The Organizational Improvement Plan at
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Exposing Neoliberalism's Erosion of Special Education in Ontario Schools

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Land Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge that I live, work, and play on the unceded and unsurrendered traditional Algonquin/Anishinaabe territory and come to you as a settler. As I acknowledge the land, I also acknowledge relationships: with the keepers of knowledge, the original stewards of the earth, and ancestors that used to walk among us.

Abstract

My positionality as a critical scholar frames the problem of practice. The PoP discusses a lack of transparency stemming from a longstanding hierarchy of influence from the Ministry of Education to local school boards and then to individual schools. A political, economic, and social analysis frames the organizational context which impacts my role and agency within the organization. The organization's worldview, tied to the ministry's worldview, undermines student experience, as does both organization's leadership approach. Using a critical bureaucracy, critical disability, and anti-oppressive theory, this organizational improvement plan investigates the physical and bureaucratic barriers that undermine experience for students with disabilities. Critical theory supports the leadership approach to change due to my agency. There is a tethering of neoliberalism, bureaucracy, and ableism that all intersect in this organizational improvement plan. The zone of mediation framework complements the leadership and humility change model used to propel change as it aligns with the theoretical framing of this organization improvement plan. This organizational improvement plan uses an adapted community analysis model to assess readiness for change. Three options to address solutions to the PoP are investigated with a preferred solution, an equity audit, selected. As a change facilitator, the support for change will be explored through servant, transformative and advocacy leadership theories. The change implementation plan uses a spiral of inquiry to monitor the change process and communicating the change process occurs through tailoring messages to the various audience, aligning with the servant leadership approach.

Executive Summary

Chapter one begins with the positionality and lens statement to profess the moral duty to shine a light on barriers that exist for students with disabilities. The organizational context contributes a political, economic, and social analysis that details the hierarchy of influence from the Ministry of Education (MOE), the WNBC board (a pseudonym) and finally to Stripes Highs School (a pseudonym). The PES analysis examines the lack of transparent decision-making stemming from the MOE to the WNBC and finally to Stripes High School; especially how this lack of lucidity effects specialized program classes (SPCs). Another factor investigated is the trusteeship, an elected official, but tied to the MOE. Economic factors uncovered in the PES analysis include the MOE's funding and grants, and activity level of parent councils. The organizational context then considers the political and economic factors in the WNBC board and Stripes High School that leads to a decreased sense of social satisfaction.

The leadership problem of practice names the lack of teacher agency that disallows special education teachers from stepping up each day with authenticity. This undermines the ethic of care necessary to be a teacher-leader in a specialized program class (Noddings, 2013). The leadership problem of practice then names teacher duties, framed as neutral, but, oppressive. As a result, anti-oppressive framework is the chosen framework for the leadership PoP. This section names the risk of saviourism as a special education teacher. Neoliberalism, oppression, lack of teacher agency and bureaucracy are implicated. Guiding questions from the PoP include, how my positionality influences the PoP. Possibilities to get people together in uncomfortable spaces is another question posed in this section. Finally, this section asks what happens when competing visions

compete or are incompatible. The leadership focus vision for change describes the chosen leadership styles for this OIP: servant, transformative and advocacy (Bradley-Levine, 2021; Greenleaf, 1970; Noddings, 2013; Shields, 2019). This section then considers the gap between the current and desired state of the WNBC board.

Chapter two begins with the leadership approach to change and explains the desired leadership approach as well as the framework for leading change. The leadership approach derives from critical theory (Crippen, 2006; Ryan & Rottman, 2007), as there is an application of critical bureaucracy theory and anti-oppressive theory. The chosen leadership approach also aligns with the chosen leadership style: servant-leadership, which seeks to develop relationships; transformative leadership, which seeks to shine a light on oppressive practices; and advocacy leadership, which seeks to uplift voices of those who have been purposely left out. Potential factors that marginalize students are investigated, such as the discourse of ableism and the narratives around students with disabilities (Hehir, 2002). Potential marginalization of students through each leadership style is also included. The framework for leading the change includes the zone of mediation for leading change (Welton, 1997) which concludes chapter two.

The zone of mediation considers the factors from above that impact change (ex. policy) and the changes from below that impact change (grassroots activism). The chosen change model is a version of the leadership and humility change model, adapted from a health care setting to support the PoP (Nickerson, 2019). The framework for leading the change involves relentless incrementalism (Grain, 2022) and aspires to move beyond first and order change models to third order change models, that seeks to shift society's beliefs. The organization change readiness section uses an adapted CARI model to assess

the WNBC's change readiness (Barwick, 2011). It looks at system capacity at the provincial level, then organizational capacity at the WNBC level, moves on to functional considerations and finally to an assessment of organization culture. This readiness assessment leads to the possible solutions to address the problem of practice. The preferred solution to address the PoP, building activism through observation, is chosen as it aligns with chosen leadership styles and an anti-oppressive framework. This solution is also preferred because if policymakers fail to engage with the strategy, there is still effect.

Chapter three begins with a change improvement plan. First, the change implementation plan engages critical allies. Detailed short-, medium-, and long-term goals based on the leadership and humility change model is examined. In the short-term, concepts of liberating structures (Lipmanowicz, et al., 2015) are engaged. Medium-term goals include co-construction of an equity audit and long-terms goals include communication and knowledge mobilization. Chapter three then turns to addressing resistance through leadership with evidence to activate servant and transformative leadership to temper turbulence as it aligns with an anti-oppressive lens. Change process, monitoring, and evaluating occurs through the spiral of inquiry as a guiding metaphor to monitor the change process (Halbert & Kesar, 2019). The monitoring and evaluation process concludes with examination of how to prevent exclusion, which includes a brief analysis on how the WNBC board assists with student communication and further increasing student voice.

The plan to communicate the need for change and the change process includes promoting the benefits of the change, highlighting the success, and supporting employees through the process. An analysis of potential implementation issues occurs through a

brief analysis of existing structures that enable or disable to allow student to fully engage in the equity audit. Disablers and enables are documented. Knowledge mobilization includes tailored messages to students, caregivers, and community members through email blasts and partner federations and organizations. Indicators of success of knowledge mobilization includes equity audits embedded into more schools in the WNBC board. The OIP includes with next steps including an attitudinal shift as a result of knowledge mobilizing and propelling equity audit results.

Acknowledgements

To my boys – I'm sorry that mom had to spend so much time working and couldn't play as much as she would have liked to.

Finally, to my husband Dave, thank you for keeping us all fed! Thank you for making the lunches every day for the past three years! Promise I will take over lunches again. Just kidding! I hate making lunches ☺. On a more serious note, I owe this dissertation to you. You agonized over APA 7 with me (eventually just taking over) and are the reason I didn't give up and torch the manual. This is yours as much as it is mine.

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List of Acronyms

Additional Qualification (AQ)

Alternate and Augmented Communication (AAC)

American Sign Language (ASL)

Ankle Foot Orthotics (AFO)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Community Analysis Research Institute (CARI)

Developmental Delay (DD)

Developmental Support Ontario (DSO)

Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)

English Literacy Development (ELD)

Family Reception Centre (FRC)

Individual Education Plan (IEPs)

International Classification of Diseases (ICD)

Learning Support Services (LSS)

Mild Intellectual Disability (MID)

Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS)

Ministry of Education (MOE)

Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO)

Multilingual Language Learner (MLL)

Occupational Therapy (OT)

Ontario College of Teachers (OCT)

Ontario Principal Council (OPC)

Ontario Public School Board Association (OPSBA)

Ontario Secondary School Teacher's Federation (OSSTF)

Ontario's Leadership Framework (OLF)

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)

Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP)

Parent accessibility Advisory Committee on the Special Education Advisory Committee

(PAAC on SEAC)

Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)

Physical Support (PSP)

Physiotherapy (PT)

Political, Economic, Social (PES)

Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental (PESTLE)

Priority School Initiative (PSI)

Problem of Practice (PoP)

School Resource Officer (SRO)

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Special Equipment Amount (SEA)

Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP)

Specialized Program Class (SPC)

Urban Priority High School (UPHS)

World Health Organization (WHO)

Definitions

Congregated Special Education Class: students with disabilities are centrally placed into specialized program classes, with a lower staff: student ratio than the main program to further support student needs. Also referred to as a specialized program class (SPC)

Disability: at the time of writing, the American Psychological Association (APA) recommends when writing about disability, "person-first language…identity-first language, or both may be acceptable depending on the group" (APA, 2020, p 134). Current preferred language is investigated (Neurodivergent Lou, n.d.; The Spectrum Girl, n.d.; Flink, 2021).

Individual Education Plans (IEPs): A legal document, developed by teachers, parents and paraprofessionals to support students in congregated special education classes. It is a written plan that describes special education programs, accommodations, and services that a school board will provide for a student

Leadership and Humility Change Model: chosen change model to propel the change forward (Nickerson, 2019).

Medical Model of Disability: the dominant discourse of disability: that disability ought to be cured or overcome. This discourse relies on doctors, practitioners, and examiners as the keepers of knowledge as opposed to the person with lived experience.

Paraprofessional: internal and external personnel that support students. Examples include occupational therapists (OT), physiotherapists (PT), and speech-language pathologists (SLPs). Some paraprofessional staff work for the school board; however, other staff are subcontracted.

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Stripes Highs School (a pseudonym): an anonymous secondary school at the centre of

this PoP. Also referred to as Stripes.

WNBC board (a pseudonym): an anonymous school board at the centre of this OIP.

Zone of mediation: the chosen framework for leading the change (Welner, 1997).

Chapter One: Problem Posing

I am a teacher-leader in a specialized program class at Stripes High School (a pseudonym), supporting up to ten secondary students with a variety of disabilities, ranging in age from thirteen to twenty-one. The congregated special education class is one of seventy five in the WNBC school board (WNBC, a pseudonym, 2021), a large-sized, publicly funded school board in Eastern Ontario. Student needs, abilities, and expectations vary within each congregated special needs class within the WNBC board. All students in specialized program classes have Individual Education Plans (IEPs), legal documents, and are eligible for support throughout schooling. I believe that there is a moral imperative to assist students with disabilities and elevate their voices. At the same time in the WNBC board, and across the world, there is a mounting desire to right historical wrongs faced by marginalized groups, including individuals with disabilities (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2021). Chapter one of this Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) will discuss how I frame my teaching, learning, and worldview and why the worldview of the WNBC board undermines special education efforts.

Positionality and Lens Statement

I arrive at my writing as a white, cisgender, heterosexual, neurotypical, non-disabled, affluent, professional settler. I remember pivotal points of learning as a younger scholar-practitioner and remain reflexive about the harm I perpetuated by centring white, able-bodied feminism within my academic and professional voice. For instance, prior to situating this experience in the literature, I recall subconsciously rewarding compliance and punishing dissonance as an educator teaching Black girls (Emdin, 2016; Gaymes San Vicente, 2010). I vividly remember the shock I experienced while reading about this

unconscious bias and vowing to do better. I am now a special-education teacher and continue to experience pivotal points of reflexivity as I persist in my learning and unlearning journey, experiencing cognitive dissonance at times with my professional voice. My hope is to approach my students with an asset lens, believing they are wholesome and capable, and to empower them to facilitate their own learning and success. I aspire to reject the medical model of disability (Gable, 2014; Radd et al., 2021) when talking about my students, yet acknowledging the wide-ranging support they will require throughout their lifespans due to physical, emotional, and intellectual needs. As I delve into the world of support for students with disabilities, I unearth oppressive barriers impacting my students. At the same time, I remain at risk of speaking for those who experience disabilities, in which case my instinct is to fix the problem or remove the barrier. This behaviour derails asset thinking and positions me as a rescuer.

Due to my lack of lived experience as an individual living with a disability, I question who has the right to speak for whom about disability (Longmore, 2003; Reid & Knight, 2006). However, this questioning is new to me because when I was a new teacher, I positioned myself as a saviour. Saviourism deserves further consideration as it underpins my positionality. I, like many white, cisgender, young women, entered the teaching profession unconsciously motivated to serve and save (Jack-Davies, 2010; Jack-Davies & Lewis, 2022). This is no longer where I stand; however, I am at risk of returning to this place and it will likely always be a blind spot in my positionality.

Overall, I have more easily found drawbacks in my own approaches to teaching, like my savior complex, than I have with the larger system within which I operate. Over time, however, I have noted that the school system has been built to accommodate people

like me rather than those with disabilities. This realization has compelled me to adopt a more critical worldview. Students with disabilities finally earned the right to attend school in 1980 (Harrison, 2010). Though not immediately apparent in official practices, pieces of evidence emerge that suggest a multitude of barriers that continue to exist for students with disabilities. This hidden curriculum (Anyon, 2014) involves competing policies, bureaucracies, and physical barriers that impact students with disabilities. Critical theory supports my lens as the more I investigated the hidden curriculum, the more inequities I could see, and the less I could unsee.

At a more localized level, I am co-chair of Stripes High School's equity committee. One priority of Stripes' equity committee is to conduct an equity audit of the school. Equity audits are focused and limited, providing clear and understandable findings with manageable key indicators to propel equitable educational spaces (Skrla et al., 2009). Stripes High School's internal equity audit recommends changes to the physical structure of the building to create more physically accessible spaces (WNBC, 2021c). This internal data remains congruent with data from the Canadian Human Rights Commission (2017) which describes a need to remove infrastructure barriers. The same report details concern about increasing class sizes and decreasing funding for specialized support for students with disabilities. So, even though many internal and external actors are calling for better support for students, there is a large gap in service delivery that undermines the educational experiences for student with disabilities in the WNBC board.

As a teacher in a special program class (SPC), I teach the same group of students all day. Each student has at least two official diagnoses from the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), a framework created by the World Health Organization

(WHO). Examples include autism spectrum disorder (ASD), developmental delay (DD), attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), cerebral palsy, oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), mild intellectual disabilities (MID), physical support (PSP), speech-language disorder and muscular dystrophy, among others. The staff to student ratio is five to one. Students require assistance with fine and large motor skills, bodily autonomy, communication, transportation, and keeping themselves and others safe at school and in the community. Some students speak, whereas other use augmented and alternative communication (AAC) or American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate. Some students use ankle foot orthotics (AFOs), arm braces and wheelchairs to support their physical independence. All students will require support throughout their lifecycles.

Within the organization, my role is to program for students, including developing and implementing their IEPs, supporting their autonomy through creating visual task analysis and operationalization, and creating community connections and work experiences to support their growth. However, the role does not end here. Part of the IEP is transition planning for students leaving secondary school and entering the community (WNBC, 2019c). My students are entitled to services, by virtue of their disabilities. To initiate services, documentation needs to be collated. This documentation includes reports from doctors, bank account information, and income tax statements.

However, collecting the required documentation follows the assumption that students have a family doctor, a bank account, and have filed a Canadian tax return. This is not always the case. Parents and caregivers are overwhelmed by the amount of paperwork required to receive services to which they are entitled. Often, applying for and receiving services takes years to initiate. As part of my role within the organization, I

highlight the need for parents and staff to be aware of entitled services long before the child is set to transition out of school. This involves liaising with community partners, seeking out information, and nudging caregivers and WNBC paraprofessionals to begin the application process early. Although not stated in my job description, I believe that there is a moral imperative underpinning this work as the entitled services will make a huge difference in each child's life trajectory.

In tandem, I seek to elevate the voices of my students by exposing barriers that prevent students from receiving entitled services. My lens is critical theory as it acknowledges suffering and oppression. Specifically, my lens of critical bureaucracy theory seeks to unearth the supposed neutrality of bureaucracy. Critical bureaucracy posits that bureaucracy promotes excessive rules and lacks accountability (Graeber, 2015; Lea, 2021). We often perceive bureaucracy as being science-like: neutral, impartial, and fair; however, reality is often the opposite as often structures that delay, defer, or ultimately deny necessary services underpin bureaucracy (Acker, 2006; Blackmore, 2011; Merton, 1940; Sjoberg et al., 1984). When I engage with community partners to support students and highlight barriers, I am often stymied by organizational reverence for policy and procedure. However, I continue to use my voice and servant-leadership to illustrate, nudge, and advocate on behalf of my students.

Organizational Context

I will use a political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental (PESTLE) analysis to understand the context for change within an organization (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2021). This section will offer an analysis of three factors that impact the WNBC board as an organization as well as

Stripes High School: political, economic, and social factors, resulting in a PES analysis. A hierarchy of influence exists beginning with the Ministry of Education (MOE), trickling down to the WNBC board. Edicts from the MOE influence the WNBC board, and then Stripes. These policies do not fall within the scope of influence of this problem of practice (PoP); however, they have the power to impact my role within the organization. There are layers and interconnectedness of policies, leadership, and theory. This organizational PES analysis will intertwine the MOE, the WNBC board, and Stripes.

To begin, the organizational culture of the WNBC board applies distributed leadership approaches. Evidence will be highlighted through this organizational analysis. The WNBC board offers SPCs for students with disabilities. These specialized classes provide congregated settings with individualized support for various ICD diagnoses. Students in SPCs are served with a lower staff-to-student ratio than in a general education class. The placement of SPCs is a decision made at the board level. Student placement in a specialized program also occurs at the board level. Some schools in the WNBC board have zero specialized program classes. Stripes High School had six, and the WNBC ultimately reduced the SPCs by one in 2019 for a total of five congregated special education classrooms.

In addition, Stripes was also one of two WNBC board congregated sites supporting students with English literacy development (ELD) needs. Criteria for ELD program placement include students with an interruption in education, for a variety of factors, such as displacement and war, and multilingual language learners (MLLs). There are two ELD sites in the WNBC board (WNBC, 2019b). Further, in 2008, the MOE began the Urban Priority High School initiative (UPHS) to target high schools in areas to

reach youth in need with the goal of providing necessary support and resources for students and communities (MOE, 2014; Rigehol, 2017). Two schools in the WNBC board received provincial designation of a UPHS, complete with funding between $200,000-$500,000 per year (Read, 2017; Rigehol, 2017); however, Stripes High School was not one of these sites. In 2019, the MOE replaced the UPHS with the Priority Schools Initiative (PSI), while also cutting the funding (Pilkey, 2019; Radford et al., 2023). As a result, Stripes High School, with its large number of newcomers to Canada, many displaced by conflict, with or without consistent schooling in any language, failed to receive any financial benefit from the UPHS, a decision stemming from the MOE. This is an act of distributed leadership passed from the MOE to the WNBC board to enact efficiency (Gosling et al., 2009; Hartley, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2009), yet it undermines educational experiences for students with disabilities and ELD students.

Distributed leadership, on a theoretical level, guides the MOE and by extension the WNBC board. Distributed leadership evokes a generally felt aspiration for the way leadership is or should be (Moore, 2023). However, a theoretical implementation of distributed leadership is where its application ends in the MOE and WNBC board. Although intended to increase efficiency, distributed leadership can result in a lack of transparency. This is often an indicator of failure or ineffective implementation of distributed leadership (Bolden et al., 2009). Decisions about who designates SPC sites and ELD sites within the WNBC board lack transparency, an indicator of the failure of the WNBC's application of distributed leadership. Decisions about who designates SPC sites and ELD sites within the WNBC also board lack transparency, another indicator of the WNBC's misapplication of distributed leadership.

Political Factors

Further, a political factor that contributes to the hierarchy of influence between the MOE and the WNBC is the trusteeship. The role of Ontario's trusteeship stems from a historical relationship, predating confederation, and surrenders power to the MOE (Young et al., 2014). Trustees are elected officials, with or without educational experience, entrusted to maintain excellence in the public school system and remain responsive to provincial and local needs (Ontario Public School Board Association [OPSBA], 2018); however, the MOE can intervene in boards in response to public pressure. Public infighting among trustees occurs throughout Ontario and in the WNBC (Campbell & Fullan, 2019; Chada et. al, 2020; Kupfer, 2018; Postmedia, 2016).

Also, trustees in the WNBC board demonstrate a habit of reaction instead of proactive investigation, making decisions based on popular opinion (Mussa, 2020). For instance, in 2017 and 2018, respectively, parents and community activists questioned the WNBC board about racism within school board decisions (Kupfer, 2018; Miller, 2017). The WNBC board ultimately dismissed parents' concerns. However, in 2020 during the Black Lives Matters protests, the WNBC board swiftly censured a trustee for potentially racist comments and canceled the school resource officer (SRO) program due to concerns about the relationship between police and students with minoritized identities (Jones, 2020; Mussa, 2020). It appears that popular opinion drives decision-making as some suspicions of racism are dealt with swiftly, yet others are dismissed. This impacts organizational context and experience for students with disabilities. Consequently, lack of attention for students with diverse learning needs is not a top priority for trustees since they are not in the limelight.

Henceforth, the example shows that the WNBC board, its priorities and steering, remain nested in the political factors of the day. This is illustrative of the WNBC board's approach to distributed leadership, which is based on efficiency. However, the effect of the trusteeship's leadership style and the hierarchy of influence between the MOE and the WNBC results in performativity (Hall et al., 2013) as opposed to the intended outcome of good governance (Campbell & Fullan, 2019). This leadership approach has detrimental effects on students with disabilities as confounding and competing factors make distributed leadership difficult to actualize as power is hidden and unexplained (Bolden et al.; Hartley, 2010; McKenzie & Locke, 2014). Hidden barriers ought to be interrogated and as a result this OIP will offer a different style of leadership to action change.

Economic Factors

Similarly, economic factors underpin the context of the WNBC board. Ontario operates based on per-pupil funding, established by the MOE (Education Act, 1990). The funding formula fails to account for the depth and breadth of student need: a policy underpinned by neoliberal economic thinking. There are mandatory committees, such as the special education advisory committee (SEAC) and the parent involvement committee (PIC), which must be incorporated into board meetings, as dictated by the MOE. Some individual schools in the WNBC board raise further funds through a parent council, a revenue booster based on volunteers and fundraisers. WNBC policy allows individual schools to collect and disperse revenues for various student resources (WNBC, 2019c). Fundraising at the school-based level occurs with the principal's approval and depends on the activeness of the individual school's parent council. This economic context remains a factor resulting in some WNBC schools acquiring more resources than needed, whereas

other schools end up lacking resources. Given the distributed leadership style of the WNBC board, there is a lack of transparency of the amount of funds generated by parent councils and a failure to share resources acquired through fundraising between affluent and non-affluent schools.

In addition, economic factors intersect with SPCs. For instance, a WNBC board placement committee decides where students with disabilities will attend school (WNBC, 2019c); however, the board does not report where the SPCs are located. Individual schools are not involved in the decision-making process, resulting in students from all over the district being placed at select schools. Due to the per-pupil funding set out by the MOE, it is possible to have a school in an affluent neighbourhood, with an active parent council and many fundraising initiatives with no specialized programs supporting students with disabilities. Further, it is equally possible to have a school in a less-affluent neighbourhood with a less-active parent council with few fundraising initiatives with several specialized programs. Yet, schools are not funded based on need.

As a result, the distributed leadership enacted by the WNBC board allows for a situation where some powerful parent councils who are vocal and active mitigate problems that may arise. Other parent councils are less active. This has potential to tax the limited resources of schools with less vocal parent councils. With five SPCs, a congregated site for ELD students, a less-active parent council, and no funding from UPHS, economic resources at Stripes High School are limited.

When considering the impact of the political and economic factors within the WNBC board, a glimpse into social factors of the WNBC board arise, as do implications for students with disabilities. The political analysis of the WNBC board reveals the

hierarchy of influence between the MOE and the WNBC board. It also reveals the pitfalls of the distributed leadership style. The political and economic factors intersect when considering the social actors involved in reporting the effects of the organizational context: the principal, who oversees the management of Stripes High School; the vice-principal, who assists with student need; the educational assistants, specializing in student behaviour; and a department head, who provides guidance and context to issues arising in the classroom. The principal of Stripes High School also uses a distributed leadership style to alleviate workload; however, due to the legal requirements of IEPs, principal authority is paramount. Downloading responsibility is impossible. Further, due to the placement of ELD programs at Stripes, the principal and vice principal have limited time resources, spending copious amounts of time relationship-building and liaising with community partners as per the WNBC strategic plan (WNBC, 2019a). This impacts the day-to-day business of the principalship (Canadian Association of Principals, 2014).

Social Factors

Having five SPCs and being one of two hubs for ELD students in the WNBC board and having a less active parent council to advocate for resources creates a situation of social discontent for staff at Stripes High School. As a teacher-leader at Stripes for sixteen years, I only saw first-year principals: emergent leaders often ill-equipped to ascertain a leadership style that fulsomely supported the needs at Stripes. When I asked why the WNBC board consistently assigned Stripes High School a first-year principal, always white and always male, I was told that the WNBC board struggled to find leaders who wanted to work at Stripes due to its need and competing interests. This social factor impacts the WNBC board. A lack of desirable leadership candidates creates a situation

where there is an absence of continuity and a scarcity of strong leadership at Stripes High

School: a situation where staff and students at Stipes feel forgotten. The distributed

leadership style used by the MOE, the WNBC and the principal of Stripes perpetuates a

lack of transparency while eroding teacher agency and educational experiences for

students with disabilities. The lack of vision, procedural dynamics at play, and low levels

of emergent-leader confidence causes confusion, a deterioration of staff morale, and an

absence of guidance regarding the support for special education (Jäppinen, 2017). Stated

differently, students and staff at Stripes feel unheard.

In summation, this section of the OIP has offered a PES analysis of the WNBC

board. This organizational analysis considers how the WNBC's distributed leadership

style flows from the MOE through the WNBC board and to Stripes High School,

impacting the experience of students with disabilities. The next section of the OIP will

consider the leadership problem of practice and how there is an increased desirability for

a leadership style shift.

Leadership Problem of Practice

Teacher-leaders want to step up with authenticity to advocate for change inside

and outside of schools to increase students' well-being (Miles & Monaco, 2019). Special

education teachers in Ontario and in the WNBC board are challenged daily to holistically

support students with complex needs while managing visible and invisible barriers that

erode special education students' experiences. Although governmental and district policy

intends to remove barriers for special education students through inclusion and

specialized programming (MOE, 2013; WNBC, 2019a), teachers lack the agency to

disrupt institutional barriers that undermine student well-being and achievement (Ball,

2003; Galton & MacBeath, 2008). The lack of teacher agency undermines the ethic of care and the moral imperative to assist exceptional students (Noddings, 2013) through the WNBC's enactment of its vision for students with diverse learning needs. As a result, teacher efforts to holistically support special education students fail to occur.

There are many bureaucratic and physical barriers nested within the WNBC's worldview including onerous paperwork, competing policy, and institutional gatekeeping all of which remain insidious yet invisible (Gobby, 2017; Grimaldi, 2012). Therefore, barriers to student achievement and student well-being remain entrenched and normalized, all while the MOE, WNBC board, and Stripes High School celebrate performative equity. As a teacher-leader, I lack the autonomy to create or implement substantive change. However, I have the moral imperative to shine a light on invisible barriers, oppressive practices, and vague policies that undermine student experience. The problem of practice under investigation is the enactment of the WNBC's vision for optimal learning environments for students with diverse learning needs which limits teacher agency in supporting students and undermines student experience.

As a teacher-leader in a congregated class, I am living in a space of oppression. I find opportunities to carry out discreet activism (Ryan & Tuters, 2017) while I live in this equity-seeking space. I create empowerment work and action it. I possess radical empathy for my students as I consider raising their voices. As such, the framework for my leadership is anti-oppressive. Shining a light on entrenched practices that are oppressive is anti-oppression work. Long-standing policies and practices, seemingly innocuous, can be oppressive. Although my agency deteriorates at a global level, my framework remains anti-oppressive. It is purported, but not proven, that Margaret Mead

famously stated, "never underestimate the ability of a small group of committed individuals to change the world" (Coffman, 2021). My leadership problem of practice channels the spirit of Mead: I intend to be part of a committed group that highlights oppression of students with special education needs in the WNBC board.

Yet, at the same time, I am at risk of saviourism. The narrative of disability within the WNBC board and within broader society remains outdated, problematic, and paternalistic: people with disabilities are constructed as threats to others or themselves, or sub/non-human or burdens of charity (Gable, 2014; Radd et al., 2021). This rhetoric is harmful yet pervasive. The narrative used to overcome this paternalistic discourse is equally problematic: objectification (Richards, 2008). It feels disingenuous to write about students and their needs without their voice. Yet, disability discourse advocates that disability can be overcome by simply providing accommodations (Vasquez, 2011), a solution that fails to address the fulsome needs of students. As a result, my problem of practice activates the tenets of critical disability theory. Lack of teacher agency is also extensively investigated in this OIP (Day & Kingston, 2008; Gu & Day, 2013; Troman, 2008; Smith & Ulvik, 2017).

In the present state of the organization, there is a lack of transparency surrounding decisions about the placement of students with disabilities. For instance, where SPCs are located and where students with disabilities are placed remain a mystery. At the same time, policies and procedures are made at the WNBC level, in the spirit of efficiency, which drastically and detrimentally impacts the educational experience of special needs students and their teachers. The people who render decisions surrounding programming needs fail to observe student needs and fail to fulsomely comprehend the holistic needs of

the child. A future organizational state would include feedback from caregivers, teachers, and students when rendering decisions; a transparent and flexible framework would be established creating thriving learning environments with a student's life trajectory in mind. The future state would allow opportunities for decision-makers to shadow students, in the spirit of reciprocity, to consider the potential impacts of decisions (Boss, 2017).

The present state of the organization actions distributed leadership (McKenzie & Locke, 2014): leadership from the top-down. The future state of the organization ought to use a combination of servant and transformative leadership to support students. Servant leadership can occur through the valuing of student voice (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007). Activating transformative leadership allows an opportunity to investigate the current worldview and how it is complicit in upholding the status quo (Shields & Hesbol, 2019). Transformative leadership can encourage risk-taking to better serve special education students. The future state of the organization ought to take responsibility for its decisions. Ramifications of WNBC policies, inseparable from MOE policies, ought to be considered by various stakeholders prior to decision implementation.

The current organizational state insulates WNBC board members from the realities of special education, the diverse needs of students and families, and the complexity of supporting students. The future state of the WNBC board, with a renewed laser focus on identifying barriers, harmful policies, and exploitative practices will allow WNBC trustees and senior staff to consider the daily realities of special education students ultimately improving outcomes for students in specialized programs.

Framing the Problem of Practice

The WNBC's worldview, tied to the MOE's worldview, neoliberalism, undermines educational experiences for students with disabilities. Distributed leadership, the preferred leadership style of the MOE and the WNBC, aligns with a neoliberal worldview. However, both the worldview and leadership style uphold policies and practices that have detrimental effect on specialized program students. This PoP names and tethers neoliberalism, oppression, lack of teacher agency, and bureaucracy experiences of students with disabilities: inseparable and interconnected.

The framing of the PoP is indivisible from a discussion of the dominant worldview that shapes the global economy: neoliberalism. Neoliberalism became the dominant economic theory after the failure of laissez-faire economics in 1929 and the subsequent failure of Keynesian economic theory in the 1970s (Monboit, 2016). In addition to economics, features of neoliberal thinking penetrated Western culture, as it is deeply rooted in a worldview of separation, reductionism, and determinism. Neoliberal features seeped into educational and social theories by insisting that human interaction could be measured, observed, and ultimately controlled. This further implicated education with an increased desire for science based educational research, another name for standardized tests (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Walton, 2021).

As the popularity of neoliberalism grew, so did the idea that all aspects of the universe, including human behaviour, were governed by the same laws (Barad, 2014). No meaning or value was given to ethics and as a result, notions of social justice were marginalized. Neoliberalism became the new propaganda as it subversively normalized positivistic student achievement, and synonymized effective teaching with high test scores on student standardized tests (Pennycook, 2014; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017).

Neoliberalism is presented as neutral and objective; however, this supposed neutrality requires interrogation as this worldview has limited compatibility to measure success for students with diverse learning needs. In fact, using neoliberal markers to measure success of students with disabilities can erode student experience and teacher agency: high stakes testing and economic efficiency fail to fulsomely capture special education student success (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Walton, 2021).

Further, the MOE, and by extension the WNBC harms students with disabilities at Stripes High School when practicing distributed leadership while viewing the world with a neoliberal lens. Neoliberalism reduces a person's value to their economic contributions to society (Walton, 2021). This is detrimental to students with disabilities as they are expensive to serve. Their social, emotional, and physical learning may require support throughout their lifespan. When success is measured by standardized tests and financial efficiency, students with disabilities are set up to fail. The benchmark of success is the problem not the students. Yet, the acceptance and application of the neoliberal worldview has stealthily convinced the MOE, the WNBC, and Stripes High School that credit attainment and high standardized test scores remain the markers of student success.

In addition, the worldview of neoliberalism erodes teacher agency (Troman, 2008) and dilutes the ability of anti-oppressive teaching to challenge the existing order (Wagner and Yee, 2011). This results in the maintenance of the status quo. The neoliberal worldview also allows an entrenchment of performativity (Ball, 2003). For instance, the WNBC board conducted a school climate survey, mandated by the MOE, to measure student belonging, safety, well-being, and achievement. In 2014, the WNBC released its first report on school climate, and continued its work, with the most recent survey

completed in the spring of 2022 (WNBC, 2022a). Although only a snapshot of the results

exists publicly, areas of concern implicate neoliberal tendencies of data collection. For

instance, the WNBC board subcontracted data collection to an American-based company,

Quadratic. Quadratic and the WNBC board failed to consider how to collect survey

results from students with disabilities and ELD students. The preferred solution was to

give extra time to students for survey completion and use tools such as Google Read and

Write to allow students to access the survey. This adaptation fits into the common

discourse of disability: just accommodate and the disability will be overcome (Vasquez,

2011). This rhetoric is harmful and leads to an incomplete picture of disability and

incomplete student survey results.

       The unintentional consequence of farming out school surveys and providing

accommodation tools that may not translate into accessibility is a symptom of a broader

problem: a neoliberal worldview and distributed leadership. This survey exemplifies a

one-size-fits-all model that does not collect authentic voices. It fails to account for multi-

marginalized students of colour (Annamaa & Morrison, 2018). Neoliberal thinking

supports an environment that allows the MOE, and by extension the WNBC board to

invite marginalized groups from schools like Stripes High School to participate, yet

expects them to adapt to policies, practices, and existing culture, without disrupting the

existing structures (Schwartz, 2010; WNBC, 2021b). It fails to account for students who

simply do not understand the question by virtue of their disability or their emergent

English language development. It promotes a positivistic method of collecting data,

which results in an incomplete picture of what is occurring in schools. This exemplifies

the power of neoliberal thinking in education: valourizing data collection and

accommodations limits the understanding of embedded structural issues that undermine experience of students with disabilities (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). Purportedly good, this student survey caused harm. The MOE and the WNBC used distributed leadership to subcontract student surveys without considering the ability to collect authentic data.

This experience needs to change. Through framing the problem of practice, vulnerabilities of the neoliberal worldview are exposed. However, there lacks an offering of an alternative paradigm for the public to harness (Walton, 2021). Economic efficiency and high standardized test scores cannot be the only markers of success. Students with disabilities deserve a more comprehensive definition of success.

Although I aspire to change hearts and minds of well-meaning educators and administrators to create buy-in for transparent framework to support thriving learning environments for students throughout secondary school and beyond, the worldview of the MOE and WNBC justifies an environment of rules and regulations. Simultaneously, a teacher's ability to disrupt barriers and uplift voices remains eroded (Pennycook, 2014). In summation, I have a moral duty to serve students who are traditionally underserved. This imperative includes a responsibility to illuminate examples of inequities that are not immediately evident to dominant groups. This influence also includes calling out positivistic data collection, which not only implicates worldview but also renders barriers to participation invisible.

Guiding Questions from the PoP

The first question that guides the PoP is: how is my positionality influencing the PoP? Throughout this OIP I remain at risk of speaking for my students with disabilities and their families. Although I do not have the lived experience as an individual with a

disability, I have the lived experience as a teacher-leader. I see the gaps in program delivery for students with disabilities at Stripes High School, in the WNBC board, and by extension the greater community. I am at risk of assuming a paternalistic approach when serving my students. Depicting students with disabilities as deficient, poor soul, and brave are entrenched practices found throughout schooling, medicalization, and employment (Anderson, 2009; Lodge, 2005; Young, 2014). My students, as members of the disability community, do not need another external actor speaking for them. On the other hand, this PoP is impacted as some students are non-speaking, and some students are unlikely to speak for themselves. As such, I seek to empower my students throughout this OIP; however, I continue to experience cognitive dissonance about ways in which actioning equity occurs for my students.

The second question guiding this problem of practice is the more challenging question: how do we get people together, in uncomfortable spaces, to make suggestions, shift thinking, and examine the problem of practice, with an awareness of power, privilege, intention, experience, and motivation (Belle, 2016)? There are entrenched ideas in the WNBC board about how to action change and engage stakeholders, stemming from the long-standing history of Ontario's education structure. Neoliberal values, including the reverence of quantitative data, high-stakes testing, and per-pupil funding, are so entrenched and tethered to education in Ontario that they remain invisible. The WNBC board, like all publicly funded Ontario school boards, relies on the MOE for funding, policy, and guidance. While considering the guiding question through this lens, a challenge is getting leaders to see what they do not want to see. In the literature, getting

people on the same page involves trust, buy-in, and consistency, all characteristics of servant-leadership, one of the chosen leadership styles of this PoP (Ball, 2017).

To find out about this concern, I can access WNBC board meetings. Presently, SEAC is a venue for parents to communicate with the WNBC board about concerns related to special education. As a member of the public, I have access to SEAC meetings and minutes. By reviewing past SEAC meeting minutes and increasing my presence on SEAC, I can gather additional evidence of the main problem of practice. As a member of the Ontario Secondary School Teacher's Federation (OSSTF), I can ask clarification questions through the OSSTF representative affiliated with SEAC.

On the other hand, viewing SEAC within a neoliberal frame implicates the committee as a factor impacting the main problem. SEAC, which is mandated by the government to every school board, is made up of trustees, members of the public and superintendents. Although trustees have voting privileges at SEAC and receive training upon election in the trusteeship (OPSBA, 2018), many trustees fail to ask the right questions at SEAC during meetings (personal communication, name withheld for anonymization, October 7, 2021), a fact supported in the literature due to the level of knowledge required to comprehend the fulsome consequences of policy decisions (Freedman & Di Cecco, 2013). Trustees do not necessarily have a background in education, or in the WNBC board, as they are elected officials.

<div align="center">**Leadership-Focused Vision for Change**</div>

Micro, Meso and Macro Level Changes

On a macro level, I seek to develop clear, transparent yet flexible special education programming that is co-constructed with students and care providers with the

end goal of supporting student's life trajectory and doing right by students. I seek to expand the hearts and minds of educators to propel change forward as I remind stakeholders of special education realities. However, on a smaller scale, I seek change for my classroom students and Stripes High School, presenting a different way to support students with disabilities in the WNBC board.

At the organization's macro level, there needs to be consideration for the distributed style of leadership that passes down from the MOE. Grounded in cost savings, the MOE sets the budget, the curriculum, and the markers of success. Subcontracting of services and downloading responsibilities occur. In a preferred organizational state, this would cease. The MOE, and by extension the WNBC would refrain from subcontracting and service deployment would occur using WNBC in-house resources. This desired organizational state would prevent work that is essential to student educational experience from falling through the cracks and therefore left to the teacher to mitigate.

Further, at the meso level, the priority is to illuminate oppressive barriers that exist for students and their families. The policies, procedures and bureaucracies presented as neutral are not. They are created and sustained with purpose. Organizational actors need to view the bureaucracies that exist for students, families, and support staff in specialized program classes as gatekeeping, and work towards removing the barriers. Further, organizational stakeholders ought to question the neutrality of the bureaucratic hoops that families are required to jump through to access services to which they are entitled. This priority is consistent with the organization's strategic plan: to remove barriers and improve equity of outcomes (WNBC, 2019a). I can engage with

superintendents and like-minded trustees and activate advocacy leadership to bring attention to barriers.

In addition, the current practice of the WNBC board operates in a right/wrong dichotomy. Organizational actors know they are right when they follow policy and procedure. However, there is little reflection on whether the right thing is the morally right thing to do (Hornby, 2015), or if the right thing to do upholds an oppressive practice. This is a pitfall of the board's chosen leadership style and its reductionist thinking (Shields & Gélinas-Proulx, 2022). A preferred organization state pursues social justice and identifies and challenges gatekeepers. A preferred state is a place where equity-seeking groups are not pitted against one another in the 'oppression Olympics' based on a finite budget for equity. A place where equity blind spots are acknowledged as part of a continuum of learning as opposed to punished for their existence. The WNBC, through the actioning of its strategic plan, has asked its employees to take risks and be vulnerable while pursuing social justice. I ask the same of senior staff and trustees: choose reflexivity and praxis over a right/wrong dichotomy.

At the micro level, I consider the leaders my students and their families. I exist in the space of education as a servant-leader. I am bound by the governing Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), and the leadership of my immediate administrators. My stance as a servant leader in the classroom lends itself to the leadership approach that is appropriate when evoking support from my immediate supervisors, who change every few years, a result of WNBC policy. The immediate supervisor has a holistic view of the school as well as their own priorities for actioning change. To illuminate the need for change with the immediate supervisors, I will need to activate servant leadership, and underpin the

moral imperative to assist students with disabilities. As there are many priorities for change competing, and a limited budget to action items, I will need to consider how to garner support from my immediate supervisor.

Preferred Organizational State

Within my classroom, there is an increased student need for paraprofessional and community support. Parents request more support with navigating the bureaucratic obstacles for their child (Brown & Percy, 2017; Eagle et al., 2014; Kraemer et al., 2003; Morningstar et al., 2018) once they exit secondary school. At present, families experience barriers with the technical requirements needed to provide necessary paperwork to various external actors. For instance, to apply for Developmental Services Ontario (DSO), a service coordination agency, specific software on a laptop or desktop is required. However, many families use phones, tablets, and chromebooks as their primary computer which does not install required software. Also, medical offices and hospitals require confidential patient paperwork to arrive via facsimile. Few families have fax machines. An investigation into the interconnectedness of schools working with families and community partners ought to occur to fulsomely support students. A preferred organizational state includes illuminating barriers to successful student transition to other organizations, such as the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and the College of Physicians and working towards removing roadblocks for students with disabilities whereas the present state relies on the goodwill of educators to initiate and access services for students with disabilities.

In the preferred organizational state, I will model reflexivity to my sphere of influence. This includes modeling for my colleagues, students, and the broader

community. I am grounded in the belief that relationships and trust are cornerstones of leading change (Katz et al., 2018). This must be considered when engaging with the vulnerability of anti-oppression work: my colleagues will not buy in if I do not engage with openness and honesty. At the same time, in the preferred organizational state, I will feel a sense of psychological safety (Kim et al., 2020) to embark on reflexive work and change course when new learning occurs. I will feel support from the WNBC board.

In summation, there ought to be a shift from the quantitative data collective method that the WNBC embraces. Although the WNBC released its school climate survey, there remains a gap in the fulsome picture of experiences of students with disabilities. For instance, the Canadian Human Rights Commission (2021) observes barriers in education for students with disabilities. Anecdotal data at Stripes High School, acquired through a local-level equity audit, also reveals gaps that are not glaringly obvious at first sight (WNBC, 2021c). Schools are now being tasked with monumental goals for students, increasing expectations for attainment and efficiency, all in the backdrop of the global pandemic which has unearthed blaring inequities in the educational system (Radford et al., 2023). Education workers are asked to be parents, social workers, mental health professionals and meal providers, yet parent autonomy, credit attainment, and rights are touted as foundational to the school system. Although I lack formal agency to change structures that oppress students with disabilities, I do have a moral imperative to highlight them for all to see. Ultimately justified by neoliberal markers and remaining firmly entrenched, these physical and bureaucratic barriers exist. They need to be named. With a lens of servant, transformative and advocacy leadership, I will embark on the change process to be discussed in chapter two.

Chapter Two: Planning and Development

Chapter two identifies the leadership approaches, develops a leadership

framework for understanding change, and analyzes organizational change to select an

informed change path. This chapter considers the zone of mediation as a framework for

change (Figure 1) and the chosen change model, the leadership and humility model

(Figure 2) as well as a model for evaluating organizational change readiness. This chapter

concludes with an assessment of possible solutions to address the PoP (Table 1) along

with challenges and opportunities of each (Table 2). Appendix A and B offer a snapshot

of tangible components to support proposed strategies to change.

Leadership Approach to Change

Servant Leadership

My mission is to serve my students and their families. I aspire to approach

students and families with an asset lens to help them cultivate a good life. I aspire to

embody self-control and active patience with my students and families. If I look at my

students as my followers, it follows that servant leadership would require that I be

responsive to their needs, nurture and take good care of them (Northouse, 2019). As a

teacher-leader, I believe this is my role and there is a moral imperative to assist the most

vulnerable, including students with disabilities (Crippen, 2006; Greenleaf, 1970; Lynch;

2012; Noddings, 2013). I offer gentle nudges of persuasion in my classroom to my

students and colleagues. However, the problem of practice seeks to investigate the

erosion of teacher agency and student experience that result in the WNBC's enactment of

its vision for students with diverse learning needs. This destruction of teacher agency and

student experience may not be immediately visible to individuals who have the agency to

initiate change as senior staff and WNBC board members do not necessarily have experience with special education students. As a result, although servant leadership will empower others to act, it will not illuminate the need for change. So, I will need multiple styles of leadership to enact change.

At the school level, I have limited agency with my immediate teaching team, my head of department, vice-principal, and principal. These actors may envision the problem of practice in the same way as I do; however, they too have limited agency enforce change. The WNBC board places special education students through a central placement process, and the administrators at Stripes High School remain uninvolved in the placement process. Administrators at Stripes, as well as the teaching team do not necessarily receive pre-existing knowledge as to the depth and breadth of student need entering the building.

Further, servant leadership also tempers turbulence when change occurs (Datnow & Park, 2014; Higgs & Rowland, 2005). Servant leadership allows for quick and open dialogue about conflict and change and reduces the resistance to change by supporting and empowering followers. However, servant leadership falls short when considering the problem of practice as it fails to fulsomely support the PoP. Even though teachers, administrators, and all school staff are in the business of serving students, special education students experience oppression through visible and invisible impediments. Many of the barriers are structural and institutional. Servant leadership fails to enable the actioning of change for the PoP as any potential solution will not come from any one individual at Stripes high school. Servant leadership also fails to interrogate systemic barriers that oppress students (Ball, 2003; Noddings, 2013; Starratt, 2009). Leading with

relationships in mind tempers turbulence as raising concerns in low-stakes conversations can engage individuals at the fringes (Cohen, 2022; Gooden et. al, 2022). As such, relationships are a crucial component of leveraging influence and speak to my core values, but for the PoP, servant leadership is not enough.

Transformative Leadership

In my role as a transformative leader at Stripes High School, I can illuminate visible and invisible systemic barriers, and action a call to others to assist with the change (Northouse, 2019; Saad Aleesa, 2021). It is our moral responsibility to serve our students and help cultivate a better life for them. Transformative leadership gives space to action large-scale change and to encourage others to become inspired (Northouse, 2019). I can activate transformative leadership to motivate followers, challenge the status quo and change expectations. This leadership style speaks to me and aligns with my problem of practice insofar as every student requires individual programming. Further, transformative leadership, "addresses the importance of mind-sets and knowledge frameworks and emphasizes the need to change those that perpetuate inequity and to reconstruct them in more equitable ways" (Shields & Hesbol, 2020, p. 5). Transformative leadership activates a high level of morality, motivation, and urgency for change. I seek to do this through the POP and evoking the same passion through followership.

Advocacy Leadership

At the community level, I am an advocate-leader (Anderson, 2009; Barth, 2001), giving away my activist leadership to engage and support the grassroots. I seek to elevate the voices of individuals in the disability community, including whose voice is left out, and who is underserved (Miles & Monaco, 2019). This is activism and within my agency.

As well, advocacy leadership is required to showcase the interconnectedness of student-school-community, crucial to the leadership approach to change. As the student is nested in the school, which is nested in the community, neither can be separated. Neither operates in a silo; they are entangled (Walton, 2021). Advocacy leadership seeks to bridge the individual-school-community through practitioner activism (Anderson, 2009; Barth, 2001). This advocacy consists of collegial influence, formal and informal teacher networks and reflective practice (Rutten et al., 2022). The humility and authenticity demonstrated toward followers and students will assist the change by developing an emotional connection and decrease dysfunctional, antiquated hierarchies (Gross, 2019). Advocacy leadership will propel change forward by grounding relationships and trust.

Using a combination of servant, transformative and advocacy is essential as my agency as a classroom teacher is unable to action potential solutions to the PoP with one singular leadership style. Transformative leadership, although aligning with critical theory as the leadership approach to change, fails to propel forward the PoP on its own. Transformative leadership requires buy-in from senior staff and school board trustees, some of whom may or may not have experience with special education students and not see the urgency of the problem of practice. Advocacy leadership is also essential as the leadership approach to change. Advocacy leadership, especially increasing awareness of the school-to-community continuum, is another essential piece of approaching the change process as it supports a reduction of the mindset that education is siloed, yet relationships need to be cultivated before an environment is ripe for advocacy. As such, servant leadership will also be required.

Potential Marginalization

The leadership approaches to change derives from assumptions of critical theory, especially critical bureaucracy, critical disability, and anti-oppression theory. Critical theory supports the leadership approaches used to propel change forward. It acknowledges suffering and oppression, centres social justice, illuminates the invisibility of patterns of disadvantage, and supports the learning and unlearning cycle (Ryan & Rottman, 2007; Sapon-Shevin, 2003). Critical bureaucracy theory and anti-oppressive theory are two subsections of critical theory that are considered while framing the leadership approach to change. Critical bureaucracy theory seeks to unearth the supposed neutrality of bureaucracy (Merton, 1940; Sjoberg et al., 1984). Anti-oppression theory resides with the foundations of anti-oppressive education framework and remains crucial to the theoretical stance (Freire, 1970; Kumashiro, 2000). It seeks to uncover hidden biases and supports praxis, is underpinned by intersectionality, and pursues peeling away the layers of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991; Furman, 2012; Proctor, 2020; Richter, 2020). Through this critical lens, potential marginalization of students may occur when applying each leadership style.

To begin, one of the ongoing narratives within the medical model of disability involves a pity narrative, a fetishization narrative (Radd et al., 2021), or in the words of Stella Young, a discourse of "inspiration porn" (Young, 2014, tedtalk.com). I reject these ablest narratives of depicting disability; however, there is potential to marginalize individuals with disabilities as I embark on the change as a servant leader. I continually need to engage with reflexive practice to examine how I speak for my students with disabilities. As both an advocate leader and servant leader, I also need to be careful of being drawn into a common narrative of disability: where people with disabilities are

presented as suffering. Organizations capitalize on this narrative (Autism Speaks, 2006), as this powerful suffering discourse pulls at heartstrings. A similar narrative of suffering sells when many Black social media influencers get more likes or shares when they post about Black suffering; however, far fewer likes or shares when posting about Black joy (Newton, 2021).

Consequently, the attraction to suffering and saviour narratives is real and carefully woven into the fabric of dominant organizations. As an advocacy leader, my role is interrogating this narrative. Disability ought to be constructed as a normal part of life, a reward for the privilege of aging. As a result, I continually ask myself if I am undermining students or buying into a dominant narrative of disability when I engage with servant and advocacy leadership.

In addition, when applying critical theory to the leadership approaches, potential marginalization of my students occurs. When viewed with a critical lens, the desired effect of transformative leadership can be aspirational. Although I seek to change hearts and minds and aspire to institutional change for students with disabilities, a transformative leader has of be aware of where followers are at (Ryan & Tuters, 2017). Followers may be resistant and this is a potential barrier. The gap between theoretical transformative leadership and transformative leadership in practice has the potential to derail transformative leadership efforts and further marginalize students. Theory prioritizes equity enaction; however, practice dilutes it, so the masses find it palatable. For instance, anti-racism becomes social justice. Reconciliation efforts can potentially result in recentring whiteness and a failure to interrogate structures, policies, and calling-out institutions, resulting in the neutralization of dissonance when examining

decolonization (Maddison, 2021; Simpson, 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Watts et al., 2022). Similarly, theory promotes an interrogation of anti-oppressive practices; however, in practice, this looks like leaders seeking out presenters for one-off diversity workshops that fail to permeate through the superficial surface (Welton et al., 2018). This is a potential derailment of transformative leadership and will not result in the desired effect for students.

In addition, research on transgender and gender-diverse students echoes these findings as many gender-diverse policies get swept up and combined with greater equity initiatives (Martino et al., 2022). The examples expose similarities of the impact of accessibility policies: looped in with a commitment to inclusive education; however, this erodes transformative leadership and authentic change for students with disabilities. The clumping together of equity-seeking policies undermines change efforts, pitting equity-seeking groups against one another. This is a direct consequence of adopting policies within a neoliberal worldview: without interrogating neoliberalism, efforts to change planning dissipate. This can potentially marginalize students and reduce the intended effect of the leadership style.

Looping back to the PoP, the WNBC's vision for students with diverse learning needs limits teacher agency and undermines student experience because the organization wants to remain palatable to the masses and appease stakeholders, including the neoliberal MOE. Application of critical theory, specifically critical bureaucracy theory, requires the WNBC to interrogate its own worldview to show how ableism and deficit thinking guides decisions for students with disabilities. For instance, decisions made at Stipes High School for students with disabilities, such as integration, when viewed with a

critical disability lens, would show the guise of equity and inclusion (Vasquez, 2011; Young, 2014). Without authentic support, student voice or parental permission, integration of students into general education classrooms is not inclusive education, in fact, the effect is the opposite: further marginalization of students with disabilities (Special Needs Roadmaps, 2023). As such, critical theory is appropriate as the leadership approach to change. Critical theory tethers neoliberalism to the PoP. Critical theory also uncovers the potential student marginalization while using each leadership approach.

<p align="center">**Framework for Leading the Change Process**</p>

The OIP uses the zone of mediation (Figure 1) as the framework for the change process (Welner, 1997). The zone of mediation is embraced due to its ability to recognize impacting factors from above, such as policy, procedure, and external forces, and impacting factors from below, such as grassroots initiatives. The chosen change model is the adapted leadership and humility change model (Nickerson, 2019), which complements the zone of mediation change framework. Several change plans were considered to propel change in the WNBC board. However, the change plan that fulsomely aligns with the leadership and theoretical stance is the leadership and humility change model (Figure 2). The leadership and humility change model has heart, expresses urgency, and values qualitative data. Other models for organizational change are neural (Renée et al., 2010), whereas the leadership and humility change model incorporates the neoliberal worldview. The chosen change model considers my limited control of actors yet allows for an anchoring of new approaches in school culture (Deszca et al., 2015).

The Zone of Mediation

The zone of mediation change framework examines systems of inequity within an organization that are leading to a need for change. Traditional change initiatives struggle to address root causes of the need for change, and as a result the discourse that surrounds the change framework fails to consider the urgency for change (Renée et al., 2010). Language such as getting the pieces in place and creating buy-in underpin traditional change frameworks; however, with a lens of equity, neutral change frameworks remain insufficient to addressing the problem of practice. Central to this PoP is illuminating the indifference caused by neutral change framework discourses.

As a result, the zone of mediation is the chosen change framework because it moves beyond first and second-order change and considers third-order change, where the community helps move change through the organization (Welner, 1997). Change shifts through social movements, collective power, and relationships. In the case of the PoP, the zone of mediation complements the change model. For instance, the zone of mediation acknowledges the power of the lowerarchy (Bolman & Deal, 2017), or the actors at bottom of the organization who possess the determination to action change. The zone of mediation as a change framework positions Stripes High School as the area where change is occurring and acknowledges both factors from above and below that impact the change. In short, the zone of mediation is the chosen change framework because Stripes High School is where the change is occurring, but the battle is occurring outside of Stripes. The zone of mediation as the guiding framework for change propels change efforts upward, forcing those who create policy to examine external forces, such as neoliberalism. The zone of mediation also recognizes the power from the grassroots. Figure 1 describes the zone of mediation.

Figure 1

The Zone of Mediation
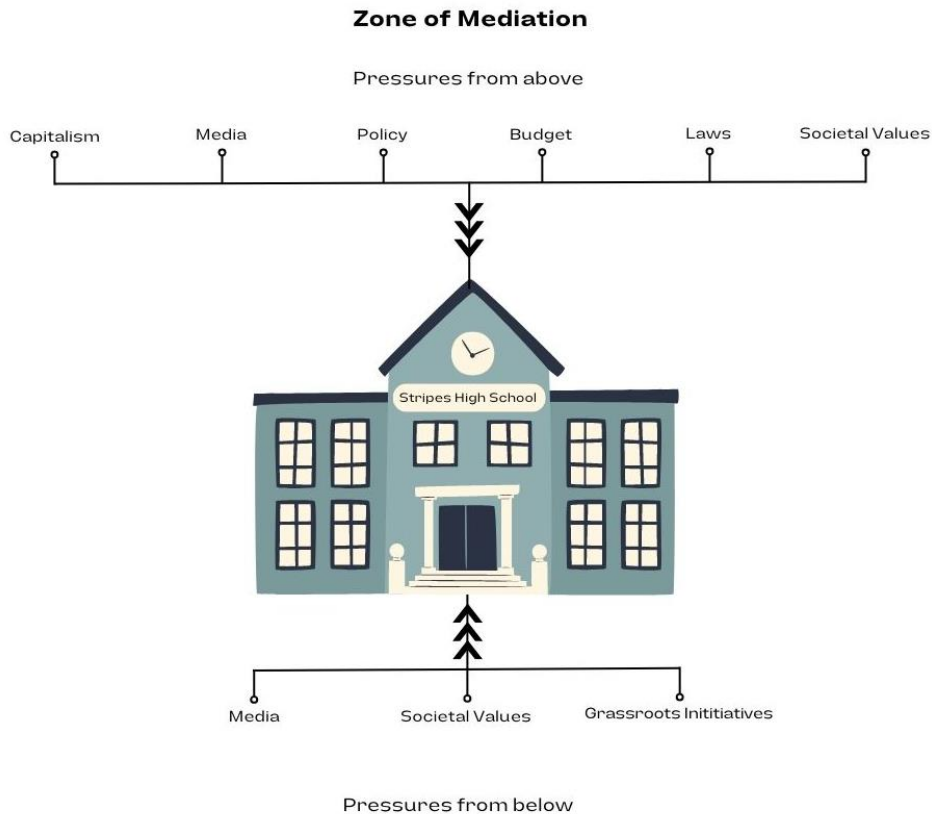
Note. The zone of mediation, the chosen change framework of this OIP, representing pressures from above and pressures from below, all playing out in the zone of mediation, Stripes High School. Adapted from Renée et al., 2010; Welner, 1997.

Moreover, the zone of mediation framework moves beyond single loop change that fails to impact organizational beliefs. The chosen framework for this PoP also moves beyond double loop change that interrogates beliefs and procedures that guide organizational shifts (Fraser & O'Neil, 2021). The zone of mediation aspires third-order change to implicate broader societal values, including capitalism and reverence to policy (Welner, 1997). Yet, the zone of mediation framework still allows for exposure of local

forces that impact the school as the zone of mediation. These forces include budget and the media. As such, the zone of mediation is the chosen framework for change.

When considering the needs of individuals in the disability community, it remains essential to remember that unspoken values are at play when people unknowingly perpetuate oppression through their emotional habits that end up subtly or overtly policing others (Grain, 2022). The zone of mediation framework uncovers and examines internal and external implicit biases through the aspiration of third-order change. Third-order change seeks to fundamentally change the community's core normative beliefs about race, class, and ability (Renée et al., 2010). First and second-order change fails to address the root causes of organization inequity, but third-order change confronts external forces (Renée et al., 2010) to shift the zone through social movements. In the case of this OIP, third-order change forces the exposure of the WNBC's worldview and erosion of teacher agency and experience for students with disabilities as forces from above and below are being called out through the zone of mediation framework.

At the same time, third-order change challenges dominant discourses which come with some potential personal and professional risk. One such dominant discourse is moral panic, a concept well-researched in the literature regarding over-policing gender-diverse students and students of colour (Lowe, 2018; Patel, 2017; Robinson, 2008). However, this same moral panic extends to students with disabilities within various areas of the zone of mediation, in this case, Stripes High School. Policing mirrors the hierarchies already manifested in greater society. A professional risk is questioning the hierarchies, as it is a threat to the status quo. So, although the zone of mediation framework invites analysis of local and global factors that implicate the PoP, the fear is that the zone of

mediation as the framework for changes fails to insulate change agents from risk and resistance. However, when considering Stripes High School as the zone of mediation, using servant leadership to temper upheaval will be the antidote to the potential professional risk (Higgs & Rowland, 2005). As a servant leader, I cannot force policy or implement change, but rather, I can nudge, gently persuade, and engage in low-stakes conversations as the third-order change process questions existing hierarchies.

Furthermore, the zone of mediation requires change from the top and change from the bottom. The bottom-level change requires a trusting relationship and low-stakes conversations. This occurs with students and parents with a servant leadership lens; occurs with colleagues and administrators with a transformative leadership lens, and finally, occurs with community partners with an advocacy leadership lens (Bradley-Levine, 2021; Burke & Sandman, 2017). The change will fail to occur if the relationship does not exist. For this reason, it is imperative that the change model grounds itself in relationships, as they are the cornerstone of propelling change (Katz, et al., 2018).

The Leadership and Humility Change Model

Furthermore, the leadership and humility change model complements the zone of mediation change framework by also exposing external forces, and in the case of this OIP, neoliberalism. The leadership and humility change model provides a cycle for enacting trust, a foundational piece when engaging all stakeholders in the change process. Grassroots activism cannot exist without trust and humility, a tenant of the chosen change model. As a result, the change framework aligns with the change model. The leadership and humility change model calls out neoliberalism, a force descending from the top, yet insidiously everywhere. The grassroots engage in relentless incrementalism (Grain, 2022)

to fulfill change. To consider possible solutions to this PoP, it is important to note that change will take time to occur; in fact, changing mindsets takes time; however, the leadership and humility change model, supplemented by the zone of mediation change framework, acknowledges internal and external forces that drive change. As such, the adapted leadership and humility change model is the chosen change model. Figure 2 explains the change model.

Figure 2

Leadership and Humility Change Model
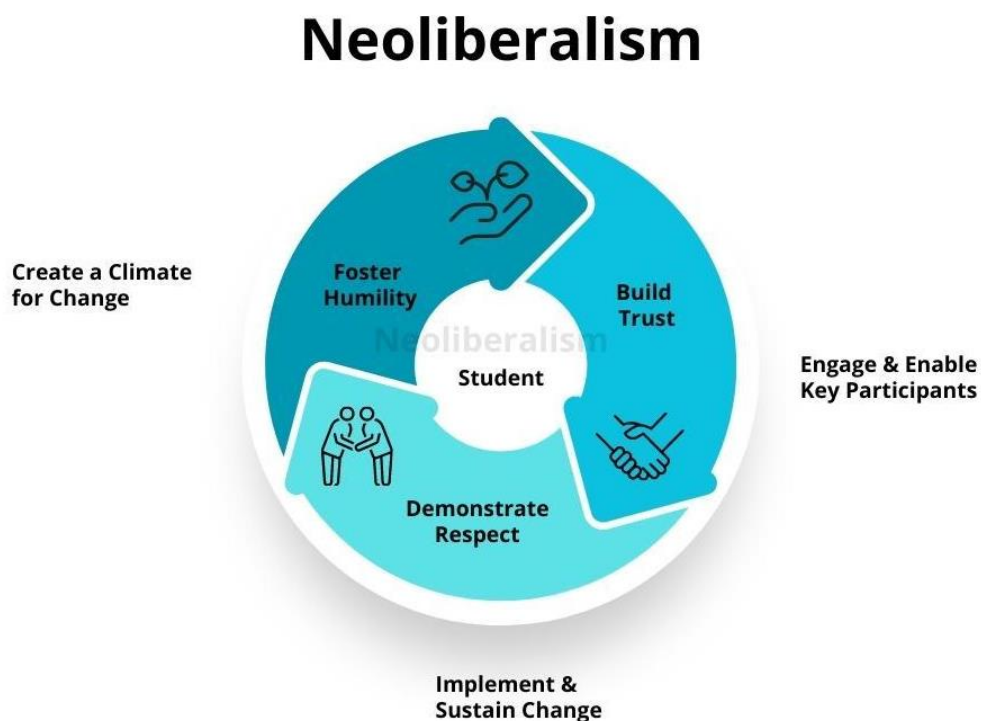
Note. This change model is adapted from Nickerson, 2019.

With the student at the centre of the change model, the leadership and humility change model encourages creating a climate for change, engaging key participants, and implementing and sustaining change. This will occur through fostering humility, building

trust, and demonstrating respect. At the centre of the change model neoliberalism is faint; however, on the outside of the change model, neoliberalism is evident.

One core assumption of my adaptation of the leadership and humility change model is that neoliberalism is insidious and invisible throughout the change process, and ubiquitous outside the change model. Grounding the change model with leader humility, possibilities emerge to create awareness of neoliberalism as an undermining factor in the change process: this is leadership as social justice (Chunoo et al., 2019). Modeling humility arouses in followers the desirability of change and will ultimately benefit the WNBC board (Jianghua Mao et al., 2019). As humility increases, what follows is a reduction in psychological hurdles for leaders and followers and an eventual improvement within an environment of psychological safety (Clark, 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Owens & Hekman, 2012). In the case of this PoP, change can occur because the leadership and humility change model will shine a light on the culpability of neoliberalism. The zone of mediation as a change framework, complemented by the leadership and humility change model, will enhance and support the change process.

On the other hand, leading change in large organizations remains slow and individual actors remain wary, even averse (Katz et al., 2018). This remains a challenge for the PoP as the evidence emerges from a neoliberal worldview, with positivism, high stakes testing, and policy constituting its definition. No doubt, as a transformative leader, I will require a tolerance for turbulence as shining a light on oppressive practices will create conflict through the change process. For many stakeholders, the perception is that it is easier to tow the line than challenge hegemonic practices. Although the change framework, change model and leadership style align, considerable effort and intention is

required to facilitate change as the organization remains tethered to antiquated policies and to a hierarchy of influence.

Organizational Change Readiness

Interrogation of special education delivery in the WNBC board is required to fully support student needs in the board. SEAC advised the WNBC board of the increasing numbers of students with disabilities entering the school board (WNBC, 2019c); however, detailed analysis and plan of support failed to occur. Senior staff in the WNBC board demonstrate risk-averse decision-making processes, especially when it comes to matters of special education, as discussed in the organizational context section of this OIP. The WNBC requires to measure its readiness for change to create an environment ripe for change that can sustain potential opposition to the change.

This OIP will used an adapted readiness assessment of the Community Analysis Research Institute (CARI) model (Barwick, 2011) to analyze the WNBC's readiness for change. The CARI model is based on best practices of the consolidated framework for advancing implementation science (Damschroder et al., 2009). This model, originally developed for health care settings, has moved into education and other social service delivery organizations. The purpose of this model is to synthesize best practices to facilitate organizational change by understanding barriers and incentives to change as well as organizational culture. Motivation and personal attributes of program leaders are part of the readiness assessment (Austin & Classen, 2008). The adapted CARI model assesses the WNBC's change readiness through system capacity, organizational capacity, functional considerations, organizational culture.

System Capacity

As a system, an external actor impacting this OIP includes the OCT. The OCT acts as a change driver and sets professional standards for the teaching profession. Included in the OCT's Standards of Practice are professional advisories. The OCT warns that teachers cannot forget their professional responsibilities and the unique position of trust and authority given to them by society when using social media. As such, the OCT advises teachers to consider their online presence, including avoiding the exchange of private texts, phone numbers, personal email addresses with students (OCT, 2020). However, this advisory conflicts with change readiness as it relates to WNBC organizational capacity, which will be discussed in the organizational capacity section.

Also, in consideration of the OCT as part of the system capacity to change readiness, the college is concerned with a blurring of lines between teaching and social work. Social workers support individuals accessing needed services. However, as part of a moral imperative, as a teacher-leader, failing to assist families with bureaucratic barriers undermines the ethic of care. In effect, the OCT acts as a barrier to supporting student learning when what the student needs is not academic support, but rather social, emotional, and bureaucratic support. At the same time, the College licenses teachers. There is a delicate balance between fully supporting students and risking professional sanctions. As part of an assessment of change readiness, the OCT, while an important external actor within this problem of practice, seems reluctant to change.

Further, the OCT offers an additional qualification (AQ) in anti-Black racism. It is a new qualification for teachers to increase their professional knowledge and consider their own biases (OCT, 2020). However, the college fails to revisit its existing policies to consider its own blind spots for white supremacist policies and other policies that

undermine students with disabilities and other intersecting needs. Rather, it has chosen to create a new course to purportedly solve racism: the responsibility downloads to the teacher as opposed to interrogating the system for its responsibility. This is a consequence of the neoliberal worldview to which the OCT ascribes. This connects to the PoP because the College of Teachers, as an actor of system capacity, would rather virtue-signal than interrogate its own policies to illuminate how experience for students with disabilities is undermined (Ball, 2003; Tosi & Warmke, 2020).

Another external system actor, the MOE also lacks the readiness to change. In theory, the MOE commits itself to inclusion practices. However, in practice, the per-pupil funding formula has remained consistent since 1998 (Wylie, 2022). Students with disabilities are increasingly expensive to serve in a congregated setting as there is a lower staff-to-student ratio. One challenge of good governance is that boards state their beliefs and refrain from further action (Campbell & Fullan, 2019). The MOE asserts equity policy and leaves implementation up to the Boards, without support, guidance, or funding for initiatives to realize fruition. Although Ministry policy is outside of the scope of influence, it is an external actor that heavily drives the problem of practice.

Organizational Capacity

As an organization, the WNBC oozes theoretical readiness to change. However, unlike the OCT which cautioned teachers from blurring the lines between teacher and social worker, the WNBC gave a director's citation award to an individual who engaged in such behaviour. A director's citation is given to an outstanding significant staff contribution (WNBC, 2020). The first award winner of 2020 was applauded for her commitment to students, visiting students during the first closure of the COVID-19

pandemic to deliver food and tech supplies. As a servant leader, I championed this award winner as I too, stress relationships and connections with students and their families (Shapiro & Stefkcovich, 2016). Yet, administrators of Stripes High School discourage and reprimand the same ethic of care. Specifically, two teachers were verbally admonished for delivering food and technology to families in need. Administration's concern remained that food and tech delivery is beyond the scope of teaching and that the OCT frowns upon this action. Specifically, my Stripes administrators evoked OCT advisories, stating, "some educators, acting out of care for their students, intervene personally yet inappropriately... behaviours may include fixating on one student, providing special privileges and gifts or attempting to become close to their family and friends" (OCT, 2020, oct.ca). It remains curious that on the school level, taking food to students in need is unprofessional, yet the organization applauds and commends the same action.

Further, WNBC's goals trace back to its strategic plan: its mission statement seeks to prioritize the dignity and well-being of students in inclusive and caring classrooms (WNBC, 2019a). However, the insidiousness of neoliberalism acts as an invisible causation undermining the board's mission statement and the PoP. For instance, the WNBC board promotes top Education and Quality Accountability Office (EQAO) scores and top academic achievers (WNBC, 2019b) by publishing top schools and scholars on its websites. The Board celebrates and elevates academic rigour, but fails to celebrate social, and emotional rigour, as no schools are publicly commended for their advancement of student's social and emotional needs. The Board accepts the grand narrative of neoliberalism that elevates quantifiable data, market-based reforms, and

standardization (Grimaldi, 2012; Walton, 2021). A disconnect remains between system and organization capacities that undermine readiness for change.

Moreover, when considering organizational capacity, the SEAC is a substantial change agent when considering the PoP. SEAC consists of the superintendent for learning support services (LSS), other superintendents, two trustees, teachers, parents, and community members. SEAC reports to the WNBC board, which in turn considers recommendations that can impact the professional context. Although SEAC's recommendations have the potential to undermine solutions to the PoP, reaching SEAC is within the scope of influence as meetings remain public.

Functional Considerations

The reverence for bureaucracy in the WNBC board among other external change actors requires investigation as part of an assessment for change readiness. Bureaucracy is more than a function. It is a gatekeeper, an authority, an enabler. As I come to my work with a critical lens, I consider the idea that knowledge is created by power (Mumby, 2005). Critical theory encourages teachers to question their role in inequitable systems; furthermore, critical bureaucracy theory questions bureaucracy's use as a justification, questions its narrative as neutral, and its use to exclude. A lens of critical bureaucracy allows the questioning of bureaucracy as more than a function.

As a teacher, I experience bureaucracy daily. In fact, I am complicit in upholding it. Navigating bureaucracies for students with disabilities in the WNBC board provide a pivotal shift in thinking about the benign construction of bureaucracy. Many students, by virtue of their disability, receive access to funding and services (DSO, 2022). However, few students know about the service when entering Stripes High School. Barriers to

access run rampant. While stewing in this space, it became evident that utilization of services failed to occur partly due to the inability of students and their families to navigate the bureaucratic process. Critical bureaucracy theory (Ferguson, 1984; Merton, 1940) posits that bureaucracies generate a secret language with allows organizations to monopolize and safeguard information, at the same time minimizing supervision from outsiders. Challenging the neutrality of policies, the bureaucracy, and the limited understanding of an organization's goals all ascribe to critical theory.

Organizational Culture

Although the organization purports a theoretical aspiration for change readiness, the WNBC board, along with senior staff, fails to facilitate an environment of psychological safety. Without a feeling of safety, individuals will not emerge to challenge existing hierarchies and hegemonies that exist in the WNBC board and elsewhere (Grain, 2022; Pregmark, 2022). The WNBC board inhibits change readiness when organizational culture feels unsafe to speak out. In fact, despite individual readiness for change, the organization uses policy to diminish change efforts. Policy is used to uphold inaction (P. Edwards, personal communication, July 24, 2021) and used to curtail dissent. Dr. Bettina Love states that "education can't save us. We have to save education" (B. Love, personal communication, May 5, 2022). Likewise, I feel the same about policy: it will not save us. We need to save it. Neoliberalism breeds risk aversion, and without an inclination for even minimal risk, change agents will not feel a sense of psychological safety. As a teacher-leader and change agent within the organization, I experience a culture of fear, reprimand, and tattletale. Senior staff can cultivate psychological safety; however, as a system, the WNBC board bows to parental pressure (Clandfield, 2014). As such, even if

all internal actors and stakeholders are on board with change, parents can curtail senior staff change readiness. Concurrently, there is a policy for everything, which can also be used by senior staff to pare down change efforts.

Consequently, this change readiness assessment has illuminated various internal and external change actors and agents. Using an adapted CARI readiness assessment, this analysis of readiness has examined system capacity for change readiness, organizational readiness for change, functional readiness to change as well as the organizational culture's readiness to change. In summation, although there is readiness for change among individuals within the system and organization, the WNBC board demonstrates theoretical readiness to change. The WNBC board remains tethered to system actors with limited readiness to change. This is due to capacity within system actors, such as the OCT and the MOE, due to organizational capacity and the publication of standardized test scores, due to the overwhelming bureaucracy and due to the perceived lack of psychological safety within the organizational culture.

Possible Strategies to Address the Problem of Practice

Each possible strategy to address the problem of practice requires careful analysis as my agency as a teacher-leader requires embeddedness in each potential solution. There are factors that I cannot change: the distributed leadership style employed by the MOE and funnelled down to the WNBC board as well as the principal at Stripes High School; the per pupil funding as dictated from the MOE; and class sizes and student placement as prescribed by the WNBC board. However, as a transformative leader, I can shine a light on barriers of our present service delivery (Miles & Monaco, 2019). I can also use community connections as a mechanism to propel change forward. As such, the possible

solutions to address the problem of practice all use existing WNBC board policies and structures to re-envision special education student placement to support student need fulsomely.

Option 1: Engaging SEAC Through Showcasing Advocacy Efforts

The first possible solution that exists is to present to SEAC. As per the Education Act, all school boards must have a special education advocacy committee. As a member of the public, I have a right to attend SEAC meetings as a non-voter. I also have agency through OSSTF to ask questions through the OSSTF SEAC representative. I can appeal to SEAC's chair for a spot to showcase my work, including reports produced as a leader of the school's equity committee. Additionally, I can use SEAC to showcase work that is done by myself and other educators to support students in SPCs to consolidate efforts within the WNBC board. The work showcased will be given away to SEAC in the hopes that members on SEAC shift their thinking and develop an increased awareness for support required for students with disabilities. Through showcasing efforts to SEAC from educators, the hope is a heightened awareness for increased vision and support for SPCs.

For this potential solution to come to fruition, SEAC voting and non-voting members will need to increase their knowledge about the function of SEAC. For instance, the parent handbook on best SEAC practice suggests members of the public remain unconvinced as to the efficacy of SEAC (Smith et al., 2016). The goals of SEAC will need to change, and so too will the function of its meetings. SEAC currently meets once per month and reports to the WNBC board; however, as per SEAC meeting minutes, very little time is devoted to guest speakers, community activists, and presentations. Most time

is focused on the business of the day (WNBC, 2021a; WNBC, 2021b). Re-juggling SEAC meetings must occur to allow for increased time for voices.

Resources required for this change include human and fiscal. Human resources are required to increase the knowledge of SEAC members. Fiscal resources may be required to incentivize participation on SEAC. As membership is based on volunteerism, it follows that a SEAC member may let their non-paying commitments fall by the wayside. Members vested in SEAC must increase their awareness of their roles and responsibilities. Servant leadership will be actioned as nudging is the path forward for this potential solution.

A part of this solution is curating a to-do list for families: support systems embedded along every part of a special needs student's educational journey. This directory of services will be curated by a team of special education service personnel, including teachers, EAs, psychologists, and other paraprofessionals, and included as hyperlinks on all WNBC board communication (see Appendix A). This curated list of support services for students and families acts as a visual reminder of timelines, services available, and community agencies. A curated list acts as a starting point in a continuum of care for students.

A further consideration within this potential solution is connecting with the board-level representative to collaborate on an awareness-raising campaign, such as Autism Awareness month, typically held each year in April. This consciousness-raising campaign would increase capacity of individuals who teach, connect, and work with students with autism. This includes their learning strengths and challenges. Using voices of students with disabilities through grassroots activism reframes and educates the community and

aligns with advocacy leadership (Barth, 2001; Rutten et al., 2022). This awareness-raising campaign can be given to SEAC for their perusal (see Appendix B).

A concern arising from this potential solution with an equity lens includes speaking for members of the disability community, along with their families and partners. As part of the change process, it is necessary to remain reflexive and remember that folks in the disability community are resourceful and wholesome (Sharpe & Nishimura, 2016). Saving them is not my requirement. At the same time, there is an ethical responsibility, a moral imperative, to assist students with disabilities. I continue to grapple not only with assuming student and family competence, but also considering that that some families feel disenfranchised from the school system. I ought to prioritize voice amplification over centring myself. Change drivers for this potential solution include SEAC, the superintendents who sit on the SEAC, and the OCT. Parents are asking for further support with their high-needs children (Eagle et al., 2003; Hetherington et al., 2010; Kraemer et al., 2003; Morningstar et al., 2018). In an environment where resources are spread thin, a teacher may feel compelled to complete the work on behalf of a family. The OCT tempers this instinct as its acts as a professional guide for educators, releasing a professional advisory warning teachers that actions of care may be considered grooming behaviour (OCT, 2020).

Option 2: Building Activism Through Observation: A Spotlight on SPCs

A second potential solution includes inviting trustees, superintendents to my classroom to showcase the increasing need of students with disabilities. The invitation would extend to actors who have agency to support further change. This solution would act as an eye-opener for people who make decisions. For instance, Shelley Moore, in her

advocacy efforts suggests, "in our advocacy aimed at support for inclusion, it's the systemic structures of support that we need to ask for, not just more people" (Don't Should on me, *One Moore Minute*, 2019). Structural changes are precisely what is needed to increase awareness of the need for students with disabilities in the WNBC board. Equity audits are also supported in the literature as tools to collect authentic student data (Boss, 2017; Freeman, n.d; Radd et al., 2021). Once a light is shone in the dark corners of the school, perhaps increased voices will begin to advocate for a change in special education delivery services, including increased vision for SPCs.

To continue with this potential solution, an invitation to SEAC for an audit of schools is within my scope of influence. In 2016, the provincial parent association advisory committee on special education advisory committee (PAAC on SEAC) contributed an effective practices handbook. The handbook included goals for SEACs. Using this guideline as a roadmap for how SEAC can be leveraged in the local context, possibilities exist in the recommendations to action an audit through SEAC.

For instance, PAAC on SEAC recommends that SEAC committees create goals to raise awareness about SEAC, increase members' satisfaction, and engage community partners. Specifically, PAAC on SEAC members acknowledge that SEACs ought to create annual priority goals (Smith et al., 2016). Using the effective practice framework as a guide, and in the spirit of propelling SEAC engagement, I could propose that SEAC members engage in audits of special education programs and their facilities. The OSSTF representative for SEAC and the WNBC representative for special education classrooms engage as change champions to facilitate this process.

Using a lens of equity, this potential solution may lead to a fetishization of students with disabilities. Specifically, having visitors into the school, visitors who perhaps view disability with a deficit lens or favour the medical model of disability are at risk of reproducing disability with an inspirational mindset: the feeling that people with disabilities are courageous and brave for engaging in everyday life experiences (Radd et al., 2021; Young, 2014). This narrative positions people with disabilities as lesser and outside the normal experience, a harmful experience for both students and visitors alike. Considering the ethic of care, I grapple with the potential harm reproduction this solution may cause. My values include being in locus parentis and I want the same things for my students as my own children. Objectification of my students because of this potential solution is my failure. As such, I approach this potential solution with caution, as it may illuminate the dark corners of the school, a goal of this PoP; yet it may increase harm.

On the other hand, I understand that seeing is believing. People who create the policy live different experiences than the people who live the policy. If a solution to this PoP includes galvanizing advocates, it is possible that other equity audits will ensue at multiple sites. Increasing voices will increase the volume and urgency of actioning potential solutions.

Option 3: Showcasing Continuity of Services With Trauma-Informed Support

A third potential solution to this problem of practice is reaching out the WNBC's family reception centre (FRC) to provide a continuation of support services. The family reception centre supports students wishing to enroll in grades one to twelve who have attended school outside of Ontario, in a language other than English, and/or if English is not the primary language spoken at home (WNBC, 2022b). Eligibility to access the

family reception centre includes permanent residents, refugees, and children of diplomats, children of parents with a work or study visa, or students with an early literacy development designation from other Ontario school boards. This may also include students without any paperwork such as report cards (WNBC, 2022b).

The FRC's mandate is to help families find additional support to adjust to life in the local area, including connecting with local agencies and community resources. The FRC could adjust its role to include a community liaison advocate to assist families with a continuation of services. Students in WNBC's congregated special education classes begin school with their local networks of support established. However, many families who are new to the area do not have support networks in place. Many students and families arrive in the area with few resources. And added responsibility to the family includes caring for a child with disabilities.

Further, a trauma-informed practice is required to support students and their families, and the family reception centre's mandate aligns with trauma-informed practice (WNBC 2022b). Trauma informed practice includes strengths-based approach rooted in the understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma that emphasizes physical, and psychological safety (Menscher & Maul, 2016). Being trauma-informed is about creating safety and trustworthiness within institutions promoting supporting learning environments, safety, and empowerment for all. Using a lens of trauma-informed care, the family reception centre can encourage a continuation of service for families, at school and within the community. Part of this continuum is advocating for the need if special education services are required to support student success.

Resources required for this potential solution include human, fiscal and language. I have limited agency in this potential solution as I do not directly work with the FRC. However, I work directly with support personnel who report to the FRC. In addition, I have compiled informal educator networks that include individuals who work at the FRC, and I could employ them to action this potential solution. Further resources for this potential solution include multi-cultural liaison (MLOs) officers, people who work for the WNBC board and speak multiple languages are the first point of contact for multi-lingual families. Increasing MLOs to connect families to community support is required. With an equity lens, although the research indicates that parents desire further assistance navigating a continuum of support for their special needs child, little research is completed about families who immigrate to the area and require language and special education services (Hamayan et al., 2017). When I considered respite care for a family of a student with disabilities, the family responded with "we don't do that. That's a family responsibility" (personal communication, June 15, 2021, name withheld for anonymization). This moment of reflexivity encouraged me to consider whether I thought the family needed help or if the family thought they needed help. Tapping into community resources is not a priority for all families, even though all students are entitled to services.

This potential solution requires the superintendent of the family reception centre and support from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and the specialized classroom placement committee. This potential solution also removes the responsibility of a continuum of services out of the school to the WNBC board level. Table 1 compares the resources required of three potential solutions to the problem of practice.

Table 1

Resources Required

Potential Solution	Time	Human	Fiscal	Structural	Language
1. Engaging SEAC Through Showcasing Advocacy Efforts	🟥	🟥	🟨	🟩	n/a
2. Building activism through observation: A spotlight on SPCs	🟥	🟥	🟥	🟥	n/a
3. Showcasing Continuity of Services With Trauma-Informed Support	🟩	🟥	🟥	🟨	🟥

Legend

Low quantity of resources required	Green
Medium quantity of resources required	Yellow
High quantity of resources required	Red

Note. This table compares the time, human, fiscal, structural and language resources required to action each potential solution.

Table 2 compares each potential solution for the problem of practice based on principles of equity, ethical considerations as well as change drivers. Finally, this table delivers pros and cons of each potential solution. A pitfall of solution one includes a failure to activate servant leadership and continues to silo special education. Potential harm may occur with solution two as inviting virtue-standers into Stripes High School may further marginalize students with disabilities with a re-entrenchment of narratives depicting people with disabilities. The lack of my involvement undermines solution three as I have limited agency and this potential solution fails to activate anti-oppressive theory as a framework.

Table 2

A Comparison of Factors Required to Solve the Problem of Practice

Solution	Equity	Ethics of Care	Change Drivers	Pros	Cons
1. Engaging SEAC Through Showcasing Advocacy Efforts	-potential to view students with deficit lens	-activates servant leadership -increases awareness	-psychological safety	-aligns with critical theory	-fails to cultivate team leadership - I operate in a silo
2. Building activism through observation: A spotlight on SPCs	-potential to fetishize students with disabilities	-highlight the inequities in person -duty/in-locus parentis	-Superintendents -SEAC -Trustees -psychological safety	-aligns with critical disability theory -aligns with leadership style	-potential to increase harm (fetishization) -invitations can be declined
3. Showcasing Continuity of Services with Trauma-Informed Support	-trauma-informed practice -strengths-based	-lacks servant-leadership and moral imparity	-MCSS -Family reception centre: adjusting its goals -psychological safety	-aligns with critical bureaucracy theory	-no action required on my part -fails to consider non-multilingual language learners

Note. This table provides a glimpse into the comparison of equity implications, ethic of

care considerations, change agents, and the pros and cons of each potential solution.

The preferred solution to address the problem of practice is option two: building

activism through observation as it speaks to my heart. If SEAC members are invited, the

committee will hear of the equity audit and encourage members to conduct similar audits

in other schools. There is also an appetite for increased equity for traditionally

marginalized groups, according to the strategic plan of the WNBC board (2019a); this

includes learners with disabilities.

In addition, option two uses servant leadership to invite those with influence into

the building. Option two provides SEAC with a bridge to a distinct annual goal: a priority

SEAC (Smith et al., 2016). Inviting other members, such as superintendents and the

education workers in learning support services, will also increase the number of people

who see the realities of barriers for students with disabilities. With a lens of

transformative leadership, the increased eyes, ears, and voices will provide other ideas

and opportunities to cultivate awareness and change.

Although my hope is to engage SEAC, members may turn down the equity audit

invitation. However, the equity audit can be facilitated without the participation of SEAC

members. I can invite staff and students from Stripes High School and other sites into my

classroom to participate in an equity audit so others can see the need. This supports the

anti-oppressive framework as it may encourage other grassroots change efforts for

students with disabilities. I am unable to engage with the systemic changes needed to

address some of the gaps in WNBC's governance structure (Fullan, 2019; Smith et al.,

2016); however, initializing an equity audit, with the intention to highlight barriers and

bring audits to other schools, is within my scope of influence.

Option one is also not the preferred solution because the responsibility of

actioning solutions rests with the teacher-leader. The intention of the OIP is not to

download further responsibility to the teacher as it does not lead to authentic change. It

does, however, highlight a gap within the organization, a partial goal of this OIP.

Option three, engaging the FRC, is also not the preferred solution. The FRC is

located at another site. I will not be involved in the change process as this organization is

arm's length from a school and operates as an intake centre as opposed to an education

centre. The solution involving the FRC includes positive features, such as using a trauma-

informed lens to support students; however, not all students with disabilities require

access to the FRC. This potential solution limits the number of students with disabilities it reaches. I am unable to activate servant leadership with this potential solution and this solution is beyond the scope of my influence.

In summation, all three potential solutions can increase the efficacy of the WNBC board and its support for students with disabilities. All potential solutions are viable and actionable. Option two is the preferred solution as it best aligns with the leadership style and the worldview and is within the scope of influence. Solution two allows for the possibility of sharing anti-oppressive practices to support students. Critical disability theory is situated in this option as it increases voices of students with disabilities. It is a grassroots effort to show the pitfalls of the board's vision for students with disabilities.

In conclusion, chapter two has contributed to the chosen leadership styles to action potential solutions to address the PoP. Chapter two has conducted an organizational readiness assessment, and provided a framework for change, and change model. Finally, this chapter has detailed potential solutions as well as their strengths and weaknesses, concluding with a preferred solution to the PoP. Chapter three will develop a plan for implementing, monitoring, and communicating change process.

Chapter Three: Implementation, Evaluation and Communication

The final chapter of this OIP builds on the findings from the WNBC

organizational analysis, the readiness assessment and information about the need for

change. The preferred solution to address the problem of practice titled: *Building activism*

through observation: A spotlight on SPCs is to hold an equity audit to highlight

increasing needs of students with disabilities. Chapter three presents the change

implementation plan and offers monitoring, evaluation, and communication planning. It

also offers a guiding inquiry-based methodology to monitor the change process.

Appendix D offers part one of the equity audit. Appendix E offers a visual of a

knowledge mobilization plan. This chapter also considers how the change process will be

tempered through leadership and potential reactions of key participants. The support and

resources required to sustain the implementation of the change are identified. The chapter

concludes by offering next steps.

Change Implementation Plan

The equity audit will increase the WNBC board's capacity to enact the strategic

plan. The organizational environment is ripe for increasing equity for traditionally

marginalized students in the WNBC board (WNBC, 2019a); this includes students with

disabilities. Pillars of the WNBC strategic plan include increasing a sense of belonging

and equity as well as modernizing bureaucracies, which is in alignment with the preferred

solution. This section of the chapter discusses the change implementation plan, with

benchmarks, targets, resources, and personnel required to engage at each stage.

To begin, it is essential to note that to change hearts and minds about a moral

imperative to fulsomely support students with disabilities. I will need buy-in from my

principal. Actioning the preferred solution teeters on his support as inviting

superintendents and trustees to Stripes would require authorization. My goal is not to lay

shame and blame for any unfavorable results stemming from an equity audit. I aspire to

move at the speed of trust (Campbell & Fullan, 2019) and galvanize critical allies, and I

want the principal, vice-principal, and department head to all be critical allies in this

change plan. If the principal of Stripes is not engaged with an idea of an equity audit, I

can still inspire like-minded people through promising practices, inviting like-minded

educators into my place and space.

The framework for a school equity audit can be given away to other equity-

seeking groups at the school, the WNBC board or community groups as the audit lays the

groundwork for investigating equity gaps in an organization and engages people at the

margins (Campos-Moreira et al., 2020). This is advocacy leadership enacted as social

justice (Chunoo et al., 2019). If I am unable to formalize an equity audit due to a lack of

support, I can give the framework away. More voices will increase empowerment and

activist work (Bradley-Levine, 2021; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The desired effect of the

OIP includes individuals with increased agency sitting in uncomfortable spaces and

engaging in equity work, however, if participants with decision-making power fail to

attend, the equity audit still has effect.

First Stage and Short-Term Goals: Creating a Climate for Change

With principal support, the short-term goals will be formulated and actioned

during the first stage of the change model, creating a climate for change. During this part

of the change process, setting the table for an equity audit will occur. First and foremost,

choosing dates to conduct the audit is necessary. I will encourage buy-in from interested

parties as well as model humility as it increases follower desire for change (Jianghua Mao et al., 2019; Owens & Heckman, 2012). Also, it is important to invite key interested parties with various perspectives to join the change process (Dudar & Scott, 2017). Desired participants include superintendents, trustees, community partners, and MOE representatives to increase the possibilities of creating change through the equity audit.

Further, my responsibility in the short term will be information gathering. For instance, from February 2023 to June 2023, I will attend SEAC meetings, liaising with the SEAC OSSTF representative to ask questions about which SEAC members would be interested in participating in an equity audit. I will meet with the vice-principal in September 2023 to ensure that the school is available for the audit. I will also ensure parental permission is granted for students in my classroom to participate in the audit. I will also present at the September all-staff meeting to advise my colleagues of the audit. In September 2023, the department head will invite emergent student-leaders in the main program to participate in the audit as well as paraprofessional staff to join. Paraprofessional staff include speech-language pathologists (SLP), psychologists, social workers and MLOs that work with the WNBC board. In September 2023, the principal will invite the superintendent to the equity audit and will ask the superintendent to invite their colleagues. In September 2023, I will ensure parental permission is captured for student participation in the equity audit. The role of the students and educational assistants will be to create invitations to be sent to community agencies, ministry officials, and trustees to invite them to participate in the audit. Resources required to facilitate the short-term goals of the change plan include time to invite participants, as well as patience and support for students to create invitations.

Students ought to have an opportunity to take on a leadership role in their schools (Tellez, 2020); however, there lies a problem with equity between voices. Many students in specialized program classes may be intimidated by speaking to adults, especially adults they do not have a previous relationship with. As a result, student voice occurs in the community to avoid conflict with the school (Mitra & McCormick, 2017). To mitigate this, in October 2023, through the leadership and humility change model, I will implement the first stage by encouraging confirmed attendees to participate in an adapted liberating structure. Liberating structures consist of alternative ways to approach and design how people work together. Liberating structures are a menu of activities used to replace conventional practices and are designed to include everyone (Chlup & Collins, 2010; Lipmanowicz et al., 2015; Singhal et. al., 2019).

First, this change plan will use an adapted celebrity interview (see Appendix C). The celebrity interview will develop relationships between students and adults participating in the audit. In the adapted celebrity interview, key invited participants will be given an anonymous profile of a WNBC student in a specialized program class. Prior to meeting as a large group, invited members will be asked to construct open-ended questions for the student which may be asked during the first meeting of the equity audit when the liberating structure activity continues in a whole group setting. By assigning participants homework, an opportunity emerges: the development of a personal narrative that is knowledgeable, involving a full range of rational, emotional, and ethical dynamics. For the purposes of the leadership humility model, this modified liberating structure activity will develop empathy, integrate cultural knowledge, and encourage self-reflection, kindness, and respect (Campos-Moreira et al., 2020).

Second Stage and Medium-Term Goals: Engaging and Enabling Key Participants

A climate that is ripe for change needs the fostering of relationships (Smith et al., 2018). This part of the change model encourages participants to be flexible and question the hierarchies, policies, and procedures existing at the WNBC board. Engaging and enabling key participants will employ the concept of liberating structures to propel the equity audit using an asset-based lens. Participants will use the celebrity interview model of the liberating structure's framework to get to know students in a specialized program class in October 2023. This is labelled as a short-term and medium medium-term goal because the celebrity interview occurs as participant homework in the short-term, and then again over one or two meetings of the equity audit team in the medium-term.

Resources required for the implementation of the second stage of the change process require invited participants to attend and be prepared. My role will be to act as the emcee of the celebrity interview: encouraging participants to reflect on their celebrity interview questions in order to boost a connection between adults and students, give substance and depth to a topic, engage every individual in generating questions for further exploration, and shed light on the student experience (Singhal et al., 2019).

After careful implementation of the liberating structure with the intention of enabling students and building relationships, the co-construction of an equity audit of Stripes begins. In October 2023, part one of the equity audit will be the participants engaging with the equity audit I have developed (Brailey, 2016; Freeman, n.d.; Gray, 2023) to illuminate school barriers (see Appendix D). The equity audit will ask participants to tour the school to investigate barriers. The groups will consist of adults, non-disabled students, and students who identify as disabled. In November 2023, part

two of the equity audit will occur in keeping with the leadership and humility change model and invite participants to develop their own equity criteria as means to allow increased voices at the table. Resources required for this medium-term goal include time, patience, and reflection. I will assist with the facilitation and invite participants to consider the school with an equity audit in mind. Participants will require voice recorders/phones to take notes, a paper copy of the audit questionnaire, clipboards and writing utensils, and will be required to move around the school. My responsibility will be to provide participants with copies of the equity audit as well as constructing groups of students and adults. Once participants have completed an equity audit, they will deliver their results to me. We will conclude the audit by debriefing using another liberating structure, the modified fishbowl experience, asking participants what seems possible now? (Lipmanowicz et al., 2015).

In November and December 2023, as well as January 2024, the superintendent, the principal, the vice-principal, the department head, the students, and I will collate the data, analyze, and evaluate the data, a medium to long-range plan for this change process. Time is required to configure and display results. Students will be responsible for sending thank you notes for stakeholder participation in the audit to maintain the relationship.

Third Stage and Long-Term Goals: Implementing and Sustaining Change

The final segment of the leadership and humility change model includes implementing and sustaining change. The grounding component in this section of the change model includes demonstrating respect, nurturing positive intentions, and considering innovations in service delivery for students with disabilities (Campos-Moreira et al., 2020). The long-range plans of the change plan will have the desired effect

of illuminating the barriers, both visible and invisible, for students with disabilities as well as the lack of vision to fulsomely support students with disabilities in the WNBC board. The exposure of the gap between the current state and the preferred state will be illuminated in all three sections of the change model: creating an environment for change, engaging key participants, and implementing and sustaining change. This will occur by examining the gaps in the organization through the equity audit: the current reality will be juxtaposed with the preferred reality.

For example, in the current reality, the WNBC board prioritizes economic accountability, whereas the preferred state prioritizes student accountability. Letting one's mind wander to possibilities and paying close attention to contradictions are all characteristics of innovators (Gregoire, 2017; Tenney & Gard, 2016). Acting on insights and revealing contradictions allows people to examine things they would be likely to ignore, such as the gap between the current and preferred organizational state. By juxtaposing the current state of the WNBC with the preferred state of the WNBC, insights such as the organizational worldview will emerge throughout the change model.

Further, the responsibilities of the students, principal, superintendent, department head, vice-principal and I lie in collating the raw data for reflection once all members of the equity audit return to the school for consolidation. Work continues by communicating findings to stakeholders. Long-term plans include communicating the findings to external WNBC key participants, as well as community organizations and politicians, which will occur in the spring of 2024. Consolidation occurs with a revisit from equity audit participants to the original school in the spring of 2024. In the fall of 2024, I will complete an article to various educational journals reporting the equity audit findings. At

this time, I will also leverage OSSTF and SEAC to encourage other schools to engage in equity audits to disseminate the results to the community beyond the WNBC board.

Addressing Resistance Through Leadership

Stakeholder reactions may vary when engaged in the change plan. Many stakeholders in the WNBC insist that change is necessary; however, consider the scope problematic in enacting broad change. Some stakeholders may insist that the current state needs tweaking, but not overhauling action. Some stakeholders may fall back on policy to prevent action. Some stakeholders may also employ data to curtail the change process (Schulze & Pinkow, 2020). However, teachers encourage student risk-taking in classrooms, potentially risking academic sabotage. Stakeholders ought to model the same thing: sit in uncomfortable spaces and take risks for the betterment of students, even with the perceived professional risk.

As a result, enacting servant and transformative leadership will occur to temper turbulence. For instance, using servant leadership, I will encourage the use of perception data, including teacher reflection and observation (Austin & Harkins, 2008; Datnow & Park, 2014), as well as direct observations and teacher implementations (Dudar & Scott, 2017). Using a transformative leadership lens, I will ask questions about data creating barriers as opposed to breaking them (A. Elizadriad, personal communication, January 26, 2023). By investigating data this way through the change model, opportunities emerge: the sharing of ideas about data, trust building, and mutual accountability. These elements are all essential in the change process. These opportunities can also be used to encourage reflection about reverence for quantitative data, a prevalent worldview in the WNBC board as well as the MOE.

This way of addressing resistance aligns with both an anti-oppressive lens and a critical disability lens by considering the unquestioned norms, habits and practices that show up in our everyday lives as normal. Attempting to influence change within seemingly entrenched systems is an act of resistance as well as transformative leadership (Chatmon et al., 2023). Moreover, transformative leadership allows for the investigation of the narrow construct of why data is used and encourages actors to find other possibilities for its use (Datnow & Park, 2014). Through a lens of transformative leadership, personnel will consider the plethora of decisions made for students with disabilities without their voices. In this circumstance, no doubt a potential roadblock to action is policy. However, stakeholders will be invited to consider organizational learning through the cultivation of post-bureaucratic practices: an integrative and genuine sharing of power and responsible autonomy for more actors (Austin & Harkins, 2008).
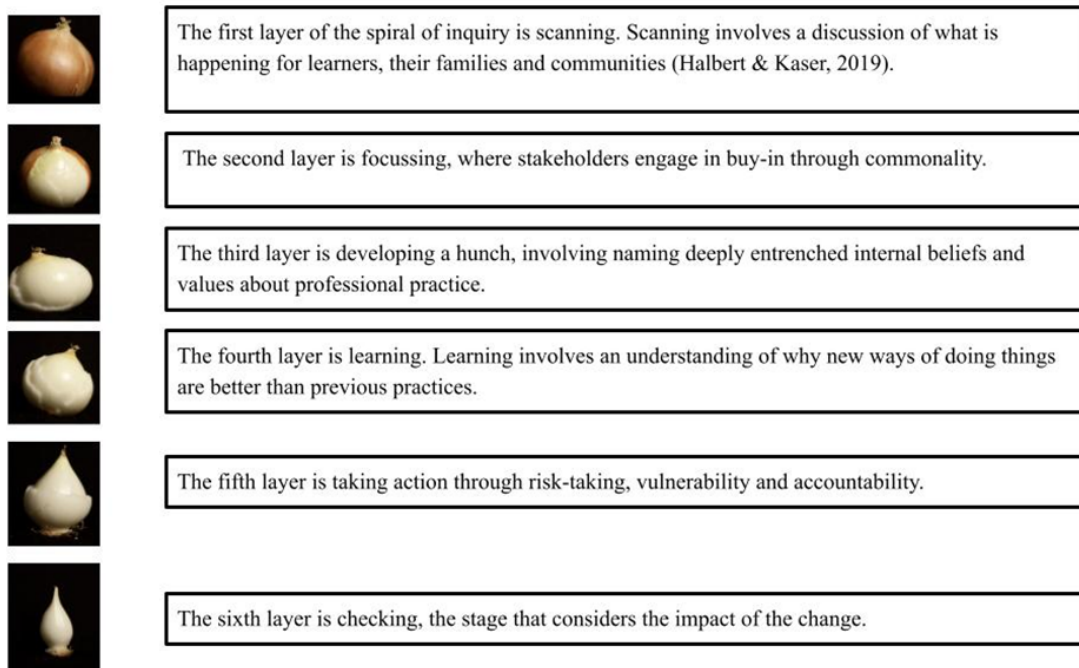
In addition, encouraging anti-oppressive culture through equity audits may also create resistance. However, it is important to acknowledge the strengths of resistors and position them to be critical support for their peers, a move developed through creating opportunities for dialoguing and learning (Schulze & Pinkow, 2020). People feel empowered when they share their voices and stronger relationships are created with authenticity. Adjustments to the change plan may occur at any time during the change process, due to factors such as student placement changes, policy enactions, and new or changing personnel. Throughout the change process, the invitation to participate in the equity audit could be declined, a potential that may change the equity audit's effect.

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluating

The spiral of inquiry acts as a guiding methodology that I, as a servant leader, will use to monitor the change process (Halbert & Kesar, 2019). Using the spiral of inquiry to monitor change provides entry points of measuring change. The spiral of inquiry is comparable to pulling back the layers of an onion. As each layer is removed, another layer emerges. An onion represents a spiral of inquiry that peels back layers of complexity upon deep investigation.

Figure 3

Peeling Back the Layers of an Onion as Applied to the Spiral of Inquiry

The first layer of the spiral of inquiry is scanning. Scanning involves a discussion of what is happening for learners, their families and communities (Halbert & Kaser, 2019).

The second layer is focussing, where stakeholders engage in buy-in through commonality.

The third layer is developing a hunch, involving naming deeply entrenched internal beliefs and values about professional practice.

The fourth layer is learning. Learning involves an understanding of why new ways of doing things are better than previous practices.

The fifth layer is taking action through risk-taking, vulnerability and accountability.

The sixth layer is checking, the stage that considers the impact of the change.

Note. This image is adapted from Medical Medium gif (2021).

Equity audits provide an avenue of capacity-building, intentionality, and a results-based inquiry cycle (Cohen, 2022; Pregmark, 2022). The first step of the spiral of inquiry is scanning. Through equity audit results, I will be able to notice commonality of key

interested parties through scanning. Scanning allows amplification of different perspectives (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018). Scanning considers student voice and uplifts voices of neurotypical and nondisabled students too. The second layer of the onion, identifying commonalities, names participants' values and beliefs. Looking at different perspectives though the raw data, increased viewpoints arise.

Consequently, as the onion's layer is pulled back further, a hunch is developed, involving the naming of deeply entrenched internal beliefs. This point of the inquiry process is where feelings of guilt may emerge in the data as many stakeholders are engaging with different perspectives for the first time and gaps arise that were previously invisible. I anticipate a shock response while embarking on this inquiry through the change process: shock expressed when stakeholders engage in an equity audit. In addition to shock, I anticipate responses anchored in guilt. Guilt is a useless emotional response unless it gives rise to action (Nixon, 2019). I consider this an entry point for monitoring. Engaging with difficult emotions is a marker of success (Annamaa & Morrison, 2018). Guilt, anger, and sadness, among other emotions, show that investigation and internal inquiry is occurring. This is part of monitoring the change process. This layer of the onion, developing a hunch, may also give rise to stigmatizing attitudes about people with disabilities, attitudes that may be unknown to the stakeholder engaged in the change process. Unearthing stigmatizing attitudes also provides an opportunity for monitoring.

As the onion peel is pulled back further, the next layer that emerges is learning. Monitoring the learning is difficult as in order to engage with the change process, vulnerability and trust are essential. Learning may include grappling with uncomfortable emotions and competing interests. This part of the inquiry may allow student voice to

take the lead in learning through data for equity audit team members. Through

interrogating qualitative data through context, neoliberal tendencies emerge. Data is

viewed through the context of one's positionality, power, and capacity to participate.

Change participants will recognize that qualitative data provides more comprehensive

information and will show a complementary and increased understanding of what the

data means. Hence, an acknowledgment of the value of qualitative data will occur. Most

importantly, this part of the inquiry allows for the investigation of how I, along with other

audit team members, uphold systems of oppression (Nixon, 2019).

       Using the onion as a guiding methodology for monitoring the change process, the

data in the equity audit enables stakeholders to consider why a shift in organizational

practice through action, risk-taking, vulnerability, and accountability gives rise to change.

This layer may be the most difficult as an entry point for monitoring the change process

as it requires trust, the "most important competitive resource" (Yang et al., 2020, p. 156)

and stakeholders may be resistant to demonstrate vulnerability. However, as a servant

leader, my role will be to nudge those with decision-making power, even if it feels

uncomfortable. Having decision-making stakeholders consider a stance of vulnerability

and entertain change is an entry point to monitor the change plan.

       Finally, after making a change based on the results of the equity audit, the onion,

as a guiding metaphor for the inquiry, guides me to check and see if the intended change

is occurring. Reflection is a key component of this guiding methodology as the onion

metaphor allows an inquiry process to monitor the change plan. The final layer of the

onion is checking and part of monitoring the change plan, I will identify through the data

how systemic barriers impact the change plan. Consideration will be given to how

institutions are complicit in upholding status quo (Tellez, 2020). Driving the change

forward includes a change process evaluation that embraces institutional accountability.

Preventing Exclusion

There are several ways to monitor and evaluate the equity audit. First, a way to

monitor the equity audit is to gauge the level of adult patience. Due to the downloading

of implementing entitled physical and communicative tools for students in specialized

program classes, it can take a long time to communicate with students. A marker of

success will occur if adults welcome all forms of communication to include student voice

that is underrepresented. For instance, some students use AAC to communicate with

others. This includes a communication core 20 board, and various communication

applications. Other students are non-speaking and use a combination of ASL and AAC to

communicate. Other students speak with difficulty and take time due to muscular issues.

Including student voice will take time.

A critical component of this change is using student voice, and as such, success

will be measured by student voice included in equity audit. This will pose challenges due

to the communication methods used by the students. Specifically, AAC communication

core-20 boards, a special education amount (SEA) item referred to students by SLPs,

require a desktop or laptop for initialization through the software Boardmaker. However,

the WNBC provides its employees and students with chromebooks, rendering

Boardmaker useless. Laptops and desktops are unsupported by the WNBC's technology

department. Professionals creating AAC through Boardmaker need to find alternative

ways to produce AAC material for students, such as creating alternate communication at

home on a desktop computer. As a result, it may be difficult, if not impossible, for a student to communicate with an adult member of the equity audit.

In a similar way, seemingly harmless decisions made at the WNBC board level can potentially disrupt experience for students with disabilities and can potentially derail student voice during the equity audit. For instance, due to subcontracting printing services, printing becomes an issue in the WNBC board. The board no longer supports SEA printers, decommissioning many printers (personal communication, September 15, 2022). Instead, colour printing outputs from a central location, tracked by key cards. Students with special needs often require high-quality colour printing to support their communication core-20 boards due to low vision and depth perception. Gatekeeping printing services not only decreases teacher's agency in programming for students, but it also erodes autonomy for students with disabilities. This innocuous decision at the WNBC board level fails to consider the ramifications for students with disabilities and will impact adult-student communication during the equity audit as printing communication boards cannot be expedited: they must be printed from a central location, taking weeks, if not months, to be prescribed, developed, initialized, and printed.

Finally, when considering adult and student communication in the equity audit, the prioritizing of WNBC's cost-savings philosophy negatively impacts augmented communication needs of students with disabilities. The technological applications, installed on SEA devices, are unsupported by WNBC staff. So, if a teacher or caregiver requires assistance to use technological AAC, no personnel assists. Although students receive training twice monthly upon assessment with the SLP, if students require classroom or home assistance, it is up to the teacher or caregiver to figure it out on their

own. Further, if the technology breaks down, the mechanism to receive repair is lengthy and detail-oriented, often leaving AAC SEA equipment decommissioned for lengthy periods, a disservice to students with disabilities and will prevent their full participation in the equity audit and in school. Decommissioning SEA communication equipment also derails teacher agency as it is essential in supporting communication needs of students with disabilities. Currently, one-third of the SPC students at Stripes High School rely on some form of assistive technology to support communication. In summation, limitations of full student participation in the equity audit highlight glaring gaps in service erosion for students with disabilities. Consequently, if policies and procedures that undermine experience for students with disabilities change, that becomes a marker of success.

Further, one way to temper factors that undermine student participation is by inviting non-disabled students to participate in the equity audit to increase the voices of students at the table. Inviting non-disabled students into the equity audit creates a student-driven partnership. Students, both disabled and non-disabled, can work towards the development of inclusivity through self-assessment (Bourke & Mentis, 2013). By developing self-knowledge, non-disabled students can increase their confidence, teach peers, and consider multiple solutions to complex problems (Bourke & Mentis, 2013). The inclusion of student voice and participation also considers the importance of place and community to create true inclusion. A twenty-first century learner comes to know and respect the world around them. Such respect for diversity requires an authentic way of reaching out to know one another in the global community. Twenty-first century learning requires that all students begin to see from multiple perspectives (Munroe et al., 2013). To sum up, student voice is important for reciprocity, inclusion, multiple

perspectives, and emancipatory social inquiry (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007). The keen sense of social justice that students have will uplift the voices of those who have disabilities and will compel stakeholders to do better.

<div align="center">**Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and Change Process**</div>

Promoting benefits of the change will enhance the potential that changes will remain established. It will also enhance the acceptance of changes (Deszca et al., 2015). Frequent communication is important and enhances the validity of a servant leader, and good change communication reduces anxiety in team members (Beatty, 2015). A coherent communication strategy remains essential, and by issuing communications periodically, the certainty of change is clarified for key participants. A good communication plan allows the team to highlight successes and communicate in person or electronically to other members of the WNBC board about changes. Holding frequent meetings to pass along information is perceived as supportive, and employees who feel supported by their leader exhibit a commitment to the organization (Yang et al., 2020).

Potential Implementation Issues and Limitations

While good communication supports team buy-in and support for the change, communication between equity audit members remains challenging. Specifically, communication between adults and students in specialized program classes involved in the equity audit face challenges. Moreover, gaps exist to fulsomely allow special education students to participate in the equity audit. One challenge of full participation of special education students throughout the equity audit is the reason an equity audit is needed. The change implementation plan discussed participant patience throughout the process. This OIP section will analyze the WNBC's existing structures that support

special education students' ability to participate in an equity audit, resulting in a potential limitation of SPC student involvement in the audit.

To begin, all students in specialized program classes have IEPs and some students are entitled to SEA funding from the MOE upon assessment by various paraprofessionals, such as speech and language pathologists. SEA funding may cover the cost of specialized communication equipment, such as iPads with communication apps. Upon student assessment by paraprofessionals and SEA funding approval, a plan to support student communication commences, supported by LSS commences. Paraprofessionals can be assigned to certain WNBC schools or can be subcontracted by other agencies that support students with special needs. Paraprofessional school assignments can be switched or altered at a manager's discretion, resulting in delays in assessing and reporting student needs. Involving outside agencies to support special education students also involves a lengthy parent consent process as well as engaging school based MLOs to interpret for families if required. This leaves WNBC students with disabilities with lengthy wait times for entitled communication equipment that supports their full inclusion in school and during the equity audit. The classroom teacher ends up tempering demands from parents when other actors fail to do their job properly or when delays prevent full inclusion. Again, patience is required.

As I anticipate questions arising from this equity audit, I will activate servant leadership to temper reactions. I will use other equity audits of WNBC buildings to show trends (personal communication, March 2021, name withheld for anonymization). Other research will be provided to equity audit members highlighting literature showing prevalence of difficulties instituting entitled equipment for specialized program students,

including students in the WNBC board. For instance, Hehir (2002), a seminal author in ableism, provides a case study of personnel issues resulting in students with disabilities being refused entry to school. Hansen (2022) also provides a narrative account of schools that lack proper facilities to support student success, including communication needs. A potential derailment of the equity audit is students with disabilities not being able to communicate with adult members of the equity audit team.

A further potential derailment of the equity audit is potential ableist bias from the key leaders invited to participate in the audit. Giving voice to the students who have traditionally been left out of decisions will remain difficult throughout this process. For instance, due to the framing of individuals experiencing disability, many adults remain at-risk of the adult-child binary trap (Robinson 2008). As discussed in chapter two, individuals with disabilities experience othering with narratives: the tiny-Tim narrative, where people who are disabled are child-like, dependent and in need of charity and pity, and the supercrips, where individuals with disabilities are used as inspiration porn for others (Gable, 2014; Hehir, 2002; Young, 2014). At the core, there is an ableist assumption and a failure to accept people as they are. I feel that external and internal key interested parties are at-risk of these assumptions when participating in an equity audit.

Highlighting the need for change is extremely important and communicating the why of change is important for buy-in and community building. (Cawsey, 2016; Hansma & Elving, 2008). A key strategy for communicating the change plan will be leveraging the foundational issue of equity at every stage of the process, including all communications. Building awareness that barriers exist is a key marker of success. A critical component to the success of this entire OIP will be to communicate and build

awareness around this current inequity that exists among specialized program students and the lack of agency to support special education students at the board level. At the core, success depends on staff with high levels of the agency to thrust change and bring equity audit findings to life. The more people with decision-making power get on board, the desired effect of the equity audit increases. Pietrzak and Paliszkiewicz (2015) discuss the importance of tapping into an employee's motivation to work for an organization that contributes to society. Implementing change and creating more equitable environments will increase employee motivation. It will be important for me to emphasize the enhanced student experience that will be realized by addressing the intersection of the WNBC's worldview, ableism, and bureaucracy that undermine a student's experience.

Furthermore, communication will need to highlight improving the student's experience. Key messages will instill the need to implement change: the urgency arises out of a desire to address an existing inequity for students. Equity is the cornerstone through which awareness building will take place. Communication will occur by slowly building a committed base of support, taking collective action to build pressure, and using a non-partisan approach (Wylie, 2022) to offer improvements. Regardless of worldview, position, or political inclination, it is important to consider experiences for students in SPCs, as it is a moral imperative to support them.

Furthermore, a long-term goal for the change implementation plan is writing an article for a journal for publication about the findings of the equity audit. This aligns with the knowledge mobilization process. The article will take the form of a case study, to be completed in September 2024. Case studies have value when used as a tool of professional development to support student learning and have value as a communication

tool (Maich et al., 2021). The communication plan will engage a case study of the equity audit as a tool of communication to be submitted for peer review and potential publication. The Ontario Principal Council (OPC), Ontario's Leadership Framework (OLF), OCT and OPBSA will be given a copy of the journal article as an attempt to communicate and mobilize knowledge of findings from the equity audit.

Further, the article about the equity audit as a tool of knowledge mobilization acts as research for social change (Johanssen & Heide, 2007). I would further the argument to purport that knowledge mobilization's purpose, in the spirit of social justice, includes rejecting oppression and offering an alternative. Despite exposed vulnerabilities, neoliberalism remains the dominant discourse (Monboit, 2016; Walton, 2021). Mobilizing knowledge, contributing to the data through the lived experiences of those with disabilities develops an offering that rejects the neoliberal worldview.

Messages ought to be tailored (Lavis et al., 2003) to the party receiving the message when communicating the results of the equity audit. Mobilizing knowledge also requires support from other WNBC personnel, such as MLOs, to communicate the change to families who speak multiple languages (see Appendix E). Along with support from the department head, vice-principal, principal, and superintendent, I will create a report that will be disseminated to SEAC, WNBC trustees and the committee of the whole. I will also give the WNBC's communication department a summary of equity audit findings, disseminating information to the board website and to weekly email blasts that land in all WNBC employee's email boxes. The principal will tell the school-based parent council of the equity audit through the formal e-mail channel. I will also share information through informal disability advocacy networks on social media. Other

interested community parties will be informed through social media, such as the WNBC's Twitter and Instagram accounts. Accordingly, students who participate in the audit will also have a platform to communicate the change through their own social networks. I will encourage all student participants to create TikToks of their work and discoveries to post on their social media networks to galvanizing more voices.

When considering messaging for student's families as well as colleagues, this will occur in an organic fashion. I communicate with families twice weekly, with email blasts and texts messages, tailoring messaging to each family. My teaching and support team meets bi-weekly and the whole school meets monthly. I will use these opportunities to update staff on the change process. In communicating change to people who have decision-making power, professional organizations enhance communication efforts to policymakers (Lavis et al., 2003). As a member of OSSTF, I can deliver my findings to my local bargaining unit as well as deliver results to the OSSTF provincial counsellor, who leverages her role at the central bargaining table to present the results to OSSTF's members of the provincial assembly. Provincial OSSTF has a direct line of communication to representatives at the MOE. Although there is insufficient evidence to report the effectiveness of OSSTF's communication with the MOE, evidence suggests that OSSTF as a messenger fails to penetrate the MOE's ears (Littlewood, 2022).

As a result, knowledge brokers may be of service in communicating the change to policymakers in the MOE (Lavis et. al, 2003). There is a gap in credibility between OSSTF as a messenger of communication toward the government. Often, the narrative of change desire is framed as whiny teachers by the media (Boylan, 2021; Lilley, 2019), likely a factor that undermines the messenger's credibility. A potential knowledge broker

may be the OCT, the OPC or OPSBA. There is a perception that organizations carry more value when considering change initiatives (Lavis et al., 2003). OPC, OCT and OPSBA can further support change communication through their social media networks as it mobilizes knowledge for a variety of audiences (Alshahrani & Pennington, 2019; Alshahrani & Pennington, 2018). To summarize, it is important to communicate the results of the equity audit to various interested parties and to tailor the communication. Using mechanisms such as social media, email blasts and channels to policymakers, propelling the change becomes an attainable goal.

Furthermore, an indicator of success of the change plan ought to be the longevity and continuity of the change (Markewitz & Patrick, 2017). For instance, if other schools in the WNBC board participate in equity audits after knowledge mobilization, this becomes a marker of success. If audits become embedded into the WNBC's strategic plan, this is a marker of success. The WNBC's strategic plan includes retrofitting older buildings for accessibility (WNBC, 2019a). If strides are made to invest in underserved schools, this is an evaluation marker that the equity audit is creating change. If students are involved as key participants in equity audits, then success has occurred. Regular reporting of the change process becomes an important monitoring tool. Achieving goals will be realized if knowledge, attitudes, hearts, minds, and systems change.

Eliminating barriers remains fundamental in this change plan. As such, if barriers emerge, the change plan requires adjustment. For instance, equity audit participants may experience urgency for time efficiency. If key participants attempt to expedite relationship building in the hopes of finishing the equity audit, the equity audit must pause. If change plans derail due to communication issues, this must be addressed.

Participants must be comfortable living in a space of discomfort to create meaningful change. Cognitive dissonance may be a part of the process. Overwhelming feelings may be a part of the process. Attitudes about disability are often unintended, unknown, and invisible; however, non-disabled people reproduce the attitudes, which is profoundly impactful (Grain, 2022; Hehir, 2002). As such, a change in attitude to present people with disabilities in a way that affirms identity is a marker of success.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

Barriers to change include some of the long-standing practices that exist in the WNBC board. For instance, a potential response to key participants engaging in an equity audit includes is that it becomes just another thing on someone's to-do list. As mentioned in the organizational structure, the WNBC board has thirteen superintendents. Not only do they have families of schools to organize and support, but they also have portfolios. With an abundance of responsibility, priorities shift. A potential barrier is not having equity audits a top priority for WNBC senior staff. This would decrease the likelihood of equity audits continuing. A next step for the evaluation plan, and for this OIP, is an attitude shift at the individual level and a system shift at the WNBC board level. This equity audit ought not to be framed as one more thing to do. Rather, an equity audit must be framed as the core of one's job. COVID-19 brought about an opportunity to rethink education, from instructional practices to supporting students with special needs (Whitley et al., 2022). At the same time, the WNBC board remains tethered to outdated traditions. These traditions, such as bureaucracy and cost-savings are presented as neutral and benign; however, these traditions deserve interrogation. The next step is to consider the students at the margins before making decisions. As Shelley Moore states, in her

comparison of inclusive education to bowling, "you aim for the pins [students] that are the hardest to hit" (Bowling & Inclusion, *One Minute Moore*, 2017). The WNBC needs to focus on the experience of the students at the margins as a next step for this OIP. This includes students with disabilities and students with multiple minoritized identities.

The responsibility for the success or failure of increasing a programming vision for students with disabilities lies not in teachers, but rather in education ministries, and local school leaders who set policies and allocate resources (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018; Porter, 2019). To harness and globalize the impact of this OIP, the neoliberal worldview must be addressed and challenged. The WNBC could encourage partner organizations, such as OSSTF, OPC, OCT, and OPSBA to propel communication upward to policymakers who can become change champions. As the number of voices increases, the ability to ignore mounting problems decreases.

Another next step of this OIP is paving the way for policymakers, superintendents, and others with decision-making power to shadow students in special education for the purpose of valuable data collection (Boss, 2017). Prior to any decision-making occurring, students with disabilities ought to be considered and consulted. From printers, specialized equipment, and transportation, many cost-saving mechanisms of the WNBC board have resulted in negative effects for teachers, education workers and students in specialized program classes. Activating advocacy leadership, by shining a light on visible and invisible barriers, in the school and outside of the school, propels equity-seeking voices further (Anderson, 2009; Miles & Monaco, 2019). Finally, for Stripes High School, a next step may be cultivating a communication tool, such as Google Classroom, where all communication from the WNBC board that impacts special

education, be posted for teacher, parent, and community perusal. This will enhance communication of special education services devolving from the MOE and the WNBC.

To summarize, this chapter outlined the change implementation plan while outlining how it will be monitored and evaluated through the leadership and humility change model. A communication plan rooted in social media and tailored to different audiences described how knowledge mobilization will occur. Finally, future considerations were outlined with a notable example being how this work would translate to other students as well as other equity-seeking groups.

Narrative Epilogue

My journey to embark upon an EdD in Educational Leadership at Western University emerged from challenges that I faced at the end of my master's as I felt my work in special education was not incomplete. There were too many gaps and competing policy to reconcile. As a special education teacher-leader, when the pandemic raged on, I continued to see increasing gaps for folks who are marginalized. I decided that this was a place to investigate further. At the same time when people were engulfed in COVID-19, I embarked on teaching special education full time, beginning my doctorate full time, and parenting two young children. Although I do not recommend this life pace to anyone, I will forever remember the academic rigor and the reflexive learning that I had the opportunity to conduct over the past three years.

Like my onion metaphor, as I investigated a layer of special education, another layer emerged underneath. As I continued to peel, perpetual barriers, both visible and invisible, arose for students with disabilities. At the same time, lack of agency handcuffed my ability to address the pitfalls of special education delivery as I recoiled the onion. Yet,

well-meaning educators who want change are found throughout our schools. Similarly, they feel handcuffed too. We are all tethered to a system that is outdated, but people with decision making power are either risk-adverse or do not experience special education delivery as a problem.

As such, I cannot separate the layers of bureaucracy, competing policy, the MOE, neoliberalism, and ableism in this OIP: they are entangled, and are all at the core of the onion. At the same time, I remain compelled that we can do better for our special needs students. Doing better includes shifting our own thinking and feelings about disability, reframing disability, and grounding our practice in an ethic of care. However, it also includes institutional responsibility. At a time when teachers are asked to shift their thinking and practice to engage folks who have traditionally been marginalized at school, the responsibility does not end here. The system also needs to take responsibility. From the MOE, to the WNBC, to community agencies and other ministries, long-standing traditions, ought to be held accountable. The shift in thinking and practice with our most vulnerable population will require more from our institutions.

Although my agency cannot include solving all of this, I remain grounded in the idea that we can do better. Society is judged by how it treats its most vulnerable population and I truly believe that there is a moral imperative to do better by our students with disabilities; this is the heart of the PoP. My agency does include conducting an equity audit and opening my spaces to showcase to others. When people with agency see the visible and invisible barriers that students with disabilities face daily, there is no way the mounting problems can be ignored. Let's do right by them and amplify their voices. We just need to listen.

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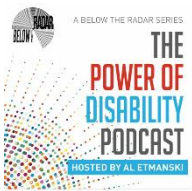
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Appendix A

Curated Supports

Toward an Inclusive Society	**Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities**
	Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities supports Muslim students with disabilities with Muslim-centred activities, included gendered-specific activities.

	The Power of Disability Podcast with Rabia Khedr **Below the Radar**
	The Power of Disability Podcast Rabia speaks to the significance of having what she calls a 'hyphenated identity' and how disability is just one facet of people's varied and intersecting experiences and identities. She shares with Al how she is working with the Canadian Association of Muslims with Disabilities to connect people to Disability Justice principles through spirituality and culture.

	Registered Disability Savings Plan
	How to apply to a registered disability savings plan in four easy steps.

	Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OCAPDD)

OCAPDD / AOCPDI Open Hands	OCAPDD provides support to hundreds of persons with developmental disabilities, in every aspect of life whether seeking work opportunities, securing living arrangements or dealing with day-to-day tasks. Since fully a third of OCAPDD's clients are also affected by physical disabilities and other medical considerations, the scope of the organization's support is in direct response to level of need.

ALGONQUIN COLLEGE	**Academic Assistance for Adults with Developmental Disabilities**
	AAADD offers adults with developmental disabilities the opportunity to further develop their academic skills as well as build social skills within a college environment, or in an online, remote setting. There are evenings and day programs, and programming may be suitable for students leaving WHS. Students focus on literacy and numeracy in the mornings. DSO funding is eligible to assist in paying for this program.

CAUSE**WAY**	**Transition Planning Workshop**
	Causeway works with the individual to find opportunities that are the right fit for their strengths and abilities. Causeway helps individuals realize potential. Regardless of the circumstances, Causeway assists in finding work.

Causeway |

DSO Developmental Services Ontario	**Development Services Ontario**
	DSO is the access point for adult development services. Mandatory Special Necessities Benefit Form Residential Tenancy Agreement Special Diet Allowance

	Summer Programming

A curated collection of summer opportunities for students with disabilities - updated May 2022.

	# Transition Planning Checklist
	What students and guardians can expect with transitioning throughout the DDP years: checklist

	# Ontario Identification Card (Purple card)
	How to apply

	# Respite Care
	Long term care for youth who need support for autonomous living. Respite Care for individuals with behaviour challenges.

	# Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) resources

	A collection of resources to support students and families with FASD. Supporting success Tool Kit for Families

	Growing Independence Podcast
	An unpolished podcast style miniseries on Growing Independence

	Independent Living
	Shared Dreams intention is to create a supportive, person-centred, family-directed permanent home for those with developmental challenges. This non-profit organization acts as a model of a person-centred support, away from institutional-based care. Family Group: supporting to assist in examining housing options for folks with disabilities. Its mission is to support families through the tightly controlled residential funding model to acquire a needs-driven space and support model that will facilitate scarce resources.

	Jamiatul Muslemeen
	A calendar of athletic events for Muslims. Providing a healthy environment for youth, men and women

	# Muslim Family Services
	Provides education, counselling, and other support services Muslims new to the area, including language instruction, employment training, job search programs. translation services and information programs on Canadian culture and life

	# Deen Support Services
	Advances community inclusion by offering culturally and spiritually relevant services for families and individuals living with disabilities. Founded by Muslims with disabilities for people of all denominations, language, and culture.

	# Proset Inclusive Tennis
	Proset Inclusive Tennis combines a specially developed program which includes teaching five universal skills: Joint attention, Motor development, Socio-emotional skills, Motivation, and Participation. Group size is a max of 10
	# Eye Doctor
	Dr. Martineau https://www.iseeoptometry.ca/ Recommended by the Down Syndrome clinic case manager Accepts patients on ODSP: show their OHIP card with proof of ODSP for the month of the appointment If a prescription is required, they submit through their ODSP worker

	Student Link Program
STUDENT LINKS Community Living Ontario	The intent of Student Links is to assist students aged 14 to 21, who have an intellectual disability, explore ideas for their future after high school. It is an opportunity which offers students' time to explore new ideas about what they hope the future might hold.

Appendix B

Potential Daily Awareness Raising Campaign

<u>Day 1</u>

The Puzzle Piece is commonly associated with Autism Awareness.

It is linked to the idea that the person is broken or incomplete or that autistic people suffer from a 'puzzling condition'.

Autistic people are not an incomplete version of neurotypical people.

Many autistic people continue to identify with the puzzle piece, but a large majority do not.

The infinity symbol is more commonly accepted as it represents neurodiversity. It also reflects the different needs and experiences of neurodivergent people.
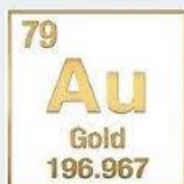
The gold infinity symbol is the symbol for autism. It has come from the chemical compound of gold being Au. Au is the first two letters of autistic and autism. It is also an infinity symbol which reflects the diversity of autistic experiences.

To support and properly represent autistic people ask them first what language, symbols, or terminology they prefer.

Happy Autism Acceptance Month!

<u>Day 2</u>

Masking is when an autistic person learns practices and performs behaviour that they have learnt from watching other people feel are a good representation of a "normal" human. Autistic people will also google how to do certain things and then use these guidelines to mask. It is done to appear more neurotypical and to seem like the autistic is not experiencing difficulties in order to fit in and hide from possible discrimination as much as possible.

What can this look like for our students and peers?

~ forced eye contact

~ scripting and preparing conversations before we see people

~ focusing on not bringing up our special interests

~ hiding our stims

~ copying gestures or learning to ask particular questions

~ pretending to relate to others in order to feel safe

What are the side effects?

~ burnout and exhaustion

~ mental health issues

~ constantly feeling anxious and needing to isolate after social interactions

~ our kids have said, "peopling is hard work!"

~ losing your identity

Hiding who you are is exhausting and for many autistic people, yet this is a daily reality. It is often a survival strategy.

Day 3

Many autistics who can't communicate functionally through speech prefer being referred to as 'non-speaking' rather than 'non-verbal'. Being labelled as 'non-verbal' perpetuates inaccurate assumptions about capacity for communication and understanding, and does not assume competence.

Non-speaking people can:

- be strong communicators

- have fulfilling relationships

- relay their needs

- learn, grow and develop

- have complex, multidimensional personalities

- understand what you say to them (or about them)

The binary of verbal and non-verbal is false. Equating understanding with someone's verbal capacity is common, and false. Some people don't use verbal speech. Some use a bit. Some have selective mutism (their ability to use verbal speech varies depending on circumstances). Many use communication devices, and every single autistic person communicates. Valuing verbal communication over all the myriad ways people can communicate is limiting and leads to the dehumanization of autistic people. Learning to listen in new ways and on a person-to-person basis takes some brain power and curiosity, but it is undoubtedly worth it.

Day 4

Social skills on a daily basis: Autistic people may struggle to know when someone has stopped talking because they don't always pick up on the social cues that neurotypical people do. This means they may interrupt people.

Sometimes autistic people process information in an associative way. For example, if they hear a sentence, they think of things related to that sentence rather than the conversation. They may focus on what it is they want to say and no longer process what the other person is saying.

We cannot expect our autistic students to always make the expected choices, we must show them how and practice.

This can look like this:

~ teaching skills explicitly and step by step

~ using role-play to act out scenarios

~ use videos and visual supports

~ talk about the skills in real-life scenarios

~ incorporate student interests and preferences

Day 5

The discourse around autism is dominated by neurotypicals. Young parents who have just found out that their child is on the spectrum are rarely exposed to the perspective of autistics. Yet, there are many autistic writers and bloggers that have a lot of enlightening insights to share. Many of those insights run counter to the conventional wisdom perpetuated by neurotypicals. Check out this one:

Autistic voices

Day 6

Many autistic women and nonbinary people go undiagnosed due to a male bias in autism diagnosis. It was believed that boys are more likely to be autistic than girls and attributed increased testosterone levels to an "increased risk" of autism. This is false! Media ranging from "Rain Man" in 1988, to the present-day television series such as "The Big Bang Theory" and "The Good Doctor" continue to contribute heavily to societal gender stereotypes about autism. While these shows are fictional, they have real-world consequences including preventing accessibility to diagnoses for women and nonbinary people. Autistic women and nonbinary people are turned away because they "don't look autistic enough" and have different special interests than trains and science related topics. In addition to gender, autistic people may also not be able to receive a medical diagnosis due to other barriers of accessibility caused by their socioeconomic status and race. It can be expensive to undergo an evaluation to receive a medical diagnosis of autism, and not everyone has the money to do so. Many autistic people who are Indigenous, Black or Racialized are either diagnosed later in life, misdiagnosed, or undiagnosed compared to white autistic people.

Day 7

Stimming is referred to as what autistics do to self-regulate and self soothe. Stims can be physical or tactile, such as hand flapping, spinning, flicking pens or fidgets, running hands and fingers through slime or clay, and rocking, or vocal, such as echolalia (repeating words or phrases) and tongue clicking, or visual, such as watching sparkly glitter or a rotating ceiling fan. Stimming serves many different functions, such as relieving anxiety and stress, focusing on a conversation with others.

Stim suppression is still unfortunately too common and starts as early as childhood, such as when autistic children being told they should use "whole body listening" or have "quiet hands," and can last until adulthood when autistic adults feel pressured to

socially mask in public spheres. Autistic behavior should not be shamed, scrutinized, punished, or pathologized anywhere, including in the classroom or in the workplace.

Day 8

In the classroom, we can help our autistic students by:

~ Having an agenda outlining the class.

~ Keeping a routine

~ Having structured tasks

~ Prioritizing the relationship over the work

~ Responding to the behaviour with empathy

~ Relying on visual rather than auditory processing

~ Providing structure as to how long the student should be engaged in a task

~ Prioritizing self-advocacy over compliance

Day 9

Three signs that a student is quiet and compliant, but not calm and well-regulated.

1. Consistent hypervigilance: students who are jumpy; constantly assessing their surroundings; have perfectionist tendencies or a significant fear of failure; engage in obsessive behaviour patterns like checking and rechecking something was done correctly and overthink or over analyze things to the point of interrupting or impeding progression through a task. These are all signs that their body is on high alert because it perceives a potential threat.

2. Behaviours that come "out of nowhere:" students who seem to go from "zero to one hundred" over a seemingly small or undetectable trigger. This is a sign that the student is

internalizing stressors and only responds when they simply can't hold it together anymore, leading to an "explosive" behaviour or meltdown.

3. This effort of "holding it together" and "masking" at school is dangerous and can lead to burnout, depression, and self-harm.

We should continue to teach our autistic students that experiencing dysregulation at school is valid and appropriate, as well as teaching and encouraging strategies for true regulation. Referring to the student's IEP is a great place to start as it was developed for each individual student's own outcome and goals. These skills are imperative and often lifesaving.

Day 10
Giving your medical information to a non-medical professional, like an organization's Human Resources Department, to make subjective decisions on what is a 'reasonable' accommodation constitutes, is ableism.

 It is ableism disguised as access.

 This is traumatic for an autistic person asking for an accommodation in the workplace. The actual implementation of the accommodation taking weeks or months to action is a secondary trauma.

A standard in workplaces is that disabled people, non-neurotypical people, and people with learning disabilities have to guess what accommodations may be available and ask for them. These folks may also come with a list of accommodations from medical professionals, only to have these accommodations judged and denied due to perceived inconvenience by non-medical professionals.

This is emotionally and practically burdensome! Imagine if the standard was if the employee declares a disability, the Human Resources Department presents them with a list of available accommodations? This is accessibility!

Day 11

In considering today's post, have a look at the following video: I am Autism

 The traditional narrative around Autism presents this developmental disorder as a disease, something to be cured. The portrayal of a child 'suffering' from Autism is popularized by many organizations that wish to 'cure' autism or 'save' children from autism.

The lure of this suffering discourse pulls at our heartstrings and is powerful! We see the narrative of suffering sell when many BIPOC social media influencers get more 'likes' or 'shares' when they post about Black suffering; however, far fewer 'likes' or 'shares' when posting about Black joy.

The attraction to suffering and saviourism narratives is real and is carefully woven into the fabric of dominant organizations.

It is time to look at Autistics with a lens of wholesomeness and resourcefulness. Kids do well if they can, and part of our job is nurturing their strengths and evoking their capabilities.

Day 12

"I am different, not less"

Temple Grandin is a lead contributor in the world of animal science and a leader in the autism community. Her most well-known story is the 'hug' machine. The device provides deep press to calm the anxiety of individuals with autism. Through her experience with Autism, she gained insight which she used to create a device that helps scores of people.

Have you seen the movie about her life?

Other famous autistic people include:

~ Susan Boyle

~ Dan Akroyd

~ James Durbin

~ Daryl Hannah

~ Courtney Love

Day 13

To close out Autism Awareness month, it should be noted that we are already aware of autism. To appreciate autistic people, we must elevate their voices over neurotypical 'autism experts.' We hope to move from Autism Awareness to Autism Acceptance to Autism Appreciation.

Elevating Autistic voices: "We can't address disability without addressing race"

Autistic Content Creation: @autismsketches, @thespectrumgirl, @neurodivergent_lou, @rdorseyslp,@autieselfcare, @aspergirl

Supporting Employment of Autistics: "I like to keep busy. I'm happy to be here and it makes me feel proud to be a part of the team."

Celebrity Interview

The celebrity interview is an example of a liberating structures activity (Lipmanowicz et

al., 2015). It was chosen to action the preferred solution to the PoP as it builds empathy,

teamwork and can be adapted for a variety of audiences.

Reconnect the Experience of Leaders and Experts with People Closest to the Challenge at Hand (35-60 min.)

What is made possible? You can enable a large group of people to connect with a leader or an expert (the celebrity) as a person and grasp the nuances of how that person is approaching a challenge. With a well-designed interview, you can turn what would otherwise be a passive, often boring presentation into a personal narrative that is entertaining, imparts valuable knowledge, and reveals the full range of rational, emotional, and ethical/moral dynamics at play. You can often turn the interview into an invitation to action, drawing out all the elements needed to spark the participant group's imagination and encourage cohesive action.

WHY? Purposes

- Create or boost a connection between an expert or leader and an audience
- Give substance and depth to a topic
- Avoid boring lectures and PowerPoint presentations
- Engage every individual in generating questions for further exploration
- Shed light on the person behind the position or expertise
- Bring big concepts to life with stories that come out in the interview

Five Structural Elements – Min Specs
1. Structuring Invitation

- Invite the celebrity to let go of his or her formal presentation or speech and answer the *harder* questions on everyone's mind in a casual "talk show" format
- Invite group members to listen, see the person behind the celebrity, and write down questions with colleagues

2. How Space Is Arranged and Materials Needed

- Interviewer and celebrity in the front of the room where everyone can see and hear the interaction
- Unlimited number of people in a space where they can sit to view the interview and later form small groups (theater-style seating is OK)

3. How Participation Is Distributed

- Part one, interview: everyone has an equal opportunity to listen
- Part two, questions: everyone has an equal opportunity to engage with one another to formulate questions
- This section can be modified

How Groups Are Configured

- Whole group for interview
- Individuals, pairs, small groups

Sequence of Steps and Time Allocation

- Interviewer welcomes and introduces the celebrity and topic to be discussed. 3 min.
- Interviewer asks questions that the audience would be expected to ask (both humor and gravity are appropriate). 15–30 min.
- Invite participants to generate additional questions in a 1-2-4 conversation and then on 3-by-5-inch cards. 5–10 min.
- Interviewer sifts the cards, looking for patterns and asking additional questions to the celebrity. 5–10 min.
- Interviewer makes closing comments, thanks the celebrity. 1 min.

Tips

- Have fun with riffs from the talk-show genre: channel Oprah, Stephen Colbert, or your favorite celebrity interviewer

- The interviewer can conduct research in advance of the session, asking participants, "What do you want to know but would not dare to ask? What is the most important thing you want to know about this person or the work ahead?"
- Use a storytelling template to structure your interview (e.g., the Hero's Journey).
- For strategy sessions, dig deeper into challenges by asking: What is happening around us that demands creative adaptation? What happens if we do nothing? Given our purpose, what seems possible now? If our current strategies were obliterated last night, what parts would you bring back today?
- Use with virtual groups. Conduct the voice/video interview while inviting all other participants to develop questions and comments in pairs or groups. Share the top questions via the chat function to "all" when the interview is complete.

Examples

- For a leader or leaders to help launch a new initiative
- To welcome and get to know a new leader coming into the organization
- To personalize and deepen the contributions of an expert
- For debriefing the experience of a few participants in an important event
- As an alternative to a case-study presentation: the interviewer helps to revive the story and the local context underneath the analysis

Appendix D

Specialized Program Class Equity Audit

The equity audit will ask participants to tour the school to investigate barriers. The

groups will consist of adults, non-disabled students as well as students who identify as

disabled. This audit will be completed by equity audit participants in groups for the

purposes of collecting data from multiple perspectives. Gathering data in the spirit of

reciprocity allows empathy development and allows for adult and student learning

opportunities. This audit is adapted from the Ontario Leadership Framework (Freeman,

n.d).

1. What WNBC policies impact your life most? Why do you think so?

2. How easy is it for you to begin in room 120 and arrive at your destination at room 215

while taking a restroom break? (Circle one)

- Easy

- Medium

- Difficult

3. What could you identify as a barrier(s) to arrive at your destination?

4. How long did it take to travel the distance to arrive at your destination?

5. Are people like you featured on our walls? (Ex. former admin, graduates, student-athletes)? What do you notice?

6. How are people with disabilities meaningfully included in school activities, including drills, pep rallies, door decoration competitions?

Explain your observations

7. What policies, processes and social relationships contribute to exclusion and inclusion of people with disabilities?

8. You are in room 120. You want to reach your off-campus transportation. Describe the steps required to get to your destination (include assistance requests)

9. Are there policies and procedures to assure no student is denied participation in curricular activities due to transportation?

If so, name them?

How are they accessed?

10. Are school administrators able to identify equity issues, act on them and are they trained to provide leadership in developing alternative strategies?

11 Are enrollments monitored in special education? If so, by whom? How are these people accessed?

12. When interacting with students and staff at school, what do you notice about the interactions? Describe.

13. Can students access books in the school library with visual, print, and non-print materials that accurately provide information for students with disabilities?

14. Are all students talked to in the same manner?

15. Are special education congregated classes comprised of students who reflect diversity of overall student population?

Appendix E

Knowledge Mobilization
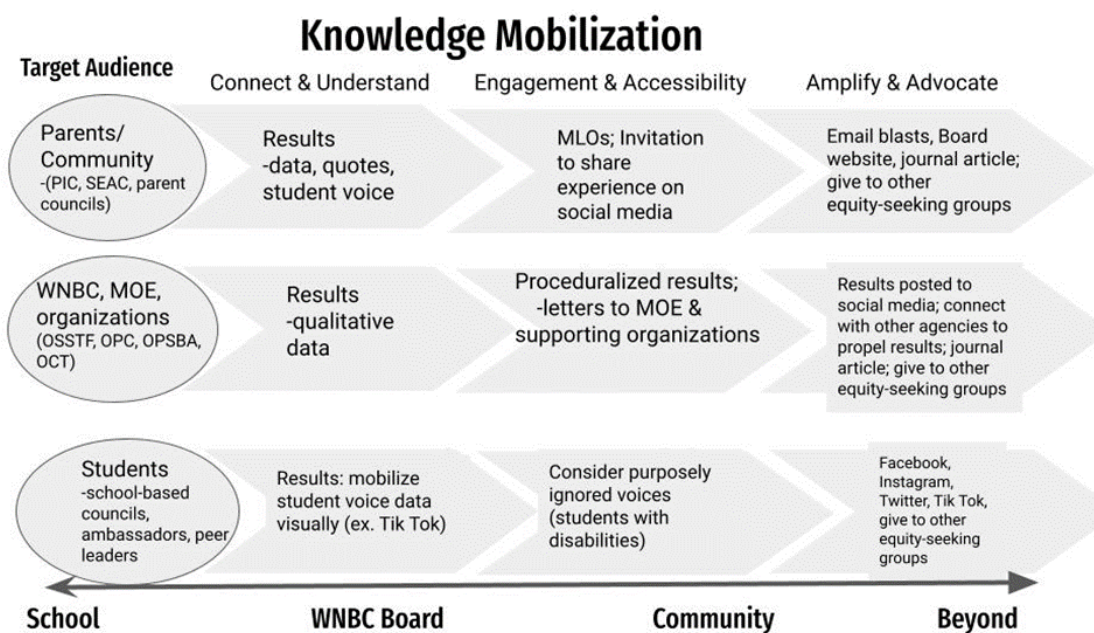
Note. This visual provides a snapshot of the desired effect of the knowledge mobilization plan. Spreading knowledge of the change requires tailoring of the messaging to various people and community partners, and this knowledge mobilization plan encourages customized communication to both caregivers, students, and the greater community. This plan also includes the role of interpreters to facilitate knowledge of the change process to multilingual language speakers. The knowledge mobilization plan first seeks to understand the data, then plan to communicate the change and finally to propel the news of change into the community and beyond.