do we teach and lead to simply reproduce reality, or will we teach and lead to transform it?" (p. 4). The time is now to bring critical consciousness to the forefront to create more thoughtful, caring, inclusive and socially just schools (Pewewardy et al., 2022). My hope is that transformative change at Adelaide

Elementary will ignite district wide change. I intentionally used *Wahkohtowin* as a pseudonym for the school district. Wahkohtowin is of Cree origin and means kinship, interconnectedness, community, and relationship (Boysis, 2019). I envision a school community grounded in love and compassion. While love is not often mentioned in academia, Roseanne Archibald, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations explains why it is necessary:

> Love in the colonial construct is always talked about from the romantic perspective, but real love is family, it is friends, it is a feeling and an emotion and a spiritual kind of energy that wants the best for you- "I want the best for you, I want you to be lifted up" – that is the love we are talking about and it's long overdue that the ideas around a deep and abiding love for our people came to the forefront because then we are not making political decisions of our mind, but we are thinking about our children, our grandchildren and children seven generations ahead and how we are moving forward to give those people a better life to help them and lift them up (Archibald, 2022, 11:55).

Chrona (2022a), an educator with Indigenous ancestry, concludes that the power to improve our education systems can be found in the knowledge systems of Indigenous cultures. As a Métis woman, deeply committed to learning about my heritage, I, too, am recognizing what Indigenous cultures offer. "Indigenous children and all children have the right to an education that does not abuse, marginalize, or erase their understanding of who they are and how they are to be in relation to this world" (Sytres, 2017, p. 133). As I lean into Indigenous pedagogy and see solutions emerging, a voice inside me whispers, and I smile wondering what my ancestors would think knowing their wisdom that was once rejected is now embraced in BC classrooms.

Transformative change is not a desired endpoint but rather a way of leading, striving for equity. Shields and Gélinas-Proulx (2022) encourage educators to relentlessly pursue social

justice, noting that the work may never be done as it is based on an ideal rather than a state of existence. Given this, I have created a conceptual change model weaving the works of Safir and Dugan (2019), Styres (2017), and Senge et al. (2019). The model is intentionally built in a circular formation and pictured on the wheel spokes of a Métis Red River cart as show in Figure 3. The circle symbolizes wholeness, connectedness, and holistic learning (Julien et al., 2010).

Figure 3

Wheel of Transformative Change
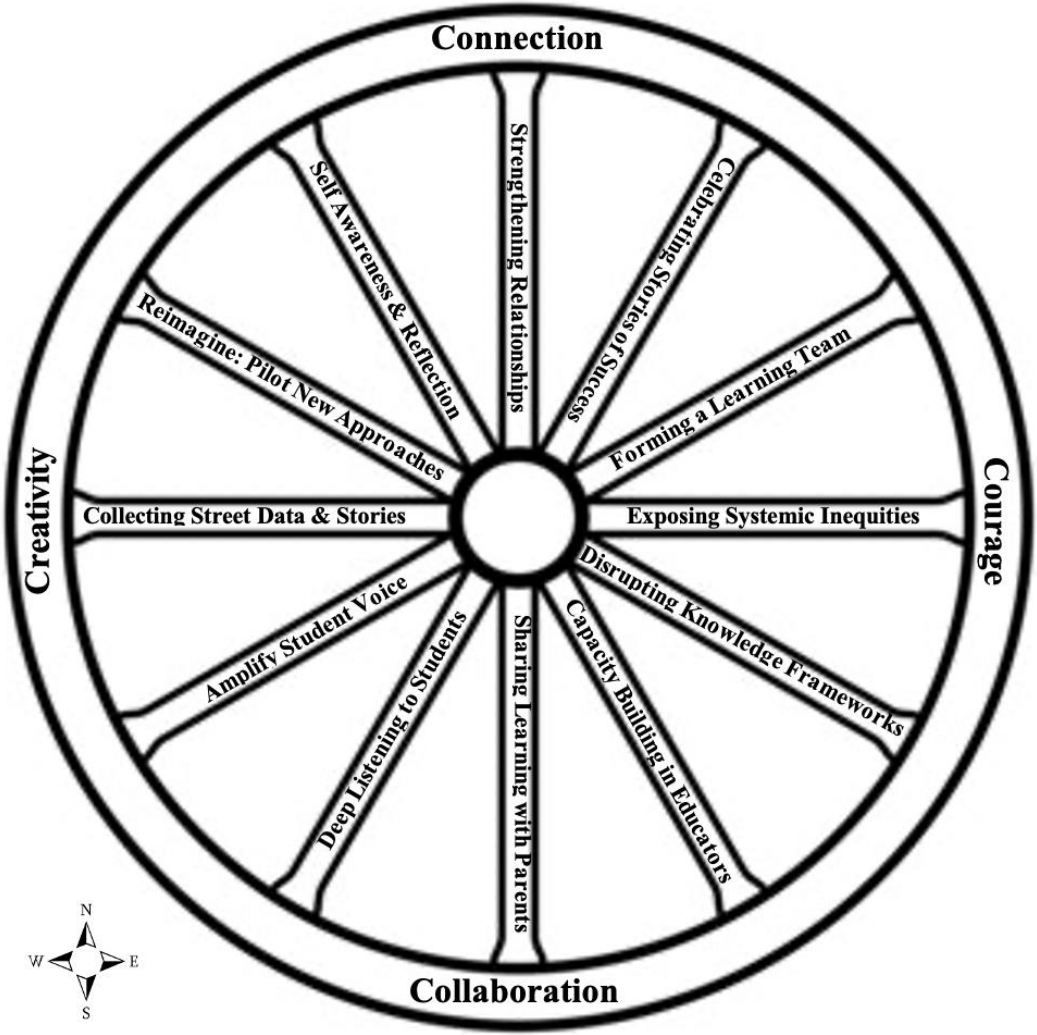
Note. This Red River wheel symbolizes the blending of Indigenous and Western pedagogy, and forward motion. Each spoke interconnects, each with equal value, representing collaboration.

The WSD offers an annual grant where schools can develop a learning team and receive funding for release time and resources. The district model closely aligns with Kotter's 8 step change model as it begins with a sense of urgency, brings a team together as a guiding coalition, creates a vision, acts, celebrates short term wins, and sustains change throughout the school year and beyond (Kotter, 2022). These steps will be mirrored within the transformative wheel so that the staff will be able to meet district requirements while pursuing transformative change.

The staff at Adelaide Elementary are learning centered and eager to participate in learning teams. I envision participants of this learning team as the change agents acting as early adopters implementing ideas and collaborating on strategies and approaches to understand and respond to student behaviour. The learning team will serve as a professional learning community, communicating with staff, students, and parents, building momentum for a cohesive discipline model that aligns with research and meets the needs of students. Stoll (2020) suggests educators move away from the 'are we there yet' mentality and see learning as continual guided by the question "where do you need to go next in creating capacity for learning?" (p. 428). The conceptual change model, the transformative wheel, will guide staff through unlearning, learning, reimagining, and celebrating success. The learning team will serve as a resource supporting educators so that they do not feel alone when working with children who presents challenging behaviour. Through curiosity and deep listening, educators will be able to recognize the opportunity gaps that exist between privileged and underserved students. Desautels (2020) shares this dream, in her quote calling for transformative change:

> Systems of oppression can be disrupted in our schools as educational environments can become the fertile, emergent, and sacred places of felt safety, coregulation, and inclusive

practices of the teaching and learning process that are founded on social justice, equity, and systemic tolerance and have been missing for over 400 years" (p. xi). The learning team will serve as change agents and share stories of success with the school community to build trust and sustain change. The potential exists to create equitable practices where all children are met with compassion and understanding.

Conclusion

We cannot afford to wait to reimagine student discipline. When I think of the five children whose names sit beside my computer, my ancestors whose voices were silenced, and every underserved child who attends Adelaide Elementary, I am reminded of my why. Every child deserves to attend a school grounded in wellbeing, decolonization, and equity. Chapter two provides a framework showing how this can be done.

Chapter 2: Hope and a Vision for Change

While chapter one provided a thorough analysis of the harm caused by punitive and exclusionary discipline within elementary school, chapter two provides hope, outlining the tools that can be used to work towards sustainable change. The leadership approaches and framework for leading change have been selected based on their ability to support educators in seeking equity, wellbeing, and decolonization. Chapter two reinforces why change is needed at Adelaide Elementary and introduces three potential solutions to address the problem of practice.

Leadership Approaches to Change

"Leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow" (Kouzes & Posner, 2021, p. 5). It is imperative that I select leadership approaches that are authentic to who I am as a leader. I have selected three approaches that align with my personal leadership lens and the established approaches within the Wahkohtowin School District (WSD). The selected approaches include compassionate systems leadership (CSL), transformative learning theory (TLT) and Indigenous ways of knowing.

Compassionate Systems Leadership

CSL has been selected for four reasons. First, as discussed in chapter one, the BC Ministry of Education (2020) launched a mental health in schools' strategy that requires all districts to focus on the wellbeing of students. Their recommended leadership approach is CSL. Second, the WSD has offered professional training in CSL for principals holds quarterly meetings to discuss how CSL tools can be applied to school leadership. Third, I have been invited to lead district workshops on how to use CSL tools to better understand and respond to student behaviour. Finally, CSL resonates as a leadership approach as the essence of CSL is compassion—the attribute I hope to expand within our school community. Senge et al. (2019)

explain that CSL builds a foundation for global citizenship, conceptualizing compassion as a systemic property. When compassion is foundational, leaders consider the impact of system change on people's thoughts, feelings, and actions (Senge et al., 2019).

The tools that will be most effective for this OIP will be the *iceberg tool* and the *shifting the burden tool*. The iceberg tool promotes curiosity by asking participants to record behaviours they see, and brainstorm potential causes that exist under the surface (Senge et al., 2019). The iceberg tool serves as a powerful visual reminding educators that behaviours are rooted in deeper causes that may or may not be known. Leo (2022) notes that we either spend time filling a child's cup with love or we spend time responding to their behaviour that stems from unmet needs. The tool shown in Figure 4 provides an opportunity for parents and educators to get curious. Understanding a student's needs improves social connections, thus reducing a student's fear and aggression and diffusing challenging behaviour (Seppala et al., 2013).

Figure 4

CSL Iceberg Tool
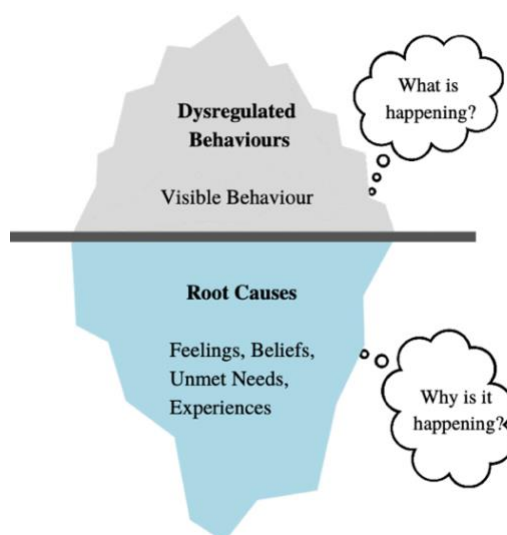
Note. Adapted from *Systems thinking iceberg tool practice* by M. Boell & P. Senge, 2017, J-Wel. Copyright 2017 by MIT.

The shifting the burden tool uses a figure-eight to compare solutions. When a child

misbehaves, schools historically respond to the symptoms of behaviour by applying punitive or

exclusionary consequences such as time out of class or suspension (Mirsky, 2011). These

solutions are reactive in nature and appear on the top of the figure-eight. The shifting the burden

tool encourages educators to consider deeper fundamental solutions as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5

CSL Shifting the Burden Tool
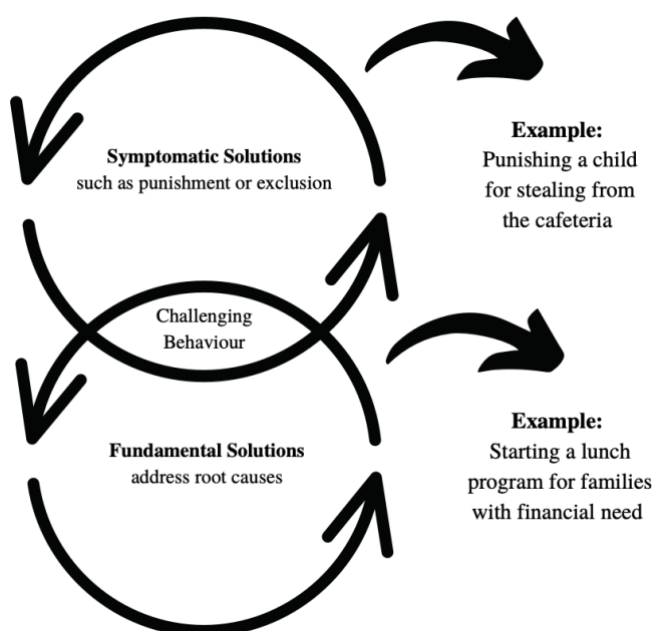
Note. Adapted from *Shifting the burden systems archetype* by M. Boell & P. Senge, 2017, J-Wel. Copyright 2017 by MIT.

For example, while suspension may be a symptomatic response, providing increased social

emotional support for children may be a fundamental response.

Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory (TLT) has been chosen as a leadership approach as it

expands on systems thinking to give considerable attention to equity. TLT digs deeper to expand

awareness, expose inequities, and shift beliefs so that educators can look at problems through a

new lens (Shields, 2018). Typically, when children misbehave in schools, punitive and

exclusionary practices have been used to attempt to change the child (Delahooke, 2019). TLT

takes responsibility for the role the education system plays and critically examines what

educators can do to improve the school experience, especially for those at the margins (Shields,

2020). TLT suggests that educators can reimagine the school system and create an improved

model focussing on equity, wellbeing, and decolonization (Safir & Dugan, 2021). While this PoP

looks to reimagine student discipline, this will only be possible if educators acknowledge the

system inequities with the status quo and are willing to shift mindsets.

One of the most impactful ways to use TLT and shift perception is through the power of

story. "Story is a form of truth" (Grain, 2022, p. 12). When educators get to know a student's

story, they are more likely to shift their practice (Tanase, 2021). Martinez (2016) conducted a

one-year study where educators worked collaboratively to focus on social emotional learning

(SEL) and understand their students' stories. The educators reported that an investment in SEL

not only reduced challenging behaviour, but it also improved the wellbeing of both students and

staff (Martinez, 2016). Michail (2011) determined that change efforts to improve student

behaviour were most successful when educators were able to develop strong, supportive

relationships with the children demonstrating challenging behaviour. Educators were less likely

to use punishment or exclusion when they understood root causes of behaviour. Storytelling will

be a powerful tool when using TLT to shift perceptions and reimagine discipline. TLT algins

with Indigenous leadership that sees storytelling as a respected methodology (Julien et al., 2010).

TLT gives voice to those typically oppressed and encourages leaders to expand their awareness

beyond conventional data (Safir & Dugan, 2021).

Indigenous Ways of Knowing

The staff at Adelaide Elementary are committed to learning about Indigenous cultures and have identified Indigenous knowledge as a focus area for professional growth (SD, 2022b). Shifting curriculum has been easier than shifting pedagogy as most staff have only received education and training from Western perspectives. Only two staff have Indigenous ancestry, therefore the lived cultural knowledge is limited. Staff have opportunities to improve their knowledge including access to a professional library, a district Aboriginal resource centre, and an open invitation to attend a professional learning series on Indigenous pedagogy with elders from local nations. Educators receive support from a district Aboriginal resource teacher, Aboriginal support worker and local knowledge holders. Adelaide Elementary has approximately 40 students of ancestry who also help teach students and staff about their culture (SD, 2022c).

This quest for additional knowledge about Indigenous pedagogy provides an ideal pathway for conversations about reimagining school discipline. While traditional school discipline has been based on Western pedagogy putting the needs of the individual at the top, Indigenous cultures have prioritized the needs of the community (Styres, 2017). Figure 6 depicts the contrast in thinking between Western and Indigenous worldviews and indicates that leadership through an Indigenous lens focuses on strengthening communities. Mastery is determined by the strength of the community and the culture rather than the development of self. This outlook, when applied to school discipline, would seek solutions that were best for the school community, with a collective responsibility to take care of all children. This shift in perspective would encourage educators to wrap around students with dysregulated behaviour through a lens of curiousity rather than judgment. A perspective that prioritizes community and belonging above the needs of self supports restorative solutions that pull children closer.

Figure 6

Comparison of Western and Indigenous Perspectives
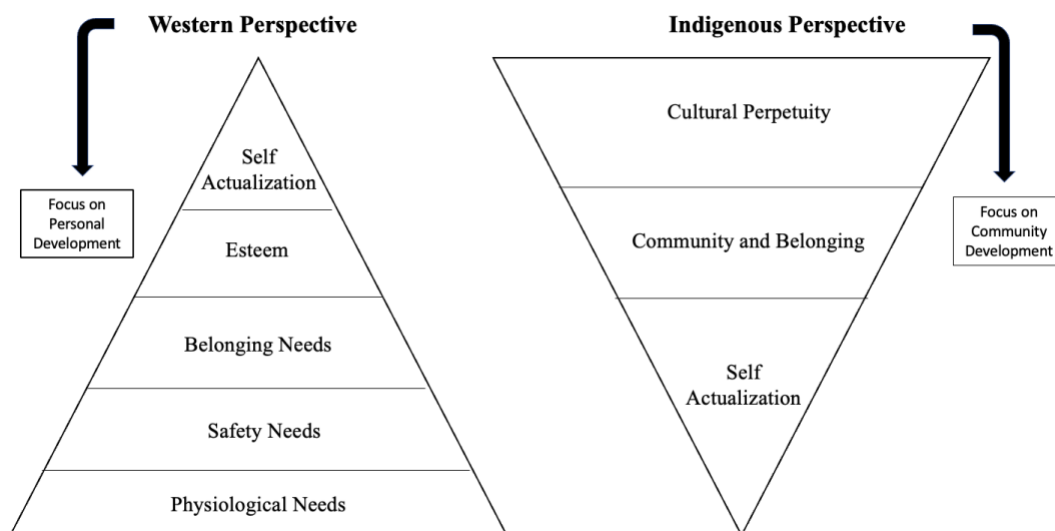
Note: Adapted from *Ensouling our schools: A universally designed framework for mental health, well-being, and reconciliation* (p. 23), by J. Katz & K. Lamoureux, 2018, P&M Press. Copyright 2018 by Jennifer Katz.

Using Indigenous ways of knowing as a leadership approach encourages solutions that strengthen community. While Western perspectives focus on power structures, Indigenous perspectives share power with a focus on self-in-relationship, seeking to rebalance and reharmonize (Sytres, 2017). The key concepts of CSL, TLT and Indigenous ways of knowing have been woven together to design of a conceptual framework for leading the change process.

Framework for Leading the Change Process

The WSD pre-established learning team model closely aligns with Kotter's 8 step model. Every September, schools are invited to apply for district funding to support school-based learning teams. The learning grant provides funding for resources and meals encouraging staff to collaborate as a professional learning community (SDD, 2022b). Like Kotter's model, the process has eight steps. Figure 7 compares Kotter's model with the existing learning team model in the WSD. While the steps are similar, they appear in a different order.

Figure 7

Alignment of Kotter's 8 Step Model with WSD Learning Team Model
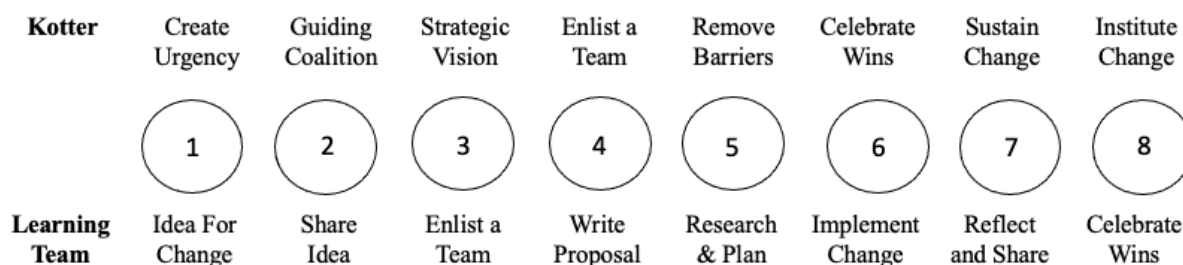
Note. Both models see change as linear and built on incremental steps.

While Kotter's model aligns nicely with the WSD learning team model and sets a vision for change his model is linear and leader centered (Mento et al., 2002). Change, however, is messy and does not always move in sequential steps. Change initiatives based on linearity are more likely to fail than change initiatives that appreciate complexity (Higgs & Rowland, 2005). Kotter's model fails to draw attention to wellbeing, equity, or decolonization. For this reason, I have borrowed ideas from other change frameworks that pay particular attention to systems thinking, social justice, CSL and Indigenous ways of knowing. The change models that I have borrowed ideas from include Safir and Dugan's (2021) equity transformation, Senge et al.'s (2019) mandala for system change and Styres' (2017) Indigenous change model. These three models use a circular framework to represent continuity, flow, and interconnectedness. Safir & Dugan (2021) provide a change model that uncovers *street data* –the voices at the margins that are sometimes missed when traditional methods are used (Safir & Dugan, 2021). Similarly, Styres (2017) Indigenous change model emphasizing deep listening, connecting through story, reflecting, and acting. This closely aligns with Senge's mandala for system change that looks to build capacity, practice skills, collected research and share with the community (Senge et al., 2019). Each of these models include reflection and personal growth as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8

Circular Change Models
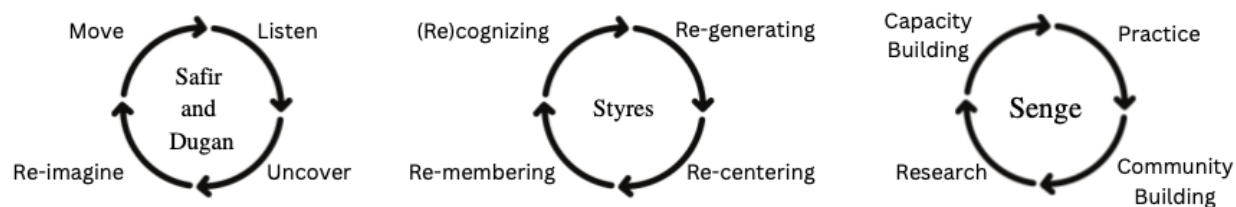
Note. Components of each circular model have been woven into a conceptual model of change.

Given that each model has different strengths that relate to my PoP, I have blended the work of Senge et al. (2019), Safir and Dugan (2021), and Styres (2017) and created a conceptual model called the wheel of transformative change.

Conceptual Change Model

The wheel has four quadrants, beginning in the east where new knowledge forms. The four quadrants move in a clockwise order through courage, collaboration, connection, and creativity. Each quadrant has three steps as outlined in Figure 3. This conceptual model weaves components of the change models discussed above and aligns with the chosen leadership approaches to work towards equity in school discipline. This model meets the needs of the WSD learning team framework, while also recognizing that transformation is not linear. The wheel of transformative change is depicted on the spokes of a Red River Métis cart to signify an Indigenous worldview. The wheel includes 12 spokes, or 12 steps, connected in the middle, symbolizing the power of working together in harmony. The circle indicates that change is continual and that the work of striving for equity is never done (Julien et al, 2010). Francis Alexis, Knowledge Keeper of the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation shares:

> The circle is a law of creation and the greatest teacher there is. When birds build their
>
> nests, they build them round. When bees build their hives, they build them round. When

you cut down a tree, you see its rings. When a pebble hits the water, it makes round

ripples. That's why a circle becomes a law of the universe. Everything we do, we do in a

circle. (Alexis, 2022, Royal Albert Museum artifact)

The four quadrants of courage, collaboration, creativity, and connection are discussed in detail

below. The circle begins in the east—the birthplace for new ideas (Styres, 2017).

Eastern Quadrant: Courage

The sun rises in the east, symbolizing the awakening of new days, new seasons, and the

potential for new creations. Styres (2017) explains "the east is the place where we begin our

journey from the spirit world to the physical world; as such, it represents new beginnings,

illumination and rebirth" (p. 39). This first quadrant is grounded in moral courage – the courage

to envision a better future, courage to expose systemic inequities and the courage to disrupt

colonial knowledge frameworks. I suspect many educators are unaware of the inequities within

school discipline models as they are repeating patterns from their own school experience. Many

teachers respond out of habit, unaware that practices such as punishment and exclusion are

outdated and ineffective (Mergler et al., 2014). In this first quadrant, a learning team will be

established with a vision for equitable discipline practices. The learning team, made up of

teachers, a counsellor, vice principal and principal, can highlight inequities that exist, such as the

data showing that children of colour or Indigenous children are three to four times more likely to

be suspended from school (Aguilar, 2020), or the data showing that marginalized students at

Adelaide Elementary are the most susceptible to punishment and exclusion (SD, 2022a, 2022d).

Southern Quadrant: Collaboration

Moving clockwise, like a forward spinning wheel, courage is followed by collaboration.

The south represents relationships and a connection to the land and to one another (Styres, 2017).

The three spokes include building capacity in educators through collaborative learning, listening, and learning from students, and sharing learning with parents. To build capacity in educators, the learning team will be able to use current research, and stories of students to guide transformative change. Katz et al. (2018) points out "there are only two options for change: new students or new teaching practices. The former usually isn't possible. Parents aren't keeping the good kids at home" (p. 5). While tongue and cheek, this helps educators realize what is within their control. Professional learning has the power to disrupt outdated teaching practices. Teacher learning is at the heart of school improvement (Katz et al., 2018). Exposure to new research and evidence-based practice creates what Senge (2020) call creative tension – the space between knowing and doing. "The learning gap that matters most for change is not that between what we know and what we do not know, but the gap between what we know and what we do" (Senge, 2020, p. 50). When teachers gain new knowledge that stretches their thinking, change is possible.

Learning in the southern quadrant expands beyond academic research and includes street data – listening to the voices of students. The WSD holds bi-annual student forums to capture student voice (SDD, 2022g), and students in grades four and seven complete annual surveys on their wellbeing (HELP, 2021b). The more educators give students a voice in their learning, the more motivation and engagement rise and off task behaviour falls (Blad, 2016). Amplifying student voice gives students the opportunity to share concerns and contribute towards solutions (Mitra, 2008). If the school is to reimagine school discipline parents will need to be invited in as partners in learning. As the principal, I write a weekly email to parents and host monthly parent meetings. These communication structures will be helpful for sharing information. This final spoke of the southern quadrant aligns with Sytres (2017) teaching that we must consider how we

want to be in relationships and how our decisions impact the future. Finding new opportunities to build relationships with families will strengthen the sense of community now and in the future.

Western Quadrant: Creativity

The third quadrant is the place of creativity, allowing the learning team to experiment with new ideas, initiate change and develop new knowledge frameworks. The west symbolizes knowledge seeking and looking within (Styres, 2017). The three spokes include creating new opportunities to hear student voice, collecting street data and personal stories, and piloting new approaches. The learning team will be able to find new ways to amplify the voice of students and consider their thoughts. Fullan (2021) identifies students, even young ones, as the most powerful changemakers of all. Safir and Dugan (2021) encourage "pedagogy of voice in which student experiences drive instruction and student agency becomes the central metric" (p. 21). Listening to the stories of students is one of the ways that oral traditions can disrupt dominant Western pedagogy (Sytres, 2017). While Western pedagogy leans to altruistic intentions, Indigenous pedagogy recognizes that people with the lived experience as the foremost experts as to what a community needs (Grain, 2022). Listening to the children to understand their stories will shed light on root causes of behaviour. After building capacity and listening deeply, the learning team can experiment with new and share feedback with one another. The western quadrant allows educators to step into their vision, creating a new future (Sytres, 2017).

Northern Quadrant: Connections

Quadrant four, the northern quadrant, focuses on the power of human connection. Indigenous pedagogy prioritizes maintaining connectedness and relations (Burkhart, 2004). Rather than abandoning relationships, one can find knowledge and understanding *through* relationships (Styres, 2017). This final quadrant has three spokes including self-awareness and

reflection, strengthening relationships, and sharing stories of success. The first step allows educators to pause, reflect and develop a sense of awareness revealing their own biases and becoming aware of inequities they may be unknowingly perpetuating. Deep change cannot be achieved through shallow solutions (Ginwright, 2022). Tanase (2019) notes that the single most powerful tool for positive change is the relationship between the student and a caring adult. One caring adult has the power to shift the trajectory of a child who does not believe in themselves (Carrington, 2020). The final step of the transformative wheel is to celebrate stories of success. Storying prioritizes Indigenous value systems (Khalifa et al., 2016). King (2003) writes "the truth about stories is that's all we are—you can't understand the world without telling a story" (p. 32). Stories tug at the heart and encourage others to come alongside. This allows new practices to gain momentum, shifting the culture of the school forward.

Limitations to the Change Model

Change will only be successful if the organization is willing to embrace it. While the transformative wheel is designed for continuous change, the school calendar starts in the fall and ends in early summer. Armenakis & Harris (2002) note that only one third of organizational change initiatives succeed, and that it is crucial to understand the factors stakeholders consider when deciding if they are going to embrace or reject the proposed change. Staffing changes from one school year to the next may serve as a limitation in implementation.

The transformative wheel evolved from the critical perspective, striving for social good, looking to amplify voices from the margins and shift the system to better meet the needs of underserved students. This poses three limitations: first, as a leader, I need to recognize that not everyone looks at problems through this paradigm. Staff bring a variety of perspectives, based on assumptions and the theoretical lenses through which they see the world (Hartley, 2010). Second,

disrupting a power imbalance can be threatening to those with privilege (Shields, 2018). While it is easy to gain support for social causes, asking people to relinquish power is not quite as comfortable. Third, this conceptual model works toward system change rather than perpetuating the status quo and expecting students to conform to the current model. The teachers' union actively encourages teachers to advocate for the removal of students with challenging behaviour rather than asking teachers to look at their practice and find ways to create inclusive spaces that calm the nervous system of students reducing the likelihood of challenging behaviours (Delahooke, 2020). CSL, TLT and Indigenous perspectives all support the work of transformative change and shifting mindsets, though resistance will occur from those who would prefer to protect the colonial system build on power structures and approaches that seek out clear explanations of who is right and who is wrong (Shields, 2018).

In contrast, this transformative change model leans in to learn why the current system is not working. It flattens power structures, fosters inclusion, and recognizes that students, teachers, parents, administrators, and support staff are all in relationship with one another, and together, the community has a collective responsibility to nurture and support all children, including those with challenging behaviour. The most powerful way to support this shift in thinking is through individual stories of success as children who are wrapped in support begin to thrive. Storytelling can awaken second and third order change as it allows listeners to question their own beliefs, shift thoughts and create new realities. Second order change occurs when educators shift their thinking in a new direction, and third order change begins when educators become aware of their own viewpoint and potential biases, thereby becoming more able to change their beliefs and behaviours as they see fit (Bartunek & Moch, 1987). Indigenous cultures model storytelling beautifully as a respected way of teaching and shifting understanding (Julien et al., 2010). My

hope is to embrace this gift, and champion the stories of students to gain trust with staff and parents. In my advocacy work, shifting the perception of homelessness, I have been successful at shifting narratives through representation—respectfully telling the life stories of those living on the streets who are not given a voice to share their experience (Blakeway, 2019). I approach my leadership in schools through the same critical lens, recognizing that stories are a form of truth, and a powerful way to evoke empathy and shift perceptions (Grain, 2022).

The hope is that transformative, continual change will become deeply rooted in the culture of Adelaide Elementary. It will be important for the learning team to model inclusion and have many entry points for staff to come alongside, recognizing that not all are early adopters (Deszca et al., 2020). The next section will discuss whether staff are ready to embrace change.

Organizational Change Readiness

You do not need to look far to see the negative impact challenging student behaviour is having within elementary schools. Student mental health needs are rising in Canada with 20% of elementary students experiencing mental health struggles significant enough to warrant mental health services (Katz & Lamoureux, 2018). It is no longer uncommon to execute room clears to protect the safety of staff and students, as several students demonstrate behaviours such as threat making, throwing objects, flipping furniture, yelling, and destroying materials (SD, 2022a). The number of employee health and safety reports of threats or injury from students is up by 50% in three years (SD, 2021a). Beyond the hard data, educators self-report a need for change as they are finding their classroom management techniques from the past are no longer sufficient. At times, the stress level of adults is palpable. Katz and Lamoureux (2018) confirm that schools are experiencing a level of stress and burnout like never before with 47% of teachers leaving the profession before retirement. The United Nations reports that the pandemic is the most

challenging crisis since World War II (Desautels, 2020). Students are also sensing the need for change and identified stress management as their top priority when asked what topics they would like to learn about (SDD, 2022g). Collectively, the school community is ready for a calmer environment. Despite tough times, educators are united by a moral imperative to serve students and hold onto hope that brighter days are ahead.

While I would like to dive in and disrupt the school discipline system, Dugan (2021) reminds transformative leaders to go slow as change will only be successful when the system is ready. Stroh (2015) compares conventional thinking with systems thinking to show the difference in mindsets. Table 1 outlines the differences between conventional thinking and systems thinking. Conventional thinking assumes problems are easy to trace, others are to blame and short-term consequences like sending a child to the office will positively shift behaviour. Systems thinking honours the complexity of behaviour, encourages discussion, and recognizes that staff and students have a role in creating connected relationships. Relationships serve as the most powerful tool to shift behaviour (Portilla et al., 2014). Table 1 indicates the contrast in thinking that can occur within a school and explains why some staff are waiting for change to happen while others are ready to serve as change agents becoming part of the solution. This table reminds me of the Dutch advertising slogan "You are not stuck in traffic. You are traffic" (Howden, 2015). While some staff may assign blame outside of the organization, others recognize possibilities exist within the organization to make transformative change. The key is to help staff recognize their agency and see systems as something they have helped create rather than something that exists outside of and independent to them (Stroh, 2015). For complex problems to be solved, individuals need to recognize how the unwittingly contributed to the problems (Stroh, 2015).

Table 1

A Comparison of Conventional Thinking and Systems Thinking

Conventional Thinking	Belief About Behaviour	Systems Thinking	Belief About Behaviour
The connection between problems and causes is easy to trace.	Children choose to misbehave.	The relationship between problems and their causes is indirect and not obvious.	Behaviour is a symptom of unmet needs.
Others are to blame for problems and must be the ones to change.	Blame parents, past teachers, video games, community.	We unwittingly create our own problems and have significant influence in solving them through changing our behaviour.	Co-regulation allows the adult to shift their own behavior to help students calm.
A policy designed to achieve short-term success will also assure long-term success.	Sending children out of class will teach them not to misbehave.	Most quick fixes have unintended consequences. They make no difference or can make matters worse in the long run.	Children with challenging behaviour require more love and support, not less.

Note. Adapted from *Systems thinking for social change* (p. 15), by D. P. Stroh, 2015, Chelsea Green Publishing. Copyright 2015 by David Peter Stroh.

Each staff member is at a different starting place, with a range of beliefs about behaviour. Grain (2022) explains that every person is at a different point in their critical beginning: some understand the need for a critical lens while others may hold onto their privilege and not yet recognize the inequities they perpetuate. "Real change starts with recognizing that we are part of the systems we seek to change. The fear and distrust we seek to remedy also exist within us –as do the anger, sorrow, doubt, and frustration" (Senge et al., 2014, p. 27). Everyone has a role to play in the pursuit of equity, decolonization, and equity (Grain, 2022).

As the principal my responsibilities are diverse and complex. The principal's disposition sets the tone within the school; therefore, it is crucial I take care of my own wellbeing so that I can show up and serve others. Goleman et al. (2013) confirm that leaders create the conditions for others to thrive, noting that 50-70% of how employees view their work culture depends on the actions of the leader. It is crucial that I acknowledge this responsibility, and model wellbeing, equity and decolonization within my leadership. Personal mastery calls for an ongoing pursuit of

personal growth, achieved through journaling, reflecting, practicing mindfulness, and uncovering personal biases (Senge et al., 2014). As a leader I will need to model these practices while also creating space for educators and students to do the same. When we are able show up authentically, we can lead with purpose and practice compassion for others (Northouse, 2022).

The proposed solutions are built around the pre-existing learning team model, with continual entry points for all staff to participate in professional development, book clubs and conversation. Given the existing positive, collaborative culture, I anticipate that the vice-principal, school counsellor, teachers, and support staff will express a willingness to participate in organizational change. This will be discussed at a staff meeting, with an open invitation for all staff to participate. Through informal conversations, I am aware of at least eight staff members hoping to form a learning team for the 2023-2024 school year (personal communication, January 16, 2023). Sharing this responsibility will build professional capacity and increase change readiness, so that the team is able to manage competing forces.

Competing Forces

Competing forces that may impact the readiness for change include staff shortages, workload, resistance to embrace students with challenging behaviour, and othering. British Columbia is facing a teaching shortage (Kulkarni, 2022) and it is not uncommon to have up to eight unfilled vacancies on one school day. This severely impacts the daily operations within schools as support teachers, school counsellors and school administrators are frequently pulled from their assigned duties and asked to teach classes. In addition, the workload of principals has grown significantly with an abundance of managerial tasks being pushed down to the school level. Wang and Pollock (2020) estimate that the average principal in BC works 57 hours per week. Likewise, teachers absorb the system pressures as supports are limited. Teaching has

become one of the most stressful career choices, ranking in line with emergency room doctors (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Approximately 30% of new teachers in Canada are leaving the profession within five years due to the pressures (Carroll, 2018). Staff shortages not only decrease the ability to support students with challenging behaviour, but they also increase the stress levels of educators who are taking on additional tasks. Archbald (2013) notes that while transformative leaders have a vision for change, school principals rarely have time to engage in this meaningful work because they are drowning in managerial tasks. Kise and Holm (2022) provides strategies for leaders to protect their bandwidth so that time can be protected for what matters most. The dance of having an open-door policy while also prioritizing demands of the system and caring for students makes the work of a principal both a science and an art.

Schools are built around human relationships. When emotions run high, it is not uncommon for teachers to want children with challenging behaviour to leave their classrooms as they disrupt the learning for others (Stanforth & Rose, 2018). This us-and-them thinking labels children and supports the belief that they do not belong (Ginwright, 2022). Desautels (2020) confirms that a shift in discipline away from punishment and towards an ability to help students regulate begins with educators being able to regulate themselves. The stress level of educators can become an unintended competing force philosophically working against the needs of students with challenging behaviour. These factors will be considered in the proposed solutions.

Strategies and Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

Complex problems cannot be solved with simple solutions. Over 70% of change initiatives fail as leaders oversimply the problem (Higgs & Rowland, 2007) or they fail to acknowledge the right change drivers. The right drivers propel the human spirit (Fullan, 2021).

Change Drivers

Fullan (2021) indicates the right drivers for whole system success include wellbeing and learning, social intelligence, equality investments, and systemness.

Wellbeing

As a principal I hear time and time again, especially from experienced teachers, "What I am doing is no longer working!" There is an awareness that the needs of today's students are more complex than prior to the global pandemic. Meeting the emotional needs of dysregulated students can be stressful for educators. The global pandemic has exacerbated wellbeing issues and highlighted systemic inequities (Harris & Jones, 2020). "Working in these demanding and chaotic circumstances, the pressure is relentless, the options are limited, and the sleepless nights are frequent" (Harris & Jones, 2020, p. 244). The best thing educators can do for their students is take care of their own wellbeing (Badenock, 2018). Fullan (2021) suggests that post pandemic, wellbeing must become a priority in system change. The BC Mental Health Strategy calls on school leaders to find ways to support the wellbeing of both students and staff (BC Ministry of Education, 2020). In a recent WSD student forum, students prioritized mental health and wellbeing as their top priorities (SDD, 2022g). "Students, including very young ones, are the most powerful changemakers of all" (Fullan, 2021, p. 35). The dissatisfaction with the status quo blended with the hope and desire to improve wellbeing creates an openness for new ideas which serves as a change driver (Gaubatz & Ensminger, 2017).

Social Intelligence

Social intelligence refers to the energy that comes from connection and collaboration (Fullan, 2021). Technology cannot replace the momentum that comes from strong human connections (Fullan, 2021). I am entering my fifth year as principal of Adelaide Elementary. I

have positive working relationships with staff, students, parents, and the community. When principals have trusting relationships and work collaboratively with all stakeholders, a climate of success is more likely (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). I am fortunate to be in a position where trusting relationships will serve as a change driver increasing the likelihood of success.

Equality Investments

Canadians have been deeply impacted by harm caused at residential schools and the mistreatment of Indigenous people (Shields & Gélinas-Proulx, 2022). Working towards Truth and Reconciliation is a moral imperative and professional duty recognized by the staff (SD, 2022b). The results of the WSD Equity Scan expose inequities towards marginalized students (SDD, 2022a). Fullan (2021) notes that there must be an explicit commitment to work towards decolonization and anti-racism to overcome oppression. Inequality will continue to exist as long as discrimination exists. As educators become aware of their personal biases and recognize injustices, growing momentum will serve as a change driver.

Systemness

Introducing the use of CSL tools has expanded systems thinking within the WSD. These tools have flattened power relationships and given students an amplified voice. Students are invited to help set policy, attend board meetings, contribute to partner group discussions, and provide feedback to the superintendent. This spirit of collaboration and inclusion will support transformational change. Systemness means that everyone in the system feels that they are a part of the system (Fullan, 2021). When all stakeholders or community members are invited to the table, the left hand knows what the right hand is doing. This coordinated approach increases the probability that change will be sustainable.

Given the organizational context, change readiness and identified change drivers, three plausible solutions have been identified: professional development, Indigenous wisdom, and an equity pivot. Each of these solutions would reduce the harm of punitive and exclusionary discipline in elementary schools.

Solution 1: Professional Development

Solution one looks to build capacity in educators through professional learning. The quote that resonates, and makes solution one worthy of consideration, comes from Greene (2016) where he reports that:

> Our knowledge of behaviorally challenging kids has expanded dramatically over the past
>
> forty to fifty years and it turns out that a lot of what we were thinking about those kids—
>
> and doing to them—doesn't square up with what we now know about them. (p. xv)

This quote captures the gap between research and practice and helps explain the lack of cohesion at Adelaide Elementary. While early career teachers may have completed coursework that includes an up to date understanding of student behaviour, others may have not received any professional training in this area. Support staff, including lunch hour supervisors who oversee children during their outdoor free play, receive no training related to student behaviour, yet they are asked to help children resolve conflict peacefully when problems occur. With such discrepancies in training amongst school staff, a solution grounded in building professional capacity is paramount. This solution would include activation of a school learning team to coordinate professional learning which could take place throughout the year at monthly staff meetings, on professional development days, or outside the timetable. Topics may include neuroscience, trauma-informed practice, SEL and student wellbeing. Planning could include guest speakers, a book club, time to collaborate and share ideas, or mini workshops hosted by the

learning team for teachers, support staff, and parents. The learning team would meet regularly, using the transformative wheel of change to guide implementation.

As the principal, I would also pay particular attention to research that correlates educator and student wellness. Educators' SEL competencies strongly influence their ability to meet the SEL needs of students (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). When adults are feeling confident and calm, students pick up on this emotion (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). If I expect educators to create a learning environment where children love coming to school, then it is my responsibility to create a work environment where educators love coming to work. Solution one serves as an entry point building on the systems and structures that currently exist in the WSD. It builds capacity in educators and reduces the gap between research and practice. However, the pitfall of this solution is that it does not require educators to look beyond Western perspectives, nor does it speak to the systemic inequities that exist within school discipline. It is simply, first order change that builds capacity and cohesion amongst educators (Bartunek & Moch, 1987). This shift addresses the knowledge gap, and may provide new tools for educators to use, though a first order change does not challenge system inequities or consider potential biases that may disproportionately impact marginalized students.

Solution 2: Indigenous Wisdom

Indigenous ways of knowing are rooted in compassion and the empowerment of community (Khalifa et al., 2016). Rather than learning *about* Indigenous cultures, educators can go deeper and learn *from* an Indigenous perspective. The WSD (2021a) Indigenous worldviews guide offers the following reflective question: *"Am I celebrating Indigenous brilliance and knowledge more than I discuss Indigenous trauma within my classroom?"* Solution two turns to Indigenous wisdom to redesign school discipline through restorative justice, holism, flattened

power structures, stories, and a collective responsibility to take care of children. "Our ancestors recognized the importance of connectedness and the toxicity of exclusion" (Perry & Winfrey, 2021, p. 230). The Western world is filled with policies and practices that have led to marginalization and undermined community (Perry & Winfrey, 2021). Solution two looks to learn from Indigenous perspectives, to create second order change where policies and practices are reimagined to create compassionate discipline where students are pulled closer rather than pushed away (Brokenleg, 2015).Western thought suggests that well-behaved children are good and poorly behaved children are bad whereas Indigenous cultures do not see behaviour as good or evil or right or wrong but rather an integral part of learning (Styres, 2017). Indigenous cultures have taken a collective approach to understanding behaviour using powerful tools such as circles, the medicine wheel, storytelling, and restorative practices to strengthen individuals (Styres, 2017). These methods provide an excellent starting place when reimagining school discipline.

Like solution one, the implementation of solution two would begin with the formation of a learning team that would meet regularly using the transformative wheel to guide change. It is crucial that "classroom practices rooted in Western philosophies are regenerated to align with Indigenous values and beliefs regarding educating children as whole beings—indeed, not only for Indigenous children but for all children" (Styres, 2017, p. 125). What this solution lacks is the deeply personal work that uncovers biases and disrupts power. Wagamese (2016) beautifully captures this sentiment when he offers "Nothing in the universe ever grew from the outside in" (p. 23). Solution three addresses the need to reimagine school discipline through a lens of equity.

Solution 3: An Equity Pivot Towards Healing

Solution three takes responsibility for systemic harm and turns the attention inwards. Solution three looks beyond new curriculum and pedagogy and extends towards the development

of a collective critical conscience, uncovering inequitable practices, reflecting on personal biases, and accepting that many norms and routines within education contribute and cause harm to marginalized students. Ginwright (2022) coins this type of effort as an equity pivot. In solution three, the learning team would review school-based discipline data and exposes inequities. Office referrals and discipline data would be assessed alongside demographic information to expose systemic inequities such as higher rates of discipline for racialized or marginalized students in comparison with the dominant class. Given that Sanders (2022) reports BIPOC students in Canada are three to four times more likely to be suspended than students from the dominant white class, this review of data would likely help expose inequities.

The learning team would coach staff in equity work, using each staff meeting as a time to learn together. The WSD has recently hired one district helping teacher and one district vice-principal to oversee equity work. These WSD staff members would be a valuable resource for the learning team. This solution requires personal commitments and reflection to uncover and repair inequitable practices. This work may evoke emotion as it is difficult for educators to come to terms with the realization that some of their practices have contributed to the marginalization of students (Shields, 2020). Solution three may be the most difficult to implement as it challenges the status quo and asks educators to see the school system as one of the contributory factors impacting student behaviour. Shields (2020) notes, failure of school reform is not because of a lack of initiatives, but rather a lack of critical analysis to acknowledge power, privilege, and cultural norms of exclusion. In a recent study, educators were asked to brainstorm all the reasons a child may not be succeeding at school (Shields, 2020). Only 5% of participants considered the impact of school itself, and the responsibility educators could take to transform the system. This indicates that that educators may not be ready to embrace solution three as a starting place.

Just as the WSD has completed a district-wide equity scan, this solution would dig deep to hear voices from the margins and learn from student experiences. Solution three would include a school-based equity scan to understand the stories of students most frequently subjected to punitive and exclusionary discipline. Work would stem beyond conversations about equity and good intentions to measure change in practices. Too often, schools talk about equity while failing to disrupt systems and take real action (Welton et al., 2018).

Shifting from a colonial discipline structure that supports punishment and exclusion towards an equity driven, compassionate, strength-based model will take time and patience. Equity is the lighthouse that will remain in the distance as long as oppression exists in schools. Deep structures of inequity are protected by pathologies of silence (Shields, 2004). Equity work requires more than improving conditions for some—it also requires a disruption of power imbalances that exist for the privileged (Shields, 2018). Discipline models are deeply engrained in the school system as they work for the students who do not need them, and perpetuate inequities for those who do (Desautels, 2019). It will take time and deep commitment to disrupt existing knowledge frameworks that best serve those with privilege.

Ethical Considerations

Western perspectives are grounded in individualism, rationality over emotion, and an ethic of justice determining right versus wrong (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2019). The ethic of justice is the root of school discipline policies. This mindset assigns blame to those displaying challenging behaviour. Weaving Indigenous ways of knowing within discipline practices reshapes the lens to which children are viewed and considers the impact to the classroom community when a child is excluded. This mindset represents both an ethic of care, caring for our fundamental human orientation towards one another (Noddings, 2013) and an ethic of

critique, considering a social justice mindset and an opportunity to eliminate oppression (Shapiro

& Stefkovich, 2016). By incorporating Indigenous wisdom, approaches, and responses to

students with challenging behaviour may begin to shift. Given that students in elementary school

are still young children, a shift away from punitive responses grounded in an ethic of justice to

warm and compassionate responses grounded in an ethic of care seems not only appropriate, but

morally just. Both solution one and two align with ethics of the profession as the BC teaching

standards require a commitment to professional learning and a commitment to improving

Indigenous knowledge (BC Teachers' Council, 2019). While solution three is the most ethical

solution as it works to eliminate oppression and aspire for equity, wellbeing, and decolonization,

it is the least attainable given the organizational readiness. This will need be considered.

Comparing Solutions

Institutions, by their very nature, are deeply entrenched in their history, unspoken norms,

and fabric of how they operate, making the status quo difficult to disrupt (Welton et al., 2018).

Equity-based problems of practice are not simple, making change efforts unpredictable (Mintrop

& Zumpe, 2019). Rather than prescribing simple solutions, leaders must find a way to let the

future emerge (Pregmark, 2022). The stark reality of the scope and sequence required to

transform a school from a colonial system to an equity-based, compassionate system leave

solution three as a long-term target rather than a starting place. Appendix B compares the three

solutions and visually depicts why solution three may be the most difficult to implement.

While equity is the ideal aspiration, foundational change will not be possible without first

addressing knowledge gaps between research and practice. As educators increase their

understanding of behaviour, and learn from Indigenous wisdom, they will be better suited to

practice two-eyed seeing balancing the best of Western and Indigenous pedagogies. As a leader I

cannot direct staff to look inward and shift their mindsets, though I can plant seeds and help raise awareness of the equity work needed in schools. Solution three, although the most transformative, assumes staff acknowledge the harm caused by punitive and exclusionary discipline, especially towards children at the margins. Not all staff are ready for this change. Given this, the chosen solution is a blend of solutions one and two, leaving solution three as a long-term goal. From this point forward, I will refer to the chosen solution as *relational discipline* blending professional capacity with the core values of Indigenous cultures, putting the child at the centre, and learning through relationships (Keels, 2021).

Conclusion

Relational discipline begins with the core premise that behaviour appears in relationship with others (Kenny & Fraser, 2012). When behaviour is undesirable, the goal is to look at the existing relationships to determine what needs to be strengthened. What type of relationship does the child have with school, with the curriculum, with educators, with family, with peers or with self? Which relationship needs support? These questions will be answered when educators build professional capacity to better understand student behaviour and lean into Indigenous wisdom for guidance. Chapter three offers the necessary tools for implementing change and will outline how solution one and two can be woven together to create the fabric for a decolonized school discipline system in elementary schools.

Chapter 3: Implementation, Communication and Evaluation

Chapter one and chapter two established the organizational context of Adelaide Elementary, described the problem of practice, and introduced the transformative wheel as the chosen change model. Three plausible solutions were discussed: building professional capacity, embracing Indigenous wisdom, and an equity pivot. While the third solution seeks the greatest transformation, it will be most impactful when the organization is ready. A solution blending professional development and Indigenous wisdom aligns with organizational readiness. The blending of solutions one and two, referred to as *relational discipline*, reaffirms that positive student-educator relationships are the most effective tool to reduce challenging behaviour (Portilla et al., 2014). Relational discipline captures the essence of Indigenous wisdom as relationships with self, others, and the land are the nucleus of Indigenous pedagogy (Kenny & Fraser, 2012). Chapter three will discuss change implementation, communication, evaluation, and next steps as Adelaide Elementary strives to reimagine school discipline.

Change Implementation Plan

Chapter one and chapter two outlined why change is necessary. The change implementation plan will outline the steps needed to promote relational discipline with all stakeholders. The First Nations Education Steering Committee (2018) collaborated with the BC Ministry of Education to create First Peoples' Principles of Learning (FPPL). One of the FPPL reminds educators that *learning takes patience and time* (FNESC, 2018). Given this, change will be implemented throughout the school year, with many entry points for students, parents, and educators to participate. Compassionate systems leadership (CSL) tools will be used to guide generative conversations. CSL believes profound interconnectedness sits behind system change, and increased system awareness is required to pay attention to those who may otherwise be

missed (Senge, 2006). Transformative learning theory (TLT) is founded on the belief that deep learning can change perspectives (Wang et al., 2019). The chosen solution, *relational discipline,* combines CSL and TLT to suggest a new way of viewing student behaviour. Relational discipline heals, repairs relationships, and strengthens individuals (Ginwright, 2022). The time is now to implement change and improve the school experience for underserved students. In the words of Indigenous author Jo Chrona (2022a), "*Wayi Wah!"*—Let's go; it's time!

Alignment with the Organizational Context

The Wahkohtowin School District (WSD) mission statement strives to create an environment where all children feel valued (SDD, 2022c), yet punitive and exclusionary approaches remain common practice. There is an understanding that children learn at different paces, therefore, if a child struggles in math, they are not sent to the office. Unfortunately, this same compassion is not extended to children with challenging behaviour. Students who lack the skills to self-regulate are met with a range of responses from compassion to punishment (Greene, 2016). This does not align with the district vision, however, as discussed in chapter one, the WSD is at a turning point where there is a growing commitment to understand inequities and support marginalized students.

Teachers in BC are required to meet teaching standard 9 which calls on educators to integrate Indigenous ways of knowing (BC Teachers' Council, 2019). Decolonizing pedagogical practices requires learning, unlearning, reimagining, and relearning (Smith et al., 2019). Embracing relational discipline practices encompassing approaches such as sharing circles, restorative justice and leaning through story will help staff indigenize their practices. These practices can be developed as staff build professional capacity and lean into Indigenous wisdom, practicing relational discipline.

Managing the Transition and Change

At the start of the school year, the WSD puts out an invitation for educators to submit proposals for learning team grants (SDD, 2022b). Given the change readiness at Adelaide Elementary, I anticipate at least ten educators will participate in a one-year learning team focussed on reimagining school discipline. The wheel of transformative change shown in Figure 3 will be used to shift practice, rooted in the four guiding principles: courage, collaboration, creativity, and connection. As discussed in chapter two, the wheel blends the work of Senge et al. (2019), Safir and Dugan (2021), and Styres (2017). The plan to manage the transition and change is described below using the four quadrants of the wheel.

The Wheel of Transformative Change: Courage

The courage quadrant includes the formation of the learning team, exposing systemic inequities and disrupting the status quo. As educators within the system, it takes courage to stand up and acknowledge that the system itself is causing harm, and that it is the responsibility of educators to do better once they know better. During this initial phase, the learning team will meet biweekly to create a vision for change, determine roles and order resources. As this is the focus area of my OIP, I will share recommended resources to draw attention to the urgent need for change. As a school leader grounded in the critical paradigm, I am committed to work that seeks social justice. Safir and Dugan (2021) believe the education system is humanizing itself and yearning for reinvention. Particular attention will be given to research that reveals the inequities of traditional discipline structures rooted in colonialism (Styres, 2017).

The Wheel of Transformative Change: Collaboration

The learning team will act as change agents, sharing their learning with staff and parents throughout the year. Having a strong team of early adopters will build momentum to support

system change (Burke, 2018). This quadrant includes capacity building of educators, sharing learning with parents, and deep listening with students. Such collaboration models the indigenous value of reciprocity, learning *with* and *from* one another (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001). The learning team will look for opportunities to connect, reminding stakeholders that social justice work is everyone's work—everyone is invited to participate (Collins et al., 2021).

The Wheel of Transformative Change: Creativity

The third quadrant gives space for creativity. In this stage, steps include amplifying student voice, gathering data and stories, and piloting new approaches. CSL tools will be used to show the importance of personal reflection, generative conversations, and systems awareness (Senge et al., 2019). The learning team will focus on systems within the school that can be disrupted to better serve marginalized students, increase a sense of belonging and reduce challenging behaviours. For example, once per week, the school hosts a school-based-team meeting to discuss students who are struggling. The CSL iceberg tool (Senge et al., 2019) shown in Appendix C will be used as a framework to shift conversations from the unwanted behaviours observed to the feelings, emotions or skill gaps that exist below the surface. Keeping creativity as a core value encourages open dialogue, the sharing of ideas and a practice of wondering (Styres, 2017). This quest for knowledge creates a perpetual inquiry model as staff continually seek out wellbeing, equity, and decolonization. Decolonized education invites participation, gives voice to students and fosters renewal, restoration, and hope (Lopez, 2020). The learning team will continue to pilot initiatives, report back at learning team meetings, and suggest strategies that foster a sense of community while reducing challenging behaviour. These examples can be used in continual report-outs and training sessions with staff and parents.

The Wheel of Transformative Change: Connection

The final quadrant of the transformative wheel focuses on connection. This stage includes reflection, sharing stories of success, and strengthening relationships. Responding to student behaviour through a restorative lens looks to repair relationships and strengthen individuals rather than finding fault (Michail, 2011). Capper (2019) confirms it is much easier to blame the child, the child's family, or society than it is to alter the white normative core of the school system. Rather than asking who was right and who was wrong, restorative justice asks who was harmed and which relationships need to be repaired (Gregory et al., 2014). This shift in thinking teaches all children they belong in the school community. Brokenleg (2015) notes that typical discipline models built on colonial structures teach 'unbelonging' as they push students away. In alignment with WSD requirements, the learning team would collaboratively share their learning with the broader WSD community at an end of year symposium. This allows learning to spread beyond Adelaide Elementary and plant seeds for change throughout the WSD.

Timeline of Change Implementation

The wheel of transformative change is designed to align with the school calendar. Figure 9 outlines the change implementation plan, noting key events including learning team meetings, staff meetings, parent education nights and professional development days. The team will also meet informally, as relational pedagogy requires a connected school environment (Reeves & Mare, 2017). Appendix D provides additional detail regarding the roles, responsibilities, resources, time, an ongoing spiral of inquiry and reflection.

While Figure 9 shows a linear progression, it is important to note that this implementation model is built on the belief that change is continuous and circular in nature (Styres, 2017). CSL training encourages educators to hold space for deep reflection and personal

growth so that they can be present in their interactions with students. Richard Wagamese

eloquently captures the value of reflection, noting that "the sound of silence is the sound of self-

emerging" (Wagamese, 2016, p. 24). Likewise, Safir and Dugan (2021) remind educators that

"every moment is an equity moment" (p. 197). While the intent is to understand stories and

amplify student voice, time with students has not been scheduled. This is intentional, recognizing

that meaningful moments that strengthen relationships can happen at any time. Every

conversation has potential for change. The transformative wheel will serve as a guiding tool

reminding the learning team to model courage, collaboration, creativity, and connection.

Figure 9

Change Implementation Plan for the 2023/2024 School Year
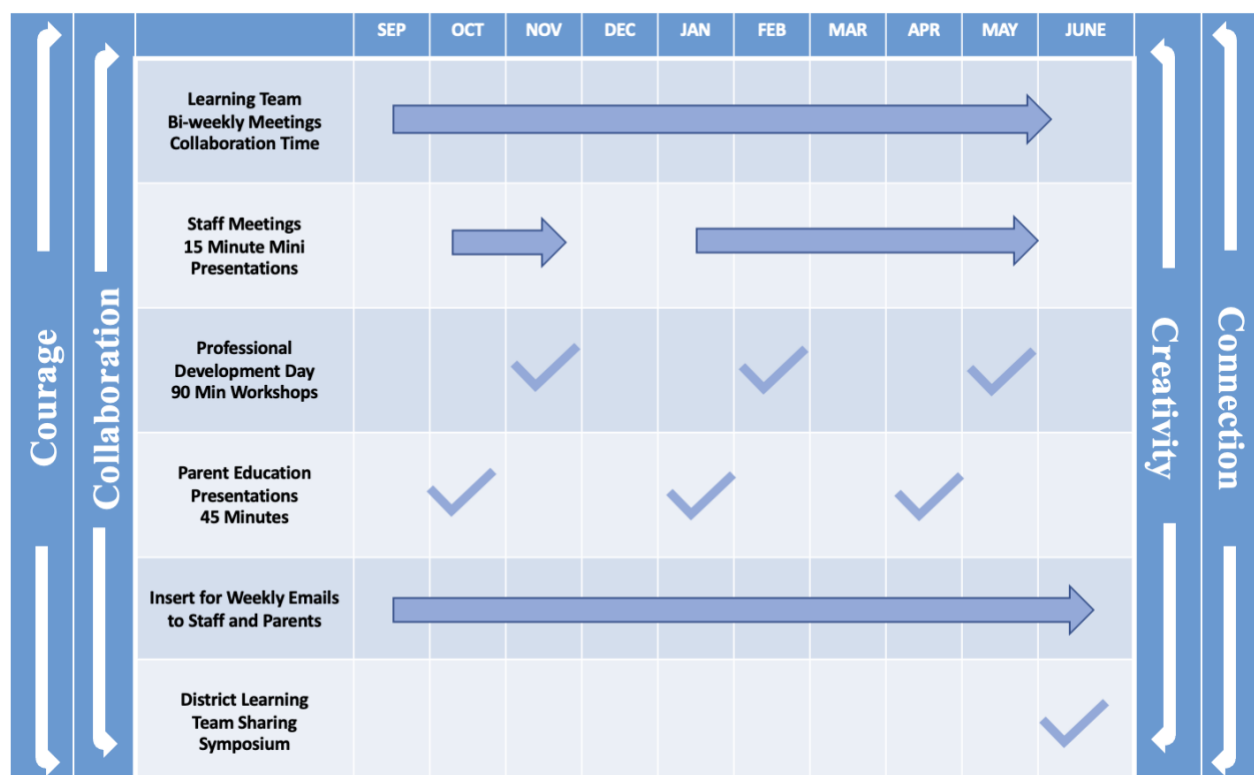
Note. Although this visual is linear in nature, all actions are rooted in the belief that learning is holistic and change requires continual courage, collaboration, creativity, and connection.

The pursuit of equity, wellbeing, and decolonization is never done. While Figure 9 outlines a schedule for year one, the wheel of transformative change can be used in successive years to continue to strive for school improvement.

Community Members Reactions and Potential Barriers

Human systems are impacted by emotion. Challenging student behaviour can negatively impact students and staff and disrupt the learning environment (Weeks, 2008). When people are hurt by others, it is difficult to lean in with compassion (Carrington, 2020). When parents feel their child has been victimized at school, it is common for them to reach out to the teacher or principal and ask for the offending child to be punished. While such requests put pressure on the school system to continue with colonial discipline rooted in punishment, it is driven by a need for safety, which can be accomplished through relational, inclusive discipline (Michail, 2011). When behaviour significantly disrupts the safety of the school, the WSD Safe and Caring Schools Department reviews behaviour through a violent threat risk assessment. During this time, students are invited to work offsite at the Safe and Caring schools' office rather than with peers until the safety of the school is restored (SDD, 2022e). Counselling supports, or support from community agencies such as RCMP or community restorative justice program may be considered (SDD, 2022f). Rather than punishing challenging behaviour, this OIP supports ways to create compassionate communities where challenging behaviour is reduced. The learning team will create opportunities for all stakeholders to learn from current research and Indigenous wisdom while reimagining school discipline.

Time and energy also serve as a barrier, as schools are dynamic organizations with many moving parts and educators suffer from initiative fatigue (Dudar et al., 2017). It will take

dedication, and flexibility for the learning team to implement change while juggling unexpected twists that come from the competing demands of personal and professional commitments.

Walking the Talk – My Leadership

Shields (2010) points out that principals who serve as transformative leaders have one foot in the dominant structure of power and one foot in the oppositional power advocating for change. This reminds me to consider my own bias as I advocate for social change while also experiencing the inherent power and privilege that comes from the role of principal. As I practice the CSL tools of reflection, I will need to continually remind myself to see problems through the perspective of others and look to the margins to make sure all voices are heard.

My motivation is influenced by the stories of students who have struggled within our system. As I 'walk the talk' I think of their names, their experiences, and their influence. I am reminded of the First People's principle "learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors" (FNESC, 2018). The work of educators is complex. As a school leader, I need to humanize the school experience not only for students but also for staff. If I am asking staff to use the iceberg tool to look under the surface and understand student behaviour, I need to extend the same compassion to staff. Finally, and perhaps the most difficult, I need to remember that I too have an iceberg and external factors that impact my leadership. Interconnectedly, school leader well-being contributes significantly to teacher well-being (Cherkowski & Walker, 2016). Principals must protect their bandwidth and take care of their own wellbeing so that they have the energy to serve others (Kise & Holm, 2022). Senge reminds leaders that self-work is the hardest work as it requires less vulnerability to hope others change. (Reese, 2020). When I reflect and take care of my wellbeing, then, and only then, will I be walking the talk.

Achieving Short-Term, Middle-Term and Long-Term Goals

This problem of practice calls for first, second, and third order change. As current research is shared, first order incremental change will occur as knowledge increases and influences practice (Bartunek & Moch, 1987). For example, Desautels (2019) offers strategies to help educators serve as co-regulators, recognizing that students can not engage in reflective discussions about their behavior until their body and mind return to a regulated state.

Second order change will occur as educators blend Western and Indigenous perspectives. Such juxtaposition creates the tension needed to re-examine beliefs and shift schemas that impact decision-making. Third order change, that models transformative learning, and reimagining school discipline through a lens of equity, decolonization, and wellbeing may happen at different times for different educators. Changing beliefs is the deepest and most challenging part of system transformation (Fullan, 2021). Table 2 outlines short, medium, and long-term goals.

Table 2

Learning Team Goals Over Time

	Short Term Goals	**Medium Term Goals**	**Long Term Goals**
Principal	Model relational discipline with office referrals Lead learning team	Continue to offer district wide learning series on challenging behaviour.	Eliminate suspensions Revised school and district code of conduct
Educators	Attend workshops to increase knowledge on behaviour	Embed SEL and trauma informed practices. Proactive culture of care	Two eyed seeing weaving Western and Indigenous pedagogy
Parents	Parent education nights	Reduced parent requests for punishment	Parents as partners supporting all children
Students	Increased opportunities to share their stories	Amplify opportunities for Student Voice	Every student feels seen, heard and understood
Systems	Use CSL tools to understand the stories of students	Embed Restorative Circles into Discipline Model	Every staff member believes every child belongs Eliminate systemic inequities in the management of behaviour.

Note. Benchmarks may be updated as shared knowledge expands.

Inclusion of All

"Whatever the problem, community is the answer. How we are together in our relationship is the solution." (Wheatley, 2012, 47:33) Transformative learning requires deep listening, clear communication, and a focus on relationships. When people notice inequities, they shift the way they see themselves (Brown, 2004). The First Peoples' Principles of Learning (FPPL) recognizes that learning is holistic, experiential, and relational (FNESC, 2018). The learning team will need to offer many entry points, inviting students, parents, and educators to engage in generative conversations. Senge (2020) defines generative conversations as the realization that humans are innately wired to learn, and that when we gather, we form generative social fields where ideas are shaped, knowledge is shared, and creativity flourishes. Generative conversations honour our interconnectedness and value community.

Stakeholders share a collective responsibility for system change. Decades of colonial practices have established systems that privilege some while disadvantaging others, ignoring the need for a focus on equity and wellbeing (Taylor, 2022). When students display challenging behaviour, the onus has been on the students to change rather than critically reflecting on the system that perpetuates inequities. Systems have the illusion of being their own entity, yet systems are the constructs we collectively create. Recognizing the agency we hold shifts our thinking and inspires hope. Together we are an interdependent web capable of change (Andreotti, 2021). Promoting inclusion invites our children to strive for compassionate communities. Moving to a re-imagined model will require clear communication.

Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and the Change Process

Educators are united through a moral purpose to serve children and support their development. Fullan (2003) notes that change is more successful when it is connected to the moral imperative of the organization. Hannay et al. (2013) confirms that change initiatives are more likely to succeed when educators see how the changes will help their students, therefore, this must be front and centre in change communication. Figure 10 outlines the vision of a connected community where stakeholders centre decisions based on student wellbeing.

Figure 10

Vision of a Connected Community
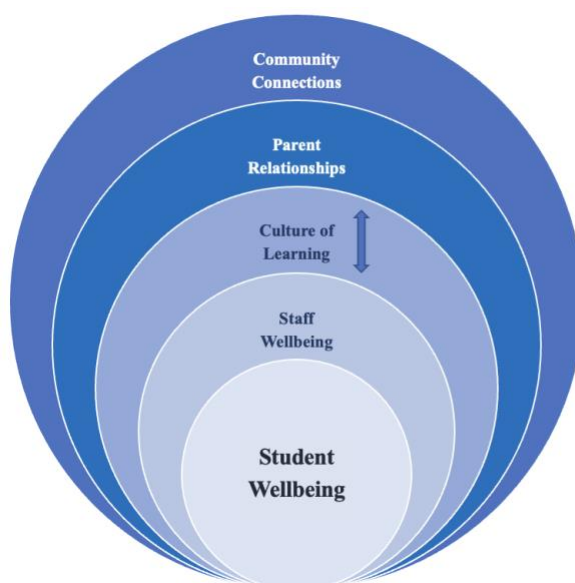
Note. A connected community priorities the wellbeing of all students.

Educators do the best they can for the children they serve, however new research, that understands student behaviour calls for improved practice. As Maya Angelou eloquently advises, "Do the best you can until you know better; then when you know better, do better" (Angelo, 2014). Communication about the need for change and the establishment of a knowledge

mobilization (KMb) plan will center around this moral imperative, creating a learning community that supports the wellbeing of all children.

Creating Awareness of the Need for Change

The first step in the conceptual change model shown in Figure 3 is to create awareness of the need for change by exposing inequities and disrupting existing knowledge frameworks. The learning team will rely on evidence-based research and *street data*—the stories of students, especially those at the margins, who have been negatively impacted by punitive or exclusionary practices (Safir & Dugan, 2021). Dugan (2021) suggests school leaders must begin by drawing attention to the fact that education systems are designed to perpetuate disparities with some children succeeding and others struggling. To create awareness amongst staff and parents, a learning corner will be added to the Adelaide Elementary weekly electronic bulletin, where I will share quick snippets of information. This bulletin is sent every Sunday evening to all staff and parents or guardians at Adelaide Elementary. These snippets will include research findings, examples of best practice, and teachings from Indigenous wisdom. As the school year has 40 weeks, I will create 40 snippets of evidence-based information that can be cut and pasted into weekly communication. Sample snippets are outlined in Appendix E.

While united by a common vision, members of the learning team may have varying levels of knowledge regarding relational discipline. The learning team grant provides funding for shared resources, therefore the learning team will be encouraged to purchase books to support collaborative conversations. Appendix F outlines a list of recommended resources connected to this OIP. These recommended resources can be used to build the professional capacity of the learning team, or they could be used to host book clubs with interested educators. Content from these resources will be useful in preparing professional development sessions for staff meetings,

parent nights, and professional development days. When teachers develop professional learning

communities, they improve their knowledge and classroom practice (Stoll & al., 2006).

While professional learning and evidence-based research can influence practice, school

leaders can also influence the behaviour of educators by modelling the way (Kouzes & Posner,

2021). Every school incident with challenging student behaviour is an opportunity to reimagine

school discipline (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). As an administrative team, the vice-principal and I

are philosophically aligned in our approach and model relational discipline when working with

staff, students, and parents. Taking additional time to explain the rationale behind our decisions

will create a ripple effect. When reporting student incidents, staff will have the opportunity to

complete an incident report that is designed through a relational lens offering restorative

approaches and resolutions. A sample of this report is shown in Appendix G. As school leaders,

the vice principal and I will share our vision for change and engage in brave conversations with

educators who are seeking punitive or exclusionary processes. The compassionate systems tools

will be used to guide these generative conversations (Senge et al., 2019). The iceberg tool shown

in Appendix C shifts the conversation from symptoms to root causes, focusing on healing rather

than punishment. A shift in practice may occur at different times for different educators given

that learning is a cyclical process of experience, reflection, and growth (Kenny & Fraser, 2012).

Knowledge Mobilization

The transformative wheel sets the framework for KMb. The four quadrants of courage,

collaboration, creativity, and connection, include steps that help share knowledge and build

professional capacity. A visual of the KMb plan, using these four quadrants is shown in Figure

11. KMb begins in the east in the courage quadrant as the east represents new beginnings and the

formation of new knowledge (Styres, 2017). This is where systemic inequities will be identified,

and a shared vision will be established. Kotter (2022) emphasizes the importance of creating

urgency at the beginning stages to build awareness for change. This aligns with the WSD

learning team model where the identified change is communicated in the grant application at the

start of the school year (SDD, 2022b).

Figure 11

Knowledge Mobilization Plan Using the Transformative Wheel
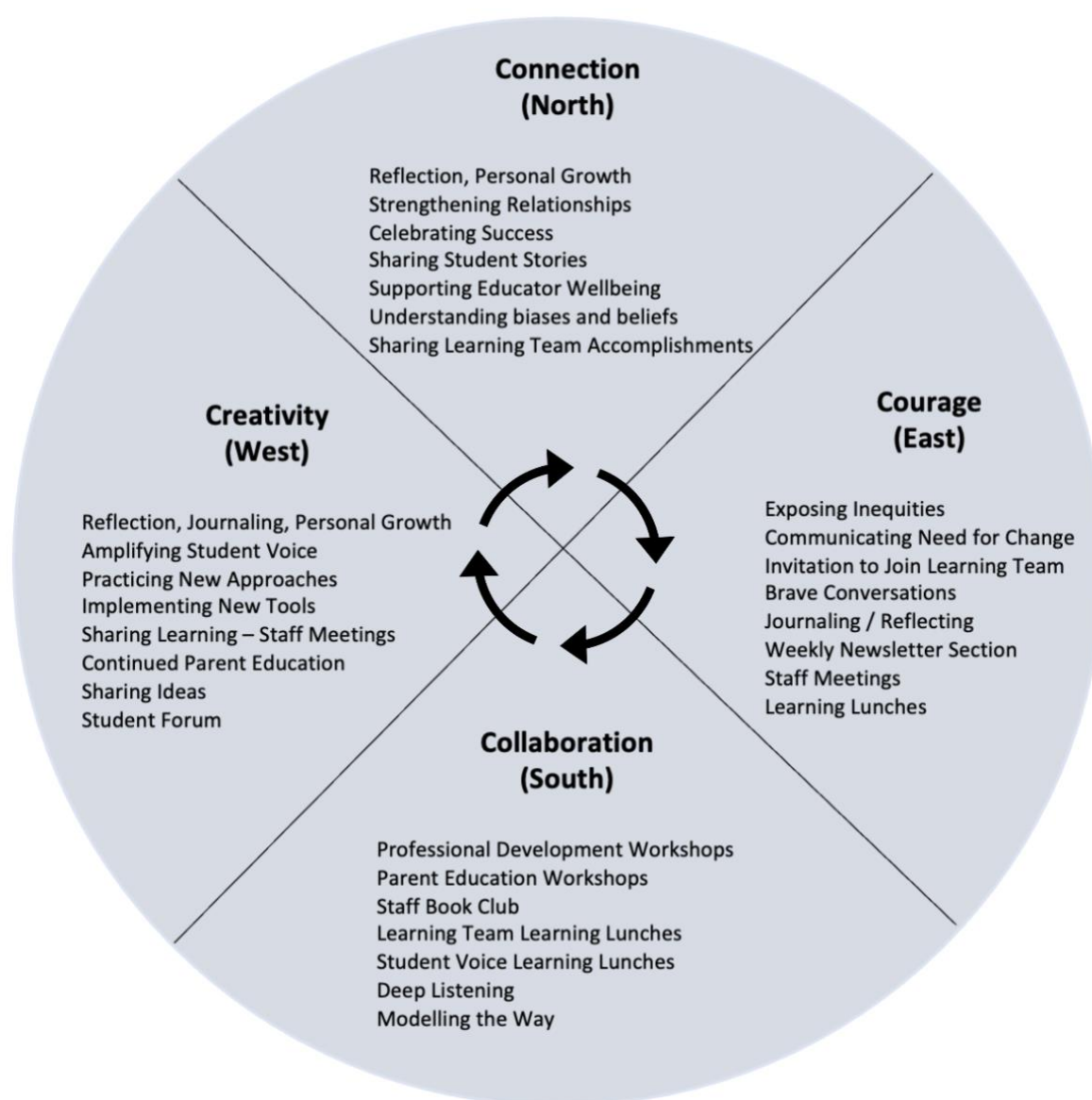
Note. As learning is not linear, the knowledge mobilization plan encompasses all four quadrants
of the transformative wheel: courage, collaboration, creativity, and connection.

The collaboration quadrant includes coming together and engaging in professional learning. KMb is about making decisions with the most current and accurate real-world knowledge (Hewitt, 2021). The learning team will review resources, vet protentional presenters for professional development days, and share learning with educators and parents. KMb occurs through imitation, iteration, improvisation, and inspiration (Hewitt, 2021). Educators will learn from one another and share stories of success. Stories are a compelling way to elicit positive reactions and hold more power than directions or policy requiring change (Hargreaves et al., 2010). Stories are a form of data, a gift from the storyteller to the listener, and a symbol of connection (Kovach, 2021).

The creativity quadrant gives space for new approaches, practice, and collaboration. KMb is best shaped by an ethic of openness, creativity, and collaboration (Hargreaves et al., 2010). Educators ignite curiosity through risk taking, collaboration, and practice. The learning team model creates space for KMb, as a positive interdependence develops where educators build trust and share ideas with one another (Hattie, 2021).

The connection quadrant allows for reflection, celebration, strengthening relationships and learning through stories. KMb that considers Indigenous wisdom recognizes that a commitment is necessary to honour reciprocal relationships, confirming that learning is not one directional (Hewitt, 2021). It will be important for educators to learn from students just as students learn from educators. Safir & Dugan (2021) call on educators to put relationships before rigor and connection before content. CSL provides the tools for educators to reflect on their learning and share with one another checking in to share strengths and stretches (Senge et al., 2019). Relational discipline that embeds Indigenous ways of knowing focuses on healing wounds, repairing relationships, building skills, and connecting community (Brokenleg, 2015). A

shift in thinking occurs when educators recognize that their most powerful tool for managing

behaviour is the relationship they create with the child (Desautels, 2020; Michail, 2011). Coming

together to celebrate stories and reflect on learning will act as a change accelerant, building trust

in new practices and hope for the future.

Communicating Milestones

Educators face competing demands, and the best laid plans can become unhinged without

careful monitoring. The learning team will work to facilitate learning conversations as a team,

with parents, and with staff. Each of these events serves as a step forward, and careful

monitoring will help with change management. Figure 12 shows a proposed list of learning

events that the team will host throughout the year.

Figure 12

Professional Learning Opportunities
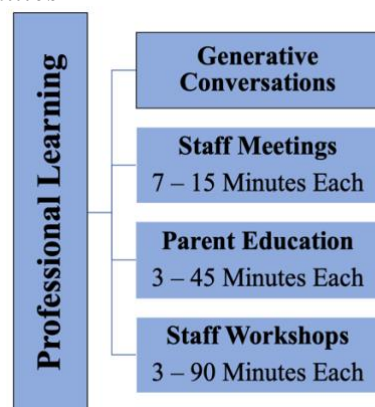
Note. These learning opportunities align with the change implementation plan in chapter two.

It will be important to pause and communicate important milestones. Communicating

important milestones will allow space for celebrating successes, sharing student stories with the

learning community. Stories of success will be shared at staff meetings, in newsletters, and on

the school social media page. Simple posts such as the 'Smile of the Day' celebrating positive

student behaviour reinforces behaviour that the school wants to see. Cavanaugh (2016) confirms

one of the best strategies for behaviour modification is to shift attention to the behaviours you want to see rather than the behaviours you do not want to see. Celebrating success builds momentum and invites others in.

Framing Communication for Intended Audiences

Communication will be adapted for the intended audiences. Consideration will be given as to what resistance may be expected from stakeholders. Stakeholders include educators, the teacher's union, and parents.

Educators

It will be important to ground new approaches in research. Emotions are at play and when frustrations arise, educators want to know that they are supported by school administration. This need for support sometimes comes with a request for punishment to teach the dysregulated child a lesson. It will be important to hear concerns, discuss potential strategies, and find common ground. Educators want to know the behaviour will not happen again. By working together to identify root causes and offer the necessary supports, the probability of reoccurrence declines (Phifer & Hull, 2016). If punishment and exclusion are the chosen strategies, and the child feels shamed, the likelihood of reoccurrence rises, as hurt kids hurt other kids (Whitaker, 2020). Punitive approaches to behaviour can impact self-worth, lead to social isolation and re-traumatize children (Phifer & Hull, 2016). Restorative processes consider the teacher-student relationship and provide guiding questions to ensure the student returns to the situation strengthened (Farr et al., 2020). Guiding questions include: What happened? Who was harmed? What relationships need repair? What supports are needed? What can we learn from this? Brokenleg (2015) reminds educators to focus on developing a sense of belonging, rather than

unbelonging, when children present challenging behaviour. Challenging behaviour is a reminder to pull children closer, not push them away.

Parents

Parents tend to seek punishment for others when their child has been negatively impacted by a peer. Safety is a top priority, and clear communication is needed to make sure parents are heard, and that plans exist to ensure safety moving forward. Face to face meetings allow for improved communication, and an explanation of chosen consequences. Meeting together allows for generative conversations where approaches can be explained in general terms to outline how the school is supporting the social emotional development of students to prevent reoccurrence.

Union Resistance

The WSD teachers' union encourages teachers to refuse work if they feel conditions are unsafe. This can put teachers in a difficult space when they recognize a child in their class struggles with self-regulation. Unfortunately, traditional discipline practices aggravate situations, as they are ineffective with children who lack regulation skills or those who have experienced trauma (Ablon & Pollastri, 2018; Phifer & Hull, 2016). A shift in mindset from will-to-skill allows educators to understand that challenging behaviour is not willful, but rather a symptom of a skill gap. Children are doing the best they can with the strategies they have developed (Ablon & Pollastri, 2018; Greene, 2016). Research indicates that a shift in practice not only improves the wellbeing of students, but also improves the wellbeing of staff (Causton & MacLeod, 2020). Staff turnover decreases, collaboration and teamwork increase, staff injuries decrease, and challenging behaviour declines (Ablon & Pollastri, 2018). These will be key points to emphasize so that the teacher's union supports relational discipline.

Giving Voice to Students

While research is important, children are often are most powerful teachers (Fullan, 2021). Learning takes place when educators try new approaches and strive for success with their most challenging students. McKibben (2021) asks teachers to think about their most challenging student, and rather than thinking about what they can do to fix their problem behaviour, asking what they can do to strengthen their relationship and be in community with them. Carrington (2020) suggests five steps for re-connection which include getting down to their level, using eye contact, providing food to calm the brain, showing genuine interest, and helping the child co-regulate. Safir and Dugan (2021) call on educators to seek out street data—the voices from the margins, to learn from student's stories. The WSD is committed to bi-annual student forums that ask students guiding questions to understand when they feel seen, heard, and understood. While the student forum is a district-wide event, this process could be repeated at Adelaide Elementary to learn from students to capture their voice and understand their perspective. The Latin phrase *nihil de nobis* translates to 'nothing about us, without us' and reminds educators that solutions are most successful when those impacted by the decision are included in the process (Herbert, 2017). Fullan (2021) confirms children are our most powerful changemakers. Likewise, Kennedy (2023) notes that student voice should become the centre of educational decision-making. The lived experience of students will be an important consideration when evaluating change.

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

System change is complex and does not always go as planned. Stroh (2015) reminds leaders to stay on course, noting that organizations can take on a life of their own, and it is common to experience moments of frustration when implementation does not go as planned. Given that change takes time, educators must remember that the pursuit of equity is an ideal

rather than an absolute, and that each step forward, or each improved student experience, is an accomplishment. To stay on course and gauge progress objectively, it is necessary to establish monitoring and evaluation systems. Monitoring collects data to track implementation, while evaluation considers the data and assesses whether change implementation is adding value (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Tools will be used for both monitoring and evaluation.

Tools and Measures

Qualitative and quantitative data will be collected to monitor and evaluate progress. Performance indicators include implementation data, student behaviour data, pre-existing survey data, and lived experience from educators and students. Each indicator is discussed below.

Implementation Data

The learning team will share knowledge through professional learning with staff and parents. These include 40 newsletter snippets, 10 staff meeting presentations, three parent education workshops and three staff workshops. A tracking sheet to monitor implementation data is shown in Appendix H. Data collection includes the number of sessions delivered and the number of people participating from the intended target audience. Each of the workshops will include a feedback form for participants to reflect on their experience. A sample feedback form is provided in Appendix I. The feedback form will measure impact, reviewing an attitudinal change based on participants' experiences. This will be useful for tweaking presentations for subsequent audiences or future presentations.

Student Behaviour Data

As new approaches to student behaviour are implemented, it will be important to track whether they are having a positive impact. Student behaviour data will be monitored using a tally sheet as shown in Appendix H. This student behaviour tally sheet will track office referrals,

room clears, and school suspensions. In each case, demographic data will be collected. When reviewed, in the evaluation stage, the demographic information will help reveal and biases amongst educators or systemic inequities at Adelaide Elementary. The tracking sheet will note students of Indigenous ancestry and students of colour as well as students with designated learning disabilities and individual education plans. Shedding light on systemic inequities in school discipline practices will challenge the assumption that we teach in a culturally neutral education system (Chrona, 2022b).

Greene (2016) suggests that current research provides educators with the tools necessary to shift their approaches and responses so that challenging behaviours can be greatly diminished, if not eliminated. Causton and Macleod (2020) provide tools to shift the mindset of educators to see students with challenging behaviour as human beings we want strengthen relationships with rather than children we hope to fix. The tool shown in Appendix J can be used to help recognize strengths of a child and shift mindsets.

Baseline Survey Data

The WSD has two survey tools that can be used as baseline data to understand the student experience. The Middle Years Development Index (MDI) is administered every year in grades four and seven to gauge student wellbeing (HELP, 2021b). School administrators are provided with a yearly report to understand trends and determine where improvement is needed. Questions related to a sense of belonging will be of particular interest. For example, in 2021, the following baseline results, shown in Table 3 indicated work that needs to be done to increase as sense of belonging. As this survey is anonymous, it is not known whether the students feeling disconnected are those exhibiting challenging behaviour, though research is clear that students who do not feel connected to their classroom or school are more likely to exhibit challenging

behaviour (Waugh et al., 2020). As the African proverb poignantly claims, "The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth" (Sendry, 2023).

Table 3

MDI Baseline Data for School Improvement

Guiding Question	Grade	Percentage
I feel I am important at this school.	4	75%
I feel I am important at this school.	7	55%
I am learning skills and strategies to support my mental health and wellbeing.	4	43%
I am learning skills and strategies to support my mental health and wellbeing.	7	65%

Note. Data is collected yearly; therefore, cohorts can be compared as they age.

Likewise, the 2021 WSD Equity Scan (SDD, 2022a) indicates that many students of Indigenous ancestry do not see themselves represented in their learning. Calls to action include improved collaboration with local First Nations, and professional learning for staff to improve practice so that all Indigenous students feel a sense of connection and belonging (SDD, 2022a). When inviting students to participate in learning lunches or student forums (discussed below), it will be imperative that students of Indigenous ancestry are represented so that their voices are heard and so that learning can take place working towards Truth and Reconciliation and the identified WSD equity report calls to action (SDD, 2022a).

Student and Staff Experiences

All behaviour is communication (Greene, 2016). The compassionate systems creative tension tool draws attention to the space between reality and the desired state. This tool, shown

in Appendix K allows educators and students to discuss the tension that exists and work towards understanding root causes (Senge et al., 2019). This requires vulnerability and an openness to learn in reciprocal relationships. When adults are regulated, and in a calm-brain state, they can help a child co-regulate (Desautels, 2019). Educators may find it difficult to respond in a positive way when a child exhibits challenging behaviour (Giallo & Hayes, 2007), however, if educators can respond with curiosity rather than judgement, every incident with challenging behaviour can become a learning opportunity for both students and staff.

While students are not often asked to reflect on their school experience, student voice can be one of the most valuable sources of data for school improvement (Dugan, 2021; Fullan, 2021; Kennedy, 2023). As the school principal, I would like to invite the learning team to host learning lunches (focus group discussions) with students where we can order in pizza and invite children, especially those with challenging behaviour, to tell us about their experience at our school, and learn what works and what does not work in supporting their emotional development. Offering food to children who misbehave can be frowned upon by those who see food as a reward (Carrington, 2020). However, Desautels (2020) confirms that food can be used as a tool to calm the nervous system. Brokenleg (2015) notes that in Indigenous cultures, learning always begins by offering food. When teachers express disappointment about food being provided, I remind them that I will always be there to get them a coffee or bring them comfort food on their hard days as well. When we are in crisis, we crave comfort, and food serves as a tool to create safe spaces and begin conversations. As Mitra (2008) concludes, amplifying student voice is one of the best ways for administrators and teachers to approach problems, as it gives young people an opportunity to share from their first-hand experience. Learning through stories reflects Indigenous values of respect and reciprocity (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2012). Taking this step to

listen deeply, amplify student voice, and collect street data, will influence decision-making through a lens of equity (Safir & Dugan, 2021).

As the sponsor of student voice for the WSD, I hold the responsibility of planning bi-annual student forums. While these events are district wide with a small number of representatives from each school, this process could easily be repeated at the school level. The student forum framework provides guiding questions and interactive activities to learn about student priorities, student concerns, and student hopes (SDD, 2022g). Like the focus group conversations, this would deepen educators understanding of the student experience.

It is also important to understand the experiences of educators. The learning team will have fifteen minutes at the start of each staff meeting which will serve as an ideal time to collect data from educators. Senge et al. (2019) suggest using journal prompts as a starting place for personal reflection. After allowing participants to reflect, they suggest hosting a group check-in either with partners or with the larger group to hear the *street data*—information that might otherwise be missed if leaders are not listening closely (Safir & Dugan, 2021). Schroeder and Rowcliffe (2019) confirm that the check-in allows space for personal and shared reflection. These check-ins will provide qualitative data to understand the experience of educators, what support they may need, how their beliefs are shifting, and how the learning is impacting their relationship with students in their classes.

Shields (2020), author of *Becoming a Transformative Leader: A Guide to Creating Equitable Schools*, provides a baseline survey to identify staff readiness for transformation. This survey can be used as a pre- and post-test to measure the changing beliefs of staff, and their readiness to support systemic change. A sample of the survey is shown in Appendix L. While not

directly related to student behaviour, this tool can help gage the beliefs and biases amongst staff in relation to the necessary equity work needed to reimagine school discipline.

The intent of this OIP is to help educators understand student behaviour, and gain the skills necessary to respond in compassionate, effective ways, to support the wellbeing of students and staff. In particular, the hope is that children at the margins are seen, heard, understood, and welcomed into classrooms and all school events. Shifting the culture takes time, patience, clear communication, and leadership (Ablon & Pollastri, 2018). It is crucial that organization improvement is done with an ethic of care that avoids additional harm (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Equity work needs to expand beyond awareness, to create systemic change as baby steps do little more than perpetuate privilege and inequities (Capper, 2019; Dugan, 2021).

Considerations

When evaluating data, particular attention will be given to the profiles of students. Given that children of colour are three times more likely to experience discipline (Sanders, 2022) and students with disabilities are two times more likely to experience discipline (Gregory et al., 2021), it is imperative that attention is given to student data to highlight and track these trends. While the WSD does not collect demographic data when tracking suspensions, I can review individual situations to calculate this data for Adelaide Elementary using student discipline notes and the student information system. As the school year progresses, it will be important to note trends in discipline, or trends in educator practice, to continually tweak and improve implementation plans. Plans will be refined in response to monitoring and evaluation findings.

Refining Implementation Plans

The learning team will meet every two weeks to discuss progress and review discipline data. If monitoring and evaluation tools indicate a rise in challenging behaviour, or a shift back

to punitive or exclusionary approaches, the team will discuss next steps. Schools are human entities, and the emotions of children and adults need to be considered. Certain times throughout the school year can be more stressful than others, which often correlates with a rise in challenging behaviour (Spilt et al., 2011). It will be imperative to consider the wellbeing of educators and continually find ways to support staff (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). When staff feel calm, they are better able to co-regulate children with big feelings (Desautels, 2019). The learning team will use the emotions of students and staff as a barometer for refining implementation plans. Desautels (2020) notes that children are honest barometers of the health of a school or community, and that disruptive behaviors should be seen as a call to action. Given that the demographics of the school have shifted significantly with 30% of students scoring as vulnerable on wellbeing surveys (HELP, 2021a; HELP, 2021b), additional focus may be needed with professional development topics such as trauma informed practice, to better support students with adverse childhood experiences (Chafouleas et al., 2018). If the learning team recognizes that students are flourishing in some classes, but not others, refinement may include sharing stories of success, mentoring opportunities, or co-teaching to model relational discipline.

Next Steps and Future Considerations of the OIP

This OIP provides the foundational work needed to shift a school culture to a new space where student behaviour is understood and met with compassion. While conventional wisdom blames the child or external factors such as their home life for their behaviour, current research, recognzies that challenging behaviour is not about a lack of will, but rather a lack of skill (Ablon & Pollastri, 2018). Shifting from a deficit mindset to a growth mindset allows educators to lend the same compassion to students who struggle to behave as students who struggle to read. This OIP lays the foundation for transformative change, weaving in current research that explains

beyond a shadow of a doubt that students who exhibit challenging behaviour are having difficulty managing the demands of the school system. CSL tools and best practices from Indigenous wisdom come together to shift understanding and create compassionate communities that share the collective responsibility to ensure all children belong.

Equity Work

Educators are leaders, united with a moral imperative to serve children. We must not only understand the conditions in which our children live and learn, but the conditions in which we live and learn, recognizing our biases, beliefs, power, and privilege (Shields & Gelinas-Proulx, 2022). We must strive for an awareness that challenges the status quo to improve the school experience for marginalized youth (Shields, 2020). This OIP provides a one-year plan to understand behaviour and weave Indigenous wisdom into our practices. Solution three, that was not selected, serves as a blueprint for future years, diving deeper into self-reflection and equity work needed in schools. Equity, wellbeing, and decolonization must remain our social justice beacons of hope that we continue to strive for. "Like truth and beauty, justice is an ideal rather than a state of existence. We do not achieve it, we pursue it" (Greenfield, 1980, p. 38). If implicit bias and deficit thinking continue to fuel our system, then equity and social justice will remain illusionary (Shields & Hesbol, 2020). The transformative wheel serves as a tool than can be used year after year, propelling the system forward towards equity, wellbeing, and decolonization.

District Wide Expansion

As organizational improvement begins at Adelaide Elementary, with reimagined discipline practices, an invitation exists to share with surrounding schools. Each year, the WSD professional development committee puts a call out for proposals. This would be a perfect opportunity to extend this OIP to a district scale. Likewise, as a principal in the WSD,

opportunity exists to present at monthly principal meetings to help others lead similar initiatives. The district leadership team is aware of this OIP and is open to future opportunities within the district where I can share this learning to build professional capacity in others. In time, my hope is that this work leads to policy reform with decolonized practices thereby reducing punitive and exclusionary practices such as suspension from school. I am hopeful that this OIP will serve as a guide for systemic change across the Wahkohtowin School District.

Conclusion

When we have the courage to lean into vulnerability, reflect on our practice, and ask what we can do to improve the system for our most marginalized students, we will transform our schools. Indigenous pedagogy expands our repertoire to include collective, holistic practices that restore relationships and help students learn through experience and story (Brokenleg, 2015; Styres, 2017). Compassionate Systems Leadership gives us the tools for brave conversations and understanding the perspectives of all stakeholders. Personal reflection improves our relationship with self to align our work with our moral calling to serve all children. A commitment to professional learning builds our capacity to understand behaviour and shifts our practices. Such a shift will allow students to heal from past experiences with punishment and exclusion. Healing restores our humanity and care for ourselves and others (Ginwright, 2022). Collectively, we have the power to create a model that understands students, teaches to their skill gaps, and supports their social emotional development with kindness and compassion. Desautels (2020) believes the health of a community can be gauged by the behaviour of its children. When we begin to walk the path of reimagining school discipline through a lens of equity, wellbeing, and decolonization, we will disrupt the school to prison pipeline, improve graduation rates, strengthen relationships, embrace stories, and create a healthy, compassionate community that takes care of all children.

Narrative Epilogue

Despite the pride I feel in this organizational improvement plan, I cannot ignore the nagging whisper that tells me it is not enough. This OIP attempts to challenge mindsets, shift perceptions, and reimagine school discipline, yet, as a stand-alone it will not be enough to create equitable schools. How might we amplify student voice so that it becomes the driving force in education? How do we ensure equity work is deep and meaningful rather than a privilege-sustaining illusion (Gorski et al., 2021). How do we protect educator wellbeing to ensure staff have the bandwidth to continually show up and serve students (Kise & Holm, 2022)? How do we create transformative learning cultures that continually strive for improvement? How do we see our children with challenging behaviour as our guides and our teachers, recognizing that their behaviour is communication? How do we reform our school system until all children, even the ones who challenge us the most, know and feel a profound sense of belonging? I hope this OIP creates more questions than answers and embeds a curiosity and quest in educators to continually strive for system improvements, to better meet the needs of underserved students. When inequity no longer exists within our schools, and students with challenging behaviour are met with love and compassion rather than punishment and exclusion, only then will our work be done.

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Appendix A

Weed or Flower? The Impact of Deficit Thinking

Weed   Flower

Colonial discipline practices assign blame and shame. They work for students who need them the least and fail the students who need them the most. A school cannot become trauma informed until they revamp and reimagine equitable school discipline practices (Desautels, 2020).

Decolonial indigenization envisions balancing power relationships, re-imagining practices such as school discipline, seeking equity and justice (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018).

A learning centered approach assumes a child's challenging behaviour is a stress response because of insufficient development in academics or social emotional competencies (Michail, 2011).

Removing kids from class does more harm than good. Exclusionary discipline creates a school to prison pipeline (Mergler et al., 2014)

Senge et al. (2019) described the space between the current and the desired state as creative tension.

The foundation of effective discipline is based in the creation of warm cultures based in trust, affirmation, and caring relationships (Perry & Morris, 2014).

Discipline must move away from punishment, exclusion, and compliance towards our ability to regulate our students – beginning with regulating ourselves. (Desautels, 2020).

The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth.
African Proverb

"The single most important factor in the academic achievement of minoritized students is the leader's explicit rejection of deficit thinking" (Shields, 2018, p. 40).

Exclusionary practices have collateral consequences on non-suspended students as they feel the loss of a peer and their anxiety increases (Perry & Morris, 2014).

"Transformative learning involves a deep, structural shift in the basic premise of thoughts, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our ways of being in the world" (Hoggan, 2016. P. 64).

Strong relationships between students and teachers are consistently shown to be the most effective tool associated with positive outcomes reducing challenging behaviour (Michail, 2011). In other words, we need to pull them closer rather than push them away.

Children subjective to punitive and exclusionary practices are considered at increased risk for dropping out, academic failure, gang membership and time in prison. Suspensions contribute to the marginalization of children (Michail, 2011).

Student and teacher stress levels have a positive correlation (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). If student wellness is the goal, perhaps teacher wellness is the strategy!

Our colonial systems are designed to perpetuate inequities. Educators are often unaware of their personal biases. Deep learning is necessary to align with structural changes. It is easy to blame the system rather than holding ourselves personally accountable to unlearn, learn and work towards equity (Dugan, 2021).

"We begin by reclaiming the village, centering the experiences of children—particularly children at the margins—and working to heal the wounds of racism and oppression in our schools" (Safir & Dugan, 20121, p. 12).

Note. Deficit thinking sees students as weeds, whereas strength-based thinking sees students for their potential.

Appendix B

Comparison of Three Plausible Solutions

	Solution 1 Professional Development	Solution 2 Indigenous Wisdom	Solution 3 Equity Pivot
System Readiness	√	√	X
Manageable in Scope	√	√	X
Aligns with Available Resources	√	√	√
Aligns with Student Discipline Policies	√	X	X
Embeds Compassionate Systems Leadership	√	√	√
Embeds Transformative Learning Theory	X	√	√
Embeds Indigenous Pedagogy	X	√	√
Strives for Equity	X	√	√
Strives for Decolonization	X	√	√
Strives for Wellbeing	√	√	√
Disrupts Power Structures	X	√	√
Focuses on closing the knowledge gap between behaviour research and practice	√	X	X

Note. While each solution has strengths, some are more attainable than others.

Appendix C

Iceberg Tool for Understanding Student Behaviour

The stress behaviours you see (the symptoms).

What's really going on (the possible causes).
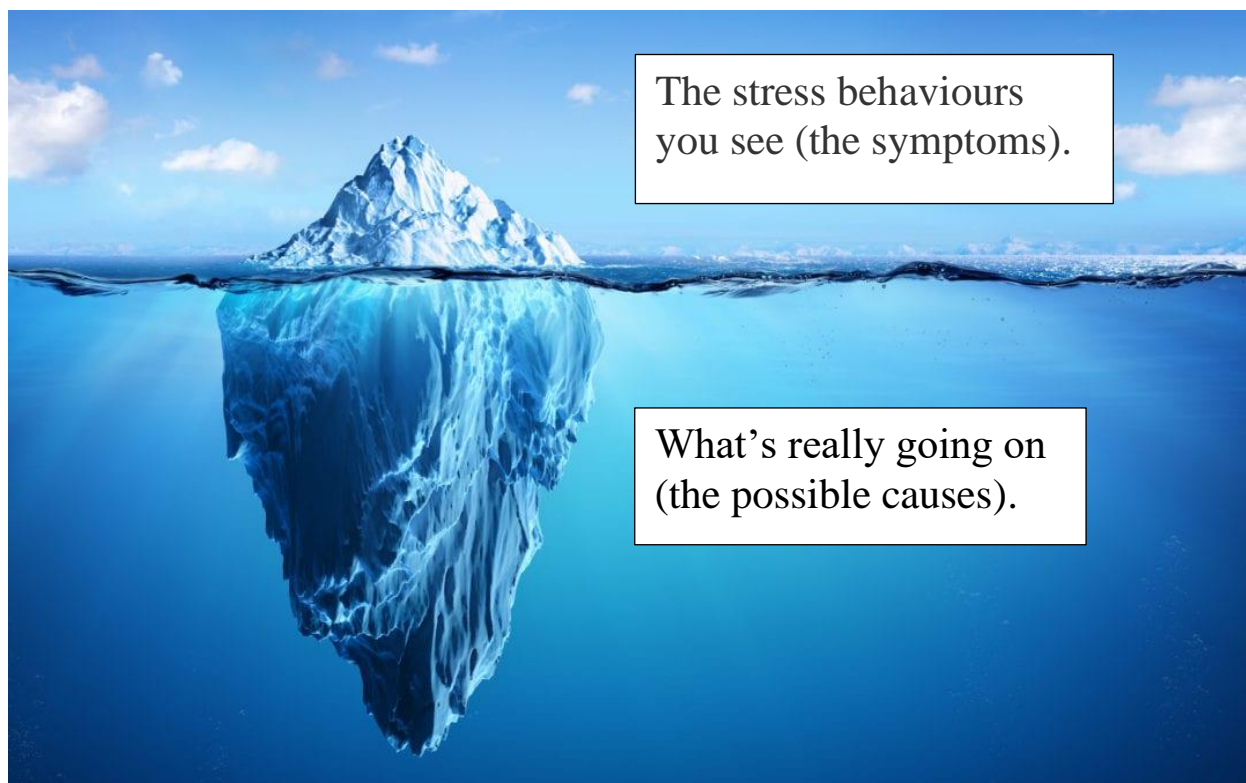
What are the student's needs?	As a staff, what can we offer the student and/or teacher and/or support staff to help the child meet those needs?

Note. Adapted from *Beyond Behaviours: Using brain science and compassion to understand and solve children's behavioural challenges* (p. 63), by M. Delahooke, 2019, John Murray Learning. Copyright 2019 by Mona Delahooke.

Appendix D

Roles and Responsibilities

	Principal / Vice Principal	**Teachers**	**Parents**	**Students**
September	Invite staff to join learning team Complete learning team grant Host first learning team lunch meeting Write 40 snipits to use in the weekly emails to parents with highlights to understand and respond to behaviour. Blend current research with school based stories and experiences	Express interest in joining learning team Attend first learning team meeting Articulate vision for change	Read weekly email which includes a blurb about relational discipline, school approaches to behaviour, and stories of success Select dates for parent nights	Communicate needs through behaviour Work with staff to build relationships, share needs, and learn skills to support self-regulation
October	Order resources Set calendar dates for the year Introduce work of learning team at monthly staff meeting Identify resources for book clubs Determine who will read which resource Meet twice per month as learning team Determine which members of the learning team will co-present for the first Professional development day in November Determine which members of the learning team will prepare staff meeting report outs and invitations to join Determine which members will gather and communicate out stories of success Determine which members of the learning team will plan and present at parent nights – principal to lead first learning session with parents in October based on OIP research and district workshops already created throughout this journey		Host parent night 1: Understanding Behaviour Read newsletters Meet to discuss any concerns	Communicate needs through behaviour Work with staff to build relationships, share needs, and learn skills to support self regulation
November	Meet twice per month as learning team		Read newsletters	Communicate needs through behaviour

	Discuss learning, implement new ideas. Use transformative wheel as guide. Share stories of success. Host professional day #1 offering staff including support staff a 3 hour workshop on understanding and responding to behaviour 15 minute presentation at staff meeting	Meet to discuss any concerns	Work with staff to build relationships, share needs, and learn skills to support self-regulation Celebrate students who have flourished by sharing their stories of success
December	Meet once with learning team Host student learning circles	Read newsletters Meet to discuss any concerns	Learning circles with students to understand their experiences and perspectives.
January	Meet twice per month as learning team Host parent night #2 Share experiences from classroom with learning team – celebrate successes Act as a resource for all staff who are experiencing challenges with behaviour 15 minute presentation at staff meeting	Host parent night 2: Responding to Behaviour	Communicate needs through behaviour Work with staff to build relationships, share needs, and learn skills to support self-regulation
February	Meet twice per month as learning team 15 minute presentation at staff meeting Coordinate and offer Professional Development Workshop #2 for any interested staff	Read newsletters Meet to discuss any concerns	Communicate needs through behaviour. Work with staff to build relationships, share needs, and learn skills to support self-regulation
March	Meet once with learning team Host student learning circles	Read newsletters Meet to discuss any concerns	Learning circles with students to understand their experiences and perspectives
April	Meet twice per month as learning team Host parent night 3 15 minute presentation at staff meeting	Host parent night 3: Behaviour through a lens of equity	Communicate needs through behaviour Work with staff to build relationships, share needs, and learn skills to support self-regulation
May	Meet twice per month as learning team Coordinate and offer Professional Development Workshop #3 for any interested staff Prepare year end presentation. 15-minute presentation at staff meeting	Read newsletters Meet to discuss any concerns	Communicate needs through behaviour Work with staff to build relationships, share needs, and learn skills to support self-regulation
June	Present at district learning team wrap up 15-minute presentation at staff meeting	Read newsletters	Celebrate students who have flourished

			Meet to discuss any concerns	by sharing their stories of success
Future Years	Based on monitoring and evaluation, determine next steps. Consider Year 2 Learning Team Application. Coordinate Year 2 District Learning Series on Understanding Behaviour. Use Transformative Wheel to adapt vision and determine next steps towards equity, wellbeing and decolonization	Learning Team to share work with other schools upon request – Adelaide Elementary becomes a pilot school to model growth Teachers from learning team to co-present on district behaviour series team if interested	Continue to coordinate parent evenings and parent newsletters to share learning about discipline and explain the reasoning behind school practices	Continue to amplify student voice by considering spaces where students could provide more input into their school experience. Lead reflective circles with students to understand when they feel safe, supported, and understood.

Appendix E

Newsletter Snippet Examples

Each week, I will post one snippet of information in the communication section of the weekly newsletter to help parents understand student behaviour and relational discipline. These are samples.

Week	Newsletter Snippets of Information
1	**Did You Know…** Punishing children as a form of discipline creates a sense of shame and lowers self worth (Greene, 2016). Rather than emphasizing what a child has done wrong, help them develop the tools by sharing what they can do to repair the situation.
2	**Did You Know…** Children sense and react to the nervous system of their caregivers and teachers. The best way to help a child calm down is to lend them your calm, and co-regulate their emotions (Desautels, 2019).
3	**Did You Know…** Adult and child stress levels are positively correlated. Find activities to do with your child that reduce stress such as taking a walk or reading a book together.
4	**Did You Know…** Suspension negatively impacts students by lowering their graduation rates, weakening their connection to school, and increasing the probability of connection with the criminal justice system (Mergler et al., 2014)

Appendix F

Recommended Resources for Learning Team Collaboration

Books to Build Professional Capacity

Understanding Student Behaviour

Ablon, J. S., & Pollastri, A. R. (2018). *The school discipline fix: Changing behavior using the collaborative problem-solving approach.* W. W. Norton & Company.

Carrington, J. (2020). *Kids these days: A game plan for (re)connecting with those we teach, lead, & love*. FriesenPress.

Causton, J., & MacLeod, K. (2020). *From behaving to belonging: The inclusive art of supporting students who challenge us*. ASCD.

Delahooke, M. (2019). *Beyond behaviours: Using brain science and compassion to understand and solve children's behavioural challenges*. John Murray Learning.

Desautels, L. (2020). *Connection over compliance: Rewiring our perceptions of discipline.* Wyatt-MacKenzie Publishing.

Shanker, S. (2020). *Reframed: Self-reg for a just society*. University of Toronto Press.

Indigenous Wisdom

Chrona, J. (2022). *Wayi Wah! Indigenous pedagogies: An act for reconciliation and anti-ractist education.* Portage & Main Press.

Transformative Change

Aguilar, E. (2020). *Coaching for equity: Conversations that change practice.* Jossy-Bass.

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

Shields, C. M. & Gélinas-Proulx, A. (2022) *Leading for equity and social justice: Systemic*

transformation in Canadian education. University of Toronto Press.

Educator Wellbeing

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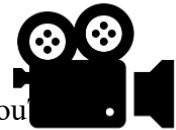
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Appendix G

Incident Report: Restorative Action

Student Incident Form		
Student Name:	Completed By:	Date:
Description of the Incident What happened?		
Identify the Harm Caused Who was impacted?		
Relationships What relationships need to be repaired?		
Restorative Plan What does the student need to feel supported? What is the plan to repair relationships and return to the community strengthened?		
Wrap Around Supports Needed Circle all that apply. Meeting with Counsellor Restorative Circle Parent Communication SEL support with Youth Worker Learning Support Community Connection		
Follow Up Plan		

Appendix H

Monthly Tracking Sheet to Monitor Organizational Improvement

Behaviour Tracking Sheet Adelaide Elementary Month_____					
Student Name	**Date**	**Type of Incident** (Room Clear, Office Referral, School Suspension)	**Learning Needs** Is this a child with a ministry identified designation or IEP?	**Profile** Is this child Black, Indigenous or a person of colour?	**Notes / Response to Behaviour**
Total Number of Room Clears for the Month					
Total Number of Suspensions for the Month					
Total Number of Office Referrals Seeking Punitive / Exclusionary Discipline					

Appendix I

Feedback Form

What was the most impactful part of our presentation?

Did this workshop shift your perception of students with challenging behaviour, and if yes, how so?

How could we improve this workshop for future audiences?

What questions do you still have? What are you hoping to learn more about in regards to student behaviour and school discipline?

Thank you for attending! We value your input!

Appendix J

Understanding Student Behaviour

Student Positive Profile	
Student Name	**Date**
Student Strengths, Talents, and Interests	
Educator-Student Relationships Which staff members have positive relationships with this student?	
Academic Review In which subject does the student have the most success?	
Social Successes Which peers does the student have the most positive relationships with? In which environment does the student have the most success with peers?	
Family Connections Does the school have a positive connection to parents or guardians? Are their family circumstances that should be considered?	
Accommodations Does the student have any known learning needs or extenuating circumstances?	

Note. Adapted from *Behaving to Belonging: The inclusive art of supporting students who challenge us.* (p. 19), by J. Causton & K. MacLeod, 2020, ASCD. Copyright 2020 by ASCD.

Appendix K

Creative Tension Tool

CREATIVE TENSION MODEL
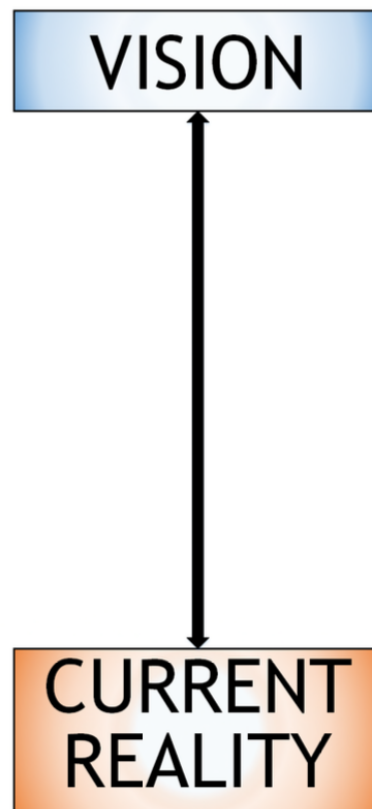
Note. Adapted from *Introduction to the compassionate systems framework in schools* by P. Senge, M. Boell, L. Cook, J. Martin, K. Lynn, T. Haygaru, S. Gruen and C. Urrea, 2019, J-Wel. Copyright 2017 by MIT.

Appendix L

Transforming Leadership Questionnaire for Educators Provided by Carolyn Shields

James McGregor Burns, in his 1978 seminal book, *Leadership*, identified two major kinds of leadership: transactional and transforming. Since then, transforming leadership has given rise to both transformational and transformative leadership theory - two important but quite distinct approaches to organizational leadership. Of course there are many other theories; however, this questionnaire is designed to identify your **dominant** leadership beliefs, dispositions, and actions related to transforming leadership. This survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Please check the box on the left.
☐ I have carefully read the above information and understand that completing this survey indicates my informed assent.

I. **Part One. Beliefs and Dispositions**

Forced Choices. In each case, you may find that both statements seem important. Please choose the one from each pair of desirable statements that best reflects your position and circle the corresponding letter a or b.

NOTE: If you are an administrator or formal leader, ease answer for yourself. If you are not a formal leader, please answer how you would want your "boss" to respond.

Q 1 a) The primary goal of a good leader is to ensure that the organization runs efficiently.
   b) The primary goal of a good leader is to ensure an equitable experience for everyone within the organization.

Q 2 a) A good leader believes that everyone is entitled to his/her individual beliefs.
   b). A good leader believes it is important to engage people in dialogue about topics like racism, classism, and homophobia.

Q 3 a). A good leader acknowledges that some units need a greater share of resources than others and distributes resources accordingly.
   b) A good leader acknowledges that equality is important and distributes fiscal resources equally throughout the organization.

4 a) A good leader focuses on assessing the effectiveness of organizational practices.
   b) A good leader focuses on assessing the equity of organizational practices.

Q 5 a) The primary goal of education is to ensure that each student develops the knowledge and skills to be successful.
   b)The primary goal of education is to promote a just and inclusive democratic society.

Q 6 a) A good leader takes individual students' backgrounds into consideration when making decisions.
   b) A good leader does not take students' backgrounds into consideration when making decisions.

Q 7 a) A good leader always strives to find a win-win solution to a problem.
   b) A good leader always strives to find the most equitable solution to a problem.

Q 8 a) A good leader encourages teachers to connect their classes with students from around the world.
   b) A good leader encourages teachers to focus on meeting required academic standards.

Q 9 a) A good leader ensures that the school's approach to discipline treats everyone equally.
   b). A good leader ensures that the school's approach to discipline recognizes societal impacts on individual behavior.

Q10 a) An effective leader emphasizes the importance of a unified position.
   b) An effective leader emphasizes the importance of multiple perspectives.

Q11 a) A strong leader acknowledges his/her responsibility to sometimes resist the rules and policies of the district.
   b) strong leader acknowledges his/her responsibility to always implement the rules and policies of the district.

Q12 a) It is important that students are primarily taught traditional American values.
   b) It is important that students be exposed to the values and beliefs of immigrant cultures.

Q13 a) A good leader knows and acts upon his or her own "non-negotiable" position.
   b) A good leader complies with the majority perspective in the school.

Q14 a) A good leader acknowledges everyone's free speech right to express an opinion regardless of what it is.
   b) A good leader recognizes that free speech may sometimes need to be curtailed to protect others.

Q15 a) A good leader helps teachers to develop appropriate programs for students based on their current performance.
   b) A good leader helps teachers to develop programs for students that address the differences between their prior opportunity to learn and their ability to learn.

Q16 a) A good leader sometimes takes controversial positions in order to advance the goals of the school.
   b) A good leader ensures that all school decisions and policies reflect traditional community values.

Q17 a) A good leader begins by spending time identifying goals for the school.
   b) A good leader begins by spending time examining the achievement data for the school.

Q18 a) A good leader recognizes that a major challenge to the success of all students is an inequitable system.
   b) A good leader acknowledges that a major challenge to the success of all students is the differing views and practices of various ethnic and socio economic groups.

Q19 a). A good leader understands that achieving student intellectual growth is dependent on eliminating notions of students as problems.
   b). A good leader understands that achieving student intellectual growth is dependent on eliminating disruptive and unruly students.

Q20 a) A good leader acknowledges that developing student capacity is unrealistic for the most deeply troubled students
   b) A good leader acknowledges that high expectations are possible even for students who are deeply troubled.

Q21 a) A good leader takes responsibility for the school's academic progress.
   b) A good leader places the responsibility for academic progress on the teachers.

Q22 a) A good leader always implements the requests of the district superintendent (director, leader).
   b) a good leader sometimes refuses the requests of the district superintendent (director, leader).

Q23 a) A good leader believes that the major goal of education is to ensure that each student develops to his or her full academic potential
   b) A good leader believes that the major goal of education is to ensure that students learn to be good citizens.

Q24 a) A good leader determines what is instructionally sound based on accepted notions of "best practice."
   b). A good leader determines what is instructionally sound based on the needs of his or her student body.

Q25 a) In the interest of fairness, a good leader ensures that all students, regardless of financial resources, pay the same fee for school activities
   b) In the interest of fairness, a good leader waives fees for students from impoverished situations when their parents are struggling to pay.

Q26 a) A good leader believes a socially just education calls for action to redress global injustices and inequity.
   b) A good leader believes a socially just education provides a just and inclusive working/learning environment for all.

Q27 a) A good leader encourages teachers to develop student awareness of how global events may relate to, and affect, their community.
   b) A good leader encourages teachers to develop student academic competence by focusing on standards and achievement.

Q28 a) A good leader acknowledges that having friends and acquaintances from multiple groups helps students to develop positive self-concepts.
   b) A good leader acknowledges that students develop positive self-concepts by knowing themselves before they are able to form relationships with those from other social groups.

Q29 a) A good leader helps all students understand how to develop their full potential.
   b) A good leader respects the wishes of parents regarding children's future aspirations.

Q30 a) A good leader waits for an issue to calm down before trying to address it.
   b) A good leader takes action immediately when an inflammatory issue is brought to his or her attention.

Q31 a) A good leader takes the dominant moral and religious values of the community into account when approving activities.
   b) A good leader approves activities that are inclusive of all students, including LGBTQ, regardless of the dominant community sentiment.

Q 32 a) A good leader provides specific diversity and equity training to all staff when it seems necessary.
   b) A good leader makes suggestions of various professional development opportunities for staff but respects the right of each person to choose for themselves.

Part Two. Frequency Statements: Actions
.
For Part Two, you are asked to respond to each statement using the following scale. **Circle the most appropriate response number.** *0=Never; 1 =Rarely; 2=Sometimes; 3=Fairly often; 4=Always.*

Q33 When I start a new job, I begin by getting to know the community to develop
an understanding of its various stakeholders.   *0 1 2 3 4*

Q34 I try not to make decisions or change policies and practices within the first six
months of a new job, even when change is needed.   *0 1 2 3 4*

Q35 I talk with my staff about how to address discriminatory words and actions
related to race, class, homophobia, xenophobia and so on.   *0 1 2 3 4*

Q36 I listen to the perspectives of parents, teachers, and students before
 making a decision.   *0 1 2 3 4*

Q37 I monitor our school policies to ensure they are applied equally to all students. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q38 I create opportunities for under-represented groups of students and parents
to be heard.   *0 1 2 3 4*

Q39 I acknowledge students for being involved in service projects in the community. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q40 I schedule time in the week for whole school meetings and activities like
assemblies or "community meetings."   *0 1 2 3 4*

Q41 I discourage teachers from addressing potentially controversial issues,
such as poverty or terrorism, in their classrooms.   *0 1 2 3 4*

Q42 I protect the right of all students to express their individual identity. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q43 I encourage teachers to connect their classes with students in other parts
of the world.   *0 1 2 3 4*

Q44 If parents are taking students out of school for a family trip to another country,
school policy requires that students complete the assigned homework while they are away. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q45 If a teacher or student believes that a policy or practice is unfair or inequitable,
I take steps to investigate and redress the situation.   *0 1 2 3 4*

Q46 I try to avoid making decisions about controversial issues. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q47 I make decisions that may put my position at risk when I believe it is the
right thing to do.   *0 1 2 3 4*

Q48 I believe that student socio-economic status is a more powerful determinant
of outcomes than anything a teacher can do in a classroom.   *0 1 2 3 4*
Q.49 I take time to reflect on the job I am doing.   *0 1 2 3 4*
Q50 I take time to discuss my goals and values with members of my
school community.   *0 1 2 3 4*

Q51 I support teachers when they address potentially controversial topics. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q52 I spend time learning about how to address the needs of minoritized students. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q53. I intervene if a student has used a racial or sexual slur but that a teacher has ignored it. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q54 I distribute leadership responsibilities to all staff regardless of gender or ethnicity. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q55. I work with community agencies and organizations to provide needed services to all students. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q56 I support our school's policy that penalizes students when they are absent for religious or cultural practices. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q57 I refrain from raising a controversial issue from a media news report if I think members of the community will be upset. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q58 If a committee comes to me with an idea that does not include all groups in the school, I ask for reconsideration. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q59 I notice whether students are working, playing, or engaging with others from different social, ethnic, or cultural groups. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q60 I encourage teachers to teach about other countries as well as our own. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q61 I intervene if I see that a teacher has not treated a student with respect. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q62 I attend grade level/department meetings to ensure teachers are implementing programs accurately. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q63 I give examples of students in difficult situations who are doing well and succeeding. *0 1 2 3 4*

Q64 I apologize if I find I have treated someone unfairly. *0 1 2 3 4*

Note. Reprinted from *Becoming a Transformative Leader: A Guide to Creating Equitable Schools* (p. 2), by C. Shields, 2020, Routledge. Copyright 2020 by Carolyn Shields.