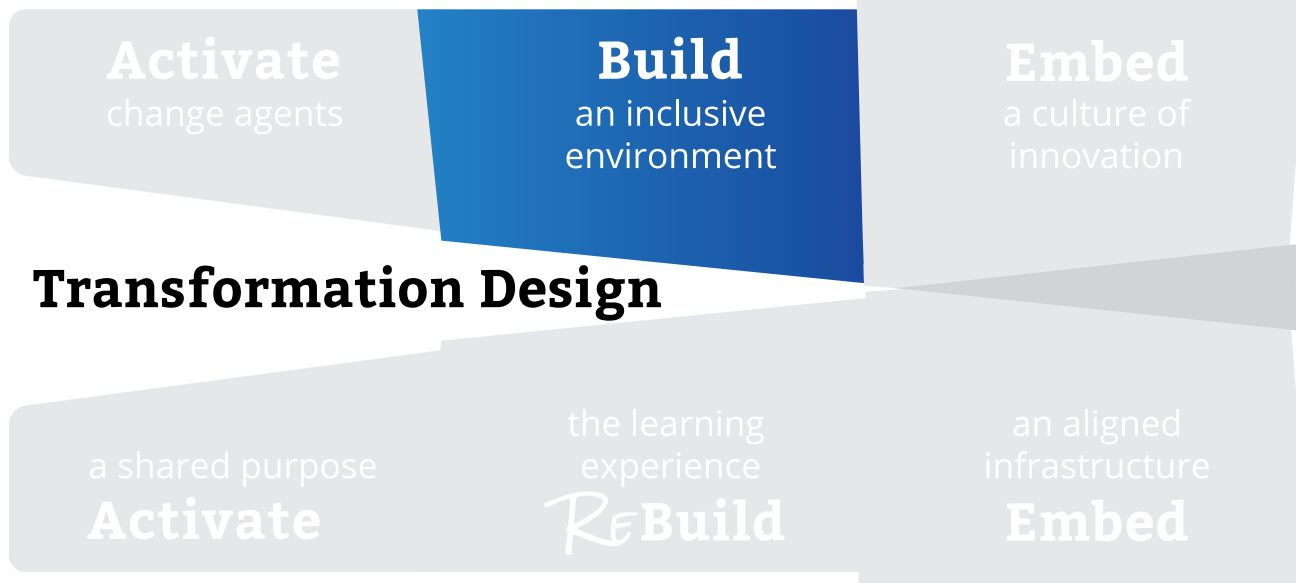# Transformation Design Deep Dive Guide

Foster Interpersonal Connections

The extent to which relationships among individuals and groups encourage the exchange of ideas and practices and that difficult conversations are invited rather than avoided.

Transformation Design Core Practice

Activate change agents

Build an inclusive environment

Embed a culture of innovation

Transformation Design

a shared purpose
Activate

the learning experience
ReBuild

an aligned infrastructure
Embed

Why Foster Interpersonal Connections?
Foster Interpersonal Connections is one action district communities can take to Build an Inclusive Environment: Strengthening relationships among teachers, administrators, students, families, school board members, community and business leaders so our district has the foundation of trust that creates an environment supportive of change.

Reflections from the Transformation Design District Self-Assessment (Discuss as a team.)

Reflect on the self-assessment findings about this action.

What did your team discover about this action? What are your district's strengths, assets, and resources that support this action?

Questions to Consider
(Reflect as a team.)

Use these questions to identify how this action shows up in your district community.

- How does your district culture encourage staff, students, and stakeholders to exchange ideas and practices about the learning transformation? Which individuals or groups are not participating and why?

- What structures foster connections that engage individuals and groups marginalized by systemic inequities in the learning transformation? What structures currently serve as barriers?

- What structures foster connections between early volunteers in the learning transformation and those engaging more gradually? What structures currently serve as barriers?

- How does your district invite conversations about challenging issues across difference and unequal distribution of power? Does your district avoid these conversations or neglect to address issues when they are raised? Can you offer an example?

Notes from the team discussion about these questions:

The Big Idea
(Complete independently.)

Review the following resources to better understand this action and why it is important.

- Bringing Schools Back to Life, Margaret J. Wheatley (1999) or How Large Scale Change Really Happens, Margaret J. Wheatley and Deborah Frieze in *The School Administrator* (2007). These articles explore districts as systems of relationships. District boundaries don't create a system; systems arise because people with shared core beliefs choose to affiliate together. Districts can create change by tapping into the real, self-organized systems within it.

- The Four Principles of Social Networks, The Piton Foundation. This two-pager presents the principles driving any social network initiative that strives to create positive, sustainable outcomes for individuals, families, and communities.

- Five Steps to Building an Effective Impact Network, David Ehrlichman, David Sawyer, and Jane Wei-Skillern in *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (2015). Innovators can catalyze networks to create large-scale social change. The sections "Convene the Right People" and "Cultivate Trust" are particularly relevant to fostering interpersonal connections.

- Tools for Courageous Conversations in the Remote DEI Toolkit (2020). These tools can help district community members navigate relationships by recognizing the impact of systemic inequities. The tools help create brave spaces for courageous conversations, encouraging respect, inclusion, compassion, and courageous intervention.

If you want to dive deeper:

- Communities of Practice: Learning as a Social System, Etienne Wenger in *Systems Thinker* (1998).

- The Tactics of Trust, David Sawyer and David Ehrlichman in *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (2016).

What new ideas from the Big Idea resources seem most exciting for your community? What strengths do they reveal about your district? What opportunities would you like to explore more deeply?

District Artifacts
(Complete independently.)

Review the following artifacts from leading districts to benchmark the Transformation Design action in your own district and to spark new ideas.

Vista Unified School District

- [The School Principal as Change Agent](#), Matt Doyle and Gerri Burton on the NGLC Blog (2018). This article describes a seminar-based community of practice bringing school principals together to learn and support each other through the learning transformation.

- [Family Engagement: The Gold Standard for Achievement](#), Matt Doyle and Jacqueline "Kiki" Bispo on the NGLC Blog (2019). The Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Network introduced in this article builds authentic relationships between district staff, students, and families in a servant-leadership approach.

- [Culture Is Not a One-Minute Solution](#), Eric Chagala (2018). In this one-page interview excerpt, the principal of Vista Innovation and Design Academy emphasizes the essential role of culture, strong relationships, and trust in his school's successful learning transformation.

St. Vrain Valley Schools

- [How Might We Foster More Engaging Student Learning Opportunities? Industry Partnerships](#), Don Haddad and Tom Darcy on the NGLC Blog (2019). This article describes the decade-long evolution of district partnerships with industries. For example, the partnership with IBM grew from jointly supporting a robotics program to diffusing design thinking across the district's schools to launching the P-TECH program at one high school.

District Artifacts (continued)
(Complete independently.)

Review the following artifacts from leading districts to benchmark the Transformation Design action in your own district and to spark new ideas.

Cross-District Partnerships

Kettle Moraine School District, Vista Unified School District, and Mentor Public Schools

- The Collaboration Project, Digital Promise (2017). In this 2-minute video, district leaders describe how teachers and students connected to foster collaboration around competency-based learning, providing inspiration to push innovation.

Lindsay Unified School District and Northern Cass School District

- Brave before Perfect: Transforming Learning in Rural North Dakota, NGLC (2020). As this practitioner's guide details, the mentoring relationship between these two districts includes not only connections among senior administrators but also among learners.

Which artifacts inspired you? Why?

What strategies have these districts used to create genuine relationships among staff, students, and stakeholders? How do they invite difficult conversations?

What do these examples illuminate about your own district's work?

A Common Understanding
(Discuss as a team.)

Gather as a team to develop a common understanding about this action and why it is important. Share insights and inspirations gained from your independent study of Big Idea resources and District Artifacts. Challenge yourselves to think big and be bold as you take on this action in your district.

What are the key takeaways to keep in mind as you plan?

Action Planning
(Complete as a team.)

Developing this Transformation Design action into common practice across your district community can advance your learning transformation and help you better serve your students, family, and local community. Use the structure below to create a plan to strengthen use of this action by your district community.

What has your district already done? (Refer to your responses to Questions to Consider *earlier.)*

What needs further development? Which of these are key levers that, if they were strengthened, would significantly advance your district's learning transformation?

What is your goal for moving forward? What do you want to accomplish?

Assign people to take action with clear deadlines and deliverables (e.g., by the end of the month, the communications director and a parent representative on the core team will create a prototype of a community newsletter). These Action Steps are an opportunity to "walk the talk" of the change you are trying to create in your district: consider how team members will own these steps and how to invite stakeholders to participate!!

Action Steps	Timeline	People Responsible	Communication Plan (Listen & Share)	Success Criteria

Progress Tracking

Set a date to reconvene to review progress on the Action Steps. Use a project management tool or another way to collectively track progress between meetings.

Date to review progress:

Other Notes: