Transforming Learning for Equity: Navigating the Change with Transformation Design

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NGLC · NEXT GENERATION LEARNING CHALLENGES

Many educators are working with their local communities to create modern alternatives to the industrial-era school model prevalent in U.S. public education. They are working to ensure equity of access to high-quality, engaging learning that prepares every learner to succeed in school and beyond. Through the Transformation Design Project, Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) is advancing the field's understanding of what it takes to enable this kind of learning redesign at scale. With support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, NGLC partnered with leading experts in educational change as well as school districts that have successfully transformed the learning experience in their schools with positive outcomes for their students. We studied the change practices used in partner districts and reviewed the literature on contemporary change practices used in business, social movements, public organizations, and education. This publication presents what the Transformation Design partners learned from the literature review. It also summarizes the organizational change frameworks that were most influential as we developed the Transformation Design framework of core practices.

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Introduction

Every parent wants his or her child to benefit from an excellent education. But in our fast-changing world, the strategies that defined excellence for past generations is not what today's young people need to thrive in learning, work, and life, and it will not work for the generations that follow. Unfortunately, our education system was designed for stability and conformity, not change and diversity. To provide students with excellence, today and in the future, we need an education system that is dynamic and flexible, adapting at the speed in which our culture and world are changing.

Shifting to a more dynamic and flexible system means embracing the idea of school districts as "learning organizations." In this kind of system, every person, from child to adult, is a learner. Each learner is surrounded by supportive relationships, has an opportunity to reflect on current practice and redesign the school experience (yes, even students!), and is given license to try out new ideas.

When every person in a school district recognizes that they are change agents, with permission and choice to take action, they make next generation learning, and an excellent education, possible.

A Next Generation System of Education

Next gen educators are asking: *How can our education systems and operating habits best enable next generation learning—rather than obstruct and diminish it?*

Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) is a community of forward-leaning educators who are working with their own communities—and together as a network—on the most urgent challenges in U.S. public education today. They are creating modern alternatives to the industrial-era, compliance-oriented school model that prevails across K-12 education. They are working to ensure equity of access to high-quality, engaging learning that prepares every student to succeed in school and beyond. They are creating the excellent education of today and tomorrow for their students and families.

Every next gen school design is unique, but learning approaches that develop students in well-rounded ways—addressing academics, life skills, wellness, and citizenship— share some common characteristics: They respond to the strengths, needs, and cultural backgrounds of each individual student. They make sure students master skills and knowledge before moving on. They connect academic knowledge and skills to on-the-job work experiences and real problems in our communities. They use the most advanced tools available in our society, including technology but also learning science. These approaches may be labelled student-centered, personalized, competency-based, equitable, experiential, authentic, and technology-enabled. At NGLC, we use the term *next generation learning* to capture all of these learning approaches.

In addition to the NGLC community, there might be another 500 to 1,000 of these schools now serving students nationwide, with many showing promising results. The hardest part of creating new designs for school, however, may not be the designs themselves. It may be how to move these new approaches into common use without losing the power, promise, complexity, and depth of the original ideas. So that tens of millions of schoolchildren, not just tens of thousands, can benefit.

Scaling innovations like next generation learning is so difficult because the top-down, policy-setting, carrots-and-sticks processes often used to change educational practices reflect more of the same industrial-era, compliance-oriented methodologies so deeply entrenched in K-12 education's worldview. These approaches directly contradict the fundamental principles of next gen learning, especially agency of the learner and equitable and deep engagement in the learning.

> For next gen learning to become the learning that students everywhere experience in school, the change process of public education must become "next gen" too.

The Project

If rules and compliance won't work, what will? We started our inquiry with the research of Daniel Pink. As detailed in his book, _Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us,_ Pink drew on four decades of scientific research to conclude that people of all ages do best in environments that enable agency and autonomy, honor purpose and diversity, and provide opportunities to develop mastery.

NGLC began searching for change strategies that create the environment and equity of opportunity for everyone in the K–12 system—teachers, administrators, students, families, school board members, business leaders, and community members—to experience autonomy, mastery, and purpose and do their best work. The goal of "next gen change" is enduring, fundamental transformations in community mindset, school design, student learning experiences, and 21st-century outcomes.

Through the "Transformation Design Project," NGLC is advancing the field's understanding of what it takes to enable this kind of learning redesign. With support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, NGLC partnered with leading experts in educational change as well as school districts that have been engaged in next gen school redesign for several years. The project's goal is to identify, synthesize, and disseminate effective change management strategies developed specifically for schools and school districts moving toward next gen learning and school redesign.

In the research stage of the project, we engaged in a deep exploration of the literature on managing change. We examined frameworks and research from the fields of business and management, social movements, public organizations, and education. We convened partner districts and experts, and we visited districts as case study sites in order to observe what change toward next gen learning looks

like in practice. As a result of the research phase, we identified a set of themes that kept recurring in the literature and were reinforced and extended by the strategies used in partner districts.

In the development stage, we continued to work with the change experts and partner districts to convert the literature and case study research into a district change framework. The framework is intended to guide districts interested in transforming themselves as an organization in order to transform learning in their schools. It supports districts that are committed to a complete systemic transformation as opposed to implementing isolated reform initiatives or making system tweaks. We continued with district visits and convenings of district leaders and experts. In the spirit of what we learned from the first phase about enabling change, we invited representatives from more districts and additional experts into the conversation. Together, we created a set of core practices along with strategies, tools, resources, and mentor networks to help districts use those practices.

This paper summarizes what we learned from the literature on managing and leading change and introduces the district change framework we developed.

Founding District Partners
- Arcadia Unified School District
- Henry County Schools
- Kettle Moraine School District
- Lindsay Unified School District
- St. Vrain Valley Schools
- Vista Unified School District

Additional District Partners
- Jeffco Public Schools
- Northern Cass School District
- Oakes Public Schools
- Pequa Valley School District
- Rowan-Salisbury Schools

Partner Organizations & Experts
- Carnegie Corporation of New York
- Deeper Learning Dozen
- FSG
- Harvard Graduate School of Education and T-525 Research Teams
- Institute for Personalized Learning
- Transcend
- Scholars and Experts in Educational Change

Inclusive. Iterative. Imaginative. Reimagining education requires us to reimagine not just what we change, but how we change.

What We Learned About Change

The Transformation Design framework that emerged from the project's research and development efforts reflects a dynamic process to bring about enduring, fundamental changes in mindsets, school designs, student learning experiences, and student success outcomes. This approach to education systems change is more inclusive, iterative, and imaginative than what is often used in K-12 education. It represents cycles of iteration involving change agents at all levels, relying on collaboration over hierarchy and innovation over the status quo. It requires a long-term commitment to both a process and an outcome designed by and for students, educators, families, and community members alike.

Activate change agents	**Build** an inclusive environment	**Embed** a culture of innovation

Transformation Design

a shared purpose **Activate**	the learning experience *Re***Build**	an aligned infrastructure **Embed**

The Transformation Design framework involves three phases—Activate, Build, and Embed—each with its own pair of core practices. The practices in each pair are interdependent, like the two sides of a coin: the personal/cultural (blue) and the technical/structural (orange). Both are required for change to move forward and endure.

Although the Transformation Design process begins in the Activate phase, moves to the Build phase, and sustains in the Embed phase, districts will continuously revisit all of the core practices. This is not a sign of failure or spinning in circles, but a recognition that a district community is always learning about itself, always welcoming new members, and always applying new learning to the transformation.
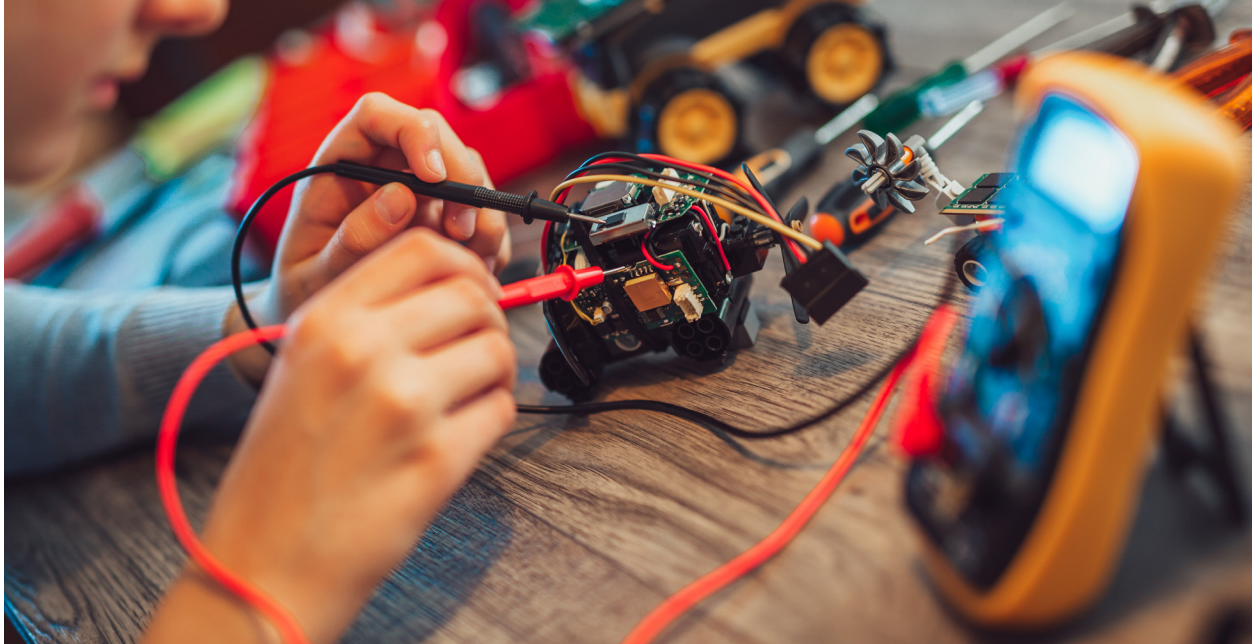
Activate

Transforming learning in a school district begins (and endures) with the district's greatest asset: the people who make up the system. Staff and school board members, yes, and also students, families, and community members. When these individuals begin to see themselves as agents of change for the district community, movement begins. Existing power dynamics start to shift, and the people closest to the change become empowered to take action. But for individuals to move forward collectively, a shared purpose must be found among the many personal, and potentially conflicting, goals in a district community. A common purpose for a learning transformation will provide both meaning and direction when it is co-constructed, emerging from the community rather than proclaimed by senior leaders. This is why each next gen learning school design is, and must be, unique.

> *The beginning of our process in Henry County was all about hearts and minds, about a willingness to engage in thinking differently about school and learning. Before you can line up the little arrows with the one big arrow, you have to develop the big arrow. Finding the collective 'Why' is crucial.*
>
> —Karen Perry, former director of personalized learning, Henry County Schools

Activate
change agents

Empowering the people in our district—teachers, administrators, students, families, school board members, community and business leaders alike—to see themselves as THE change-makers for the district.

Invite and empower stakeholders
The extent to which staff, students, and stakeholders are involved in, own, and lead the transformation.

Map roles by strengths
The extent to which strengths of individuals are used for creating teams and designing the transformation.

Cultivate leadership capacity
The extent to which authentic, self-paced, equitable opportunities exist for staff, students, and stakeholders to develop skills and knowledge, be replenished in spirit and creativity, and advance careers.

Activate
a shared purpose

Collectively developing a shared purpose, so that everyone—teachers, administrators, students, families, school board members, community and business leaders alike—has a common understanding of the vision, mission, values, principles, and goals for transforming learning district-wide.

Engage every stakeholder
The extent to which staff, students, and stakeholders' passions, concerns, and input are surfaced and understood, particularly for those who are marginalized by systemic inequity.

Define the problem
The extent to which the problem to solve and its root causes are clearly identified by the district community.

Collaboratively re-envision student success
The extent to which staff, students, and stakeholders work together to articulate the "why" for transformation and the vision for student learning and success.

A district will go through many cycles of the two Activate core practices. It will activate change agents whenever it invites and involves more individuals to participate in the learning transformation. The community will refine the shared purpose as the transformation unfolds, and will reactivate it whenever it meets obstacles and makes mistakes. This cycling helps to unify the community in purpose and meaning and builds its capacity to enact the learning transformation.

Even as the change process matures, a district community must continually revisit these two practices. School board elections, new student enrollments, and administrative and staff turnover are inevitable. The world changes, too: social movements, economic cycles, technological innovation, and changes in employment opportunities continually shift what success means for youth in our schools. Districts must be responsive; the work of activating change agents and a shared purpose never ends.

> " If you are a bus driver, you don't just drive a bus, you get learners to school safely. Your role is critical, and we want you to become a learning facilitator. We communicated this repeatedly and even created a pipeline for some of our Classified staff to get trained in this process to transform the learner experience. That was critical in making profound changes to the school culture. "
>
> —Brian Griffin, Lindsay Unified School District

Build

The Build phase of a learning transformation involves practices that build connections between change agents and practices to work on changes in learning, starting small and growing over time. The goal of this phase is to try out new approaches to learning, to see what works, and to get better quickly before enacting more wholesale changes in the learning experience. Movement in this phase is catalyzed by small groups taking action to change the learning experience and employing continuous cycles to learn, get better, and tackle additional transformations. What these small groups do is based on what most energizes the community—the shared priorities that emerge from the Activate phase—and may look like a few small groups working in parallel on similar innovations or many small groups working on several different innovations.

Developing trust is critical for initial efforts to lead to anything meaningful and enduring. It requires consistent encouragement of change agents to take action and consistent demonstrations of support regardless of outcome.

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.

Distribute leadership
The extent to which teams of diverse staff, students, and stakeholders lead various aspects of the transformation, empowered to make decisions and take action.

Confront existing inequities
The extent to which the transformation disrupts district structures, policies, and behaviors that sustain inequitable experiences and outcomes for staff, students, and stakeholders.

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.

Listen. Then communicate
The extent to which communication begins with listening, especially to those "at the margins," and that information about the transformation is transparent, accessible, and distributed in multiple ways.

R∈Build
the learning experience

Trying new approaches to learning that are based on our district's shared purpose, often by small groups changing the learning experience in classrooms and schools, inviting the district community to learn as we go.

Start with a shared priority
The extent to which small groups and teams are trying new approaches to learning that are collectively chosen as high priority based on the district's shared purpose.

Establish cycles of improvement
The extent to which those trying out aspects of the transformation learn what works, what doesn't, and how to get better, inviting the district community to learn alongside them.

Design and refine the learning model
The extent to which students have the opportunity to master learning that is designed around the district's shared purpose.

Move forward, learning from setbacks
The extent to which staff, students, and stakeholders adapt to challenges, learn from mistakes, and incorporate responses to pushback from members of the district community.

This phase of transformation is messy because the ways of working and relating to each other that it demands are new to everyone, and the slate is not a clean one: a district needs to address the aftereffects of past conflicts, neglected promises, and abandoned reforms that exist in all our histories. It also requires awareness of relationships that may be broken due to existing inequities, working to repair those relationships, and intentionally including members of the community that have historically been sidelined, disempowered, or left unheard. Histories of exclusion may

> " *As we began to institute these changes, that initiative fatigue set in. There's just too much going on. What are we focusing on here? So our job has been to identify that coherent thread that links all these things together.* "
>
> —Jeff Wilson, former assistant superintendent, Arcadia Unified School District

be related to identities like race and class, or it may be a specific group of stakeholders—for example, students often have the least input into what they learn and how they learn.

The community also needs to respond to issues that emerge as the shared purpose is challenged, as individuals take ownership in ways that test the commitment of those in positions of power, and especially as mistakes are made. This is hard work, but change toward next gen learning will continue as individuals continue to build trust with a wider, more inclusive network.

The work in this phase is as much about developing mindsets that embrace change as it is about the changes made to the learning experience. Both practices in this pair are necessary; otherwise the district's efforts will trigger the fatigue of "program-itis" and top-down reforms.

> *'Brave before perfect' is the mindset. Just do what's best for kids. It's not easy, but being hard is not evidence that it is wrong.*
>
> —Cory Steiner, Northern Cass School District

Embed

Transformation is at its broadest, deepest, most enduring, systems-redefining level when a district takes action to replace long-embedded bureaucratic organizational structures and mindsets with those of a learning- and service-focused organization.

Celebrating the ongoing efforts to activate change agents and build trusting, inclusive relationships leads to a district-wide culture that supports the learning transformation. The consistency in trust-building and taking action becomes embedded into the ways the organization measures progress and learns how to improve. Prior barriers to change, from mindsets to policies, give way to broad "all in" sentiment and a relentless alignment of organizational resources and operations to the shared purpose. And the learning transformation is sustained and strengthened with the aid of long-term political will among the community and an ongoing investment in the people in the district.

> *Microcredentialing supports teachers to build collective wisdom and models the competency-based learning they are facilitating for students. We recognized that we should honor teachers' learning through compensation. We said, 'When you improve your practice and provide artifacts and evidence from students' voices, products, and reflections, you will advance on the salary schedule.' I've never seen anything else align the resource of personnel to the goals of the district like this has. It has been so powerful.*
>
> —Pat Deklotz, Kettle Moraine School District

Embed
a culture of innovation

Building a district-wide culture of inquiry and improvement with broad "all in" sentiment, something that results from the ongoing efforts for the people in our district to become change-makers working to transform learning in inclusive, trusting relationships.

Measure progress and celebrate people
The extent to which the district community is celebrated for its contributions and evaluating progress is used as a learning opportunity, shared internally and externally through stories, process measures, and data.

Deepen collective responsibility
The extent to which the transformation persists even through changes in leadership because the majority of staff, students, and stakeholders assume ownership of it.

Embed
an aligned infrastructure

Shifting our district's systems and structures to align with our shared purpose, characterized by learning and service as opposed to compliance and mandates.

Reallocate organizational resources
The extent to which district budget, human resources, and organizational structures are allocated to foster and sustain the transformation.

Redesign policies and processes
The extent to which district policies, processes, and behaviors that create barriers for the transformation are changed to foster and sustain the transformation.

Complacency is tempting, but a district that has engaged in all six practices of the Transformation Design framework learns first-hand that transformation requires continuous cycling through the three pairs: re-activating the transformation, re-building new learning strategies, and re-embedding these changes at a systems level. This phase is not an end but a beginning of a district's ongoing commitment to learn, evolve, respond, and get better at creating the ideal learning experience for all learners.

> *What leads to burnout, especially for people who are passionate about the transformation, is to just get hit with so many requirements that they can't manage them all. Through our strategic plan, we manage those demands so school principals can focus on the main event: transformation at their school. It's not getting X plan in by Monday. District administrators are lead blockers and servant-leaders; we get boulders out of the way so these agents of change can do really incredible things.*
>
> —Matt Doyle, Vista Unified School District

Change Frameworks

The previous section, What We Learned about Change, provides the synthesis and application of our literature review to the district transformation we seek to understand and explain. In this section, we provide brief summaries of the key change management frameworks and perspectives on organizational change that had the greatest influence on the development of the Transformation Design framework. They are organized into four sections: Equity and Design, Business and Management, Educational Change and Emergence, and District Transformation in Practice. The summaries include a basic description of the elements, steps, shifts, or principles of the approach. They emphasize aspects that align to principles of next gen learning design and highlight considerations that are distinctive in the literature. This section is not a complete reference list; additional sources that informed the Transformation Science project are available in Appendix A.

Equity & Design

Design Thinking: Managing change through human-centered design, involving people from the very beginning and at each step of the process in particular, is the best way to avoid the most common barriers to change: (1) resistance, (2) lack of consensus, and (3) lack of buy-in. Incorporating design thinking into your change

effort will help you focus on the feelings, knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes of the people who are and will be affected by the change. A design thinking approach seeks multiple solutions to a single problem, and addresses the problem through an iterative process of testing and refining solutions. Compare this to what the authors consider a traditional method of managing change through four logical steps: (1) explain the reason for change; (2) model the desired behaviors of the chosen solution; (3) re-engineer processes and practices; (4) train staff to develop required skills. The recommendation is to first engage in the five-step design thinking process: (1) empathize; (2) consensus on the problem; (3) ideate; (4) prototype; and (5) test. Designing for change in an organization can be achieved through (1) mobilizing people around a shared purpose, (2) building momentum through action, and (3) growing and sustaining a change over time by redesigning the conditions that support it and spreading the word through storytelling.

The equity-centered design framework, from the Stanford d.school K12 Lab and the National Equity Project, extends the five-step design process to help Equity Designers become aware of "biases and baggage," to avoid reproducing power relationships, and to build an equity lens as they design. Liberatory Design incorporates two practices, not as additional steps but as a new approach to design thinking: (1) notice, building self-awareness of your identity, power, context, partnership, and intention, and (2) reflect, providing time to focus and reflect on actions, emotions, impact. **Sources**: 5 Ways to Improve Change Management through Design Thinking by Colleen d'Offay in *InsideHR,* April 2018; Design Thinking, IDEO; Liberatory Design Resource Collection, Stanford d.School.

Six Conditions of Systems Change: Seemingly intractable problems are often systemic, and when organizations engage in systems change, they focus on "shifting the conditions that are holding a problem in place" (from Social Innovation Generation). The six conditions that hold a problem in place—and are levers for change—are divided into three levels. At the explicit level are (1) Policies, (2) Practices, and (3) Resource Flows, all elements of Structural Change. The semi-explicit level includes (4) Relationships & Connections and (5) Power Dynamics. The implicit level is where (6) Mental Models influence how we think, what we do, and how we talk, and shifts here lead to Transformational Change. Districts engaged in transforming learning should look internally and externally at how these conditions shape their system. Typically, educational change begins at the explicit level of policy, practices, and resources. But changing these explicit conditions without **also** addressing the other conditions under the surface is unlikely to lead to lasting change. Just as design thinking is human-centered, systems change is about transforming the relationships between the people who are, indeed, the system.

Power Dynamics, defined here as "the distribution of decision-making power, authority, and both formal and informal influence among individuals and organizations," is not as explicitly addressed in other change management frameworks as it is in this model and the Liberatory Design framework above. Challenges to racial equity, along with inequities across other social identities like gender, ability, and income, can appear at all three levels. Even the most data-driven organization can be blind to the needs and resources of a marginalized group, because an organization's mental models are controlled by those in power. Those in power are often not aware of problems and injustices happening within the system. Those closest to the problem are often most in touch with the resources, assets, and "innovations" that are happening naturally. The authors argue that equity is a natural outcome when people who are impacted by an issue get to tell their stories, are involved in decisions like allocation of money, and are involved in authentic partnership with those leading systems-level change. **Source**: _The Water of Systems Change_ by John Kania, Mark Kramer, and Peter Senge, FSG, June 2018.

Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action.

Systemic Oppression: A systems view of inequity and injustice looks at the complex set of relationships, rules, and behaviors of a school or organization and its people, situated within a larger cultural and historical context of oppression. Taking a systems view opens more opportunities for equitable change. Even with the best of intentions, wIthout seeing schools as part of the complex, historical, and

systemic "fabric of inequality" in the U.S., educators will reproduce and reinforce existing inequities and may unintentionally blame the "victim." Systemic oppression exists at the individual (such as unexamined belief systems), institutional (for example, a single school's norms, policies, and practices), and structural levels (such as relationships between institutions or government policies and laws). Systemic oppression—and the inequitable outcomes that result from it—does not require racist actors. Using a racial equity lens for change requires exercising critical judgment through a cycle of questioning, action, and reflection, with a leap of faith that "if we take a calculated risk to disrupt the status quo, we do indeed possess the will, skill, knowledge, capacity and emotional intelligence to adjust our actions as necessary." The model offers a set of core assumptions for understanding oppression and a set of analytical questions to help change agents apply a racial equity lens to their change efforts. **Source:** *The Lens of Systemic Oppression: Applying a Racial Equity Frame,* National Equity Project.

Movement Action Plan: This is a developmental model of how "successful" social change movements have achieved their goals, created by Bill Moyer, an organizer and strategist for social change. The eight stages relate the work of the activist organizers to public opinion about an issue and powerholders' resistance and/ or acquiescence: (1) Business as Usual; (2) Failure of Established Channels; (3) Ripening Conditions/Education and Organizing; (4) Takeoff; (5) Perception of Failure; (6) Winning Over the Majority; (7) Achieving Alternatives; and (8) Consolidation and Moving On. The model presupposes an imbalance of power within change efforts led by those relegated to the margins. A movement starts with small groups educating an uninterested public that believes those "in charge" are taking care of the problem/injustice. After challenging the established structures via a public education campaign, a trigger event spurs coalition-building, widespread public concern, and lots of energy and activity, though often with little planning or agreed-upon objectives. Surprisingly rare in the literature, the model accounts for setbacks like dwindling participation, waning media attention, and powerholders discrediting and repressing the movement as part of the process. But when activists persevere through setbacks and set achievable objectives, they win public opinion and face the next challenge of shifting their strategy away from opposing an injustice to offering alternatives and solutions, including agreeing on which alternatives to promote. In the final stages, the movement shifts from crisis-based action to long-term struggle with powerholders, and succeeds when it achieves alternatives (the solutions) that begin to shift mindsets and behaviors, while powerholders who maintained power by adapting new policies and conditions often take credit for the movement's success. The coalition looks to the future to fully enact those

underlying mindset and behavior changes. **Source:** *Frameworks for Social Change*, Training for Change.

Business & Management

Kotter Change Leadership Framework: The Kotter approach to leading change involves four Change Principles and eight Accelerators. The four Change Principles are (1) Leadership + Management, (2) Head + Heart, (3) Select Few + Diverse Many, and (4) "Have To" + "Want To." The eight Accelerators are not a finite, sequential step-by-step process that a prior version of Kotter's model encouraged; instead the accelerators are concurrent and continuous: (1) Create a sense of urgency around a "Big Opportunity," (2) Build a guiding coalition, (3) Form a strategic vision and initiatives, (4) Enlist a volunteer army, (5) Enable action by removing barriers, (6) Generate short-term wins, (7) Sustain acceleration, and (8) Institute change. "To ensure new behaviors are repeated over the long term, it's important that you define and communicate the connections between those behaviors and the organization's success. Years of a different kind of experience are often needed to create lasting change." The framework helps districts focus on building new behaviors and shifting organizational culture, as much as, or more than, any individual solution. **Sources:** *The 8-Step Process for Leading Change*, Kotter, 2018; *Accelerate* by John P. Kotter, 2014.

Courtesy of Montessori for All

Hamel's Deep Organizational Change Model: Gary Hamel is a speaker, author, and consultant on business strategy and deep change in organizations. He questions the ability of traditional change management to tackle complex systemic issues and support true innovation, proposing three shifts to reimagine the change model. First is a shift from top-down to activist-out: for change to be "proactive and pervasive" it needs to live across an organization. This requires senior administrators to create the conditions for grassroots change to occur and for front-line employees who have in-depth, sophisticated understanding of the organization and its challenges to become change leaders,suggesting that, in this model, teachers in a school district are the primary change leaders. Second is a shift from sold to invited. Commitment by those who are most affected by a change determines whether a change will last. Inviting everyone in the organization to identify problems and propose solutions is the best way for that commitment to be genuine and enduring. And third is a shift from managed to organic. The common "unfreeze-change-freeze" model created by psychologist Kurt Lewin is inadequate because in today's rapidly changing world, anything "frozen" quickly becomes irrelevant. Hamel recommends a shift to constant experimentation, a "permanent slush," achieved by emphasizing self-organizing communities that identify, experiment, and scale new initiatives more than establishing a project management office. **Sources**: Build a change platform, not a change program by Gary Hamel and Michele Zanini on McKinsey & Company website, October 2014; Why Change Management is an Oxymoron, GaryHamel.com.

Educational Change & Emergence

Forces of Education Change and Reform: Transforming schooling is a challenging problem because the system of education is designed to resist change. Michael Fullan, an expert in whole system educational change and the global leadership director for New Pedagogies for Deep Learning, offers eight lessons that form a new approach to education change, one that positions schools as learning organizations and teachers as change agents: (1) You can't mandate what matters (The more complex the change, the less you can force it.) (2) Change is a journey, not a blueprint (Change is non-linear, loaded with uncertainty and excitement and sometimes perverse.) (3) Problems are our friends (Problems are inevitable and you can't learn without them.) (4) Vision and strategic planning come later (Premature visions and planning blind.) (5) Individualism and collectivism must have equal power (There are no one-sided solutions to isolation and groupthink.) (6) Neither centralization nor decentralization works (Both top-down and bottom-up strategies are necessary.) (7) Connection with the wider environment is critical for success (The best organizations

learn externally as well as internally.) (8) Every person is a change agent (Change is too important to leave to the experts; personal mindset and mastery is the ultimate protection.). **Source:** *Change Forces* by Michael Fullan, 1993.

Emergence: Scholars like Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze propose that "emergence is the only way change really happens on this planet" because complex systems are, by definition, uncontrollable. And change in these complex systems is not transactional; it is relational, and one person is never in charge. Change occurs when people or groups that are working independently yet share a common purpose connect with each other; their "passion moves like wildfire through our networks and communities," leading toward a system that is new and unique and greater than the sum of its parts. As more connections are made (if they are made) through networks of local groups and communities, a new "system" emerges at scale. The emergent change typically appears suddenly and quickly, but is the result of many smaller, less powerful, local actions and decisions that preceded it. This theory about the nature of change is well aligned with an educational worldview that embodies the principles of next generation learning: equity, agency, experiential, relational, etc.

Given the emergent nature of change, those who wish to nurture change need only foster critical connections. The Life Cycle of Emergence has three relationship-centered stages: (1) Networks: like-minded people connect with each other for their own benefit; membership is fluid; (2) Communities of Practice: smaller, self-organized groups share common work, provide mutual support, and intentionally create new knowledge for the field; individuals make a commitment to the group; good ideas and new practices are put into action quickly; (3) Systems of Influence: unpredictable sudden appearance of a system with real power and influence; efforts and practices on the sidelines become the norm; critics become chief supporters.

Traditional change management in business arose from the idea that leaders need to control, monitor, and measure staff. That's why Wheatley argues that instead of trying to turn things around at the systems level—a near impossible feat—individuals in an organization should "make a commitment to practice the values that we cherish." Those aiming to lead organizational change (not only senior administrators) pay attention to (1) relationships, providing trust and confidence; (2) deep thinking, coming together and collectively problem-solving in regular, consistent, informal meetings (that don't have an agenda); and (3) reflection, bringing peacefulness. To develop relationships, "people must be engaged in meaningful work together," and can be fostered by these actions: (1) Nourish a clear organizational identity; (2) Focus people on the bigger picture; (3) Demand honest

communication; (4) Prepare for the unknown, explore alternative future scenarios; (5) Keep meaning at the forefront; (6) Use rituals and symbols; (7) Pay attention to individuals. **Sources:** Lifecycle of Emergence: Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale by Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze, in *Kosmos Journal*, Spring/Summer 2015. Capacity Building in Emergence with Margaret J. Wheatley, I-Open video interview transcript, November 2013.

Emergence in Schools: Wheatley recommends schools and districts—complex systems that are organized by geography more than shared purpose— work *with* the change that is inevitable and uncontrollable in complex systems, rather than working *against* it or trying to control it. Six actions help a school system create change for itself: (1) Discover what's meaningful. "If it is a school system or community interested in changing, this search for new meaning must be a collective activity to discover whether a community of shared interests actually exists." (2) Discover one another as colleagues. "If we can discover something important to work on together in our school, then we figure out how to do the work, together." (3) Observe how ideas travel. Living networks are great communicators, and when we find "the meaning-rich ideas and processes that create energy in one area of the system…. Then we can watch how our other networks choose to notice what we're doing….[and] we learn who might be ready to take up this work next." (4) Make sure that everybody is involved. Despite wishful thinking that people will accept a good plan because it is good, everyone has the right to decide to change or not. "If we want their support, we must welcome them as co-creators." (5) Learn to work with living systems. Working with change is gradual and people revert to old ways easily, especially when they are confused or sense tension. Start by defining a set of design principles and then focus on the change processes by asking these questions regularly: "Who else needs to be here to do this work? Why are we doing this? Is the meaning still clear? How is the meaning changing? Are we becoming better truth-tellers with each other? Is information becoming more open and easier to access? Are we trying to impose anything? Are we becoming more alert to what's going on, right now? Are we learning to partner with confusion and chaos as opportunities for real change?" (6) Learn to trust life's self-ordering process. Because life will always throw instability, chaos, change, and surprise at the best-laid plans, "we need less reverence for the plan as an object, and much more attention to the processes we use for planning and measuring. It is attention to the process, more than the product, that enables us to weave an organization as flexible and resilient as a spider's web." **Source:** "Bringing Schools Back to Life: Schools as Living Systems" in *Creating Successful School Systems: Voices from the university, the field, and the community,* Christoper-Gordon Publishers, September 1999.

Human-Scale at Scale: Scaling student-centered learning in schools across the U.S. requires solutions that are cultural as well as technical, seeing scale and systems change as a learning journey rather than a science. Without culture, "there is a risk that the adoption of new practice and ways of working don't stick, and are effectively superficial or short-lived." The approach proposes six "rules of thumb" that enable flexibility for districts to choose their own solutions, allow educators to adapt to their local context, involve educators in creating solutions, and help "accelerate the adoption and embedding of new mindsets, norms, behaviours, and protocols" in schools and districts. The six rules of thumb are (1) Unlearning to learn anew, (2) Collective visioning, (3) Structures that seed cultures, (4) Nimble scaling journeys, (5) Making change stick, and (6) Educators as innovators and collaborators.

A primary recommendation is to engage in scale and spread as an educator-led community endeavor, citing examples of Networked Improvement Communities and Nested Communities that place self-directed culture change at the center of the effort. Nested Communities, a strategy articulated and utilized by Innovation Unit, convenes a series of communities: (1) The Community of Innovators brings together groups from across an organization(s) to design and implement solutions to common challenges and are highly supported and facilitated; (2) The Community of Potential Adopters or Adapters is a critical friend to the Community of Innovators, offering insights into how innovations would work in their contexts and actively helping to shape essential elements of the innovation and how it's implemented;

(3) The Community of Interest includes others who want to be connected and informed of the innovation work but are not (yet) committed to be more actively involved and their interest builds as a result of a strong communications and engagement strategy. **Source:** *Human-Scale at Scale: Cultivating New Education Cultures* by Tom Beresford, Innovation Unit, November 2017.

District Transformation in Practice

Learner-Centered Leadership at Vista Unified: In this book, Devin Vodicka, chief impact officer of Altitude Learning and former superintendent of Vista Unified School District in San Diego County, California, shares the story of transformation at Vista, along with vignettes from other districts, in a call to action to create a learner-centered education system that addresses four challenges: (1) Ensure that all students are connected and supported in their learning; (2) Reverse the "engagement dip" that we see as learners move through grade levels; (3) Recognize and celebrate the diversity of our learners, our families, and our communities; and (4) Reduce the gap between the pace of change within schools and the pace of change in the world around us. Vodicka recommends six strategies for transformation to a learner-centered system of education and accompanying actions for leaders (positional and otherwise): (1) A framework for the future with vision, mission, values, goals, roles and responsibilities, and strategic plan to set the conditions for change; (2) Servant-leadership that is independent of title or position to catalyze change; (3) A system to enable both incremental improvements and transformal change; (4) Visibility of performance quality to learners, educators, and leaders using measures that matter; (5) Structures to support meaningful knowledge exchange and information flow within and across roles; and (6) Accelerating change through policy, technology, and talent to create ongoing momentum. **Source:** *Learner-Centered Leadership: A Blueprint for Transformational Change in Learning Communities* by Devin Vodicka, 2020.

Systemic Shifts toward Personalized Learning at Lindsay Unified: Lindsay Unified School District created a Checklist for Shifting to a Performance-Based System organized into 10 sections, based upon its own transformation from a traditional time-based education system to a learner-centered performance-based system: (1) Creating preliminary change, (2) Creating a new culture, (3) Transforming leadership, (4) Transforming personnel, (5) Transforming curricula, (6) Transforming assessment, (7) Transforming teaching, (8) Transforming learning, (9) Transforming technology, (10) Connecting with the community. The district recommends 10 strategies for ensuring a successful transformation: (1) Collaborate with all stakeholders to develop a future-focused strategic design; (2) Invest the time and

energy to create a unified mission and vision; (3) Develop collective ownership of the mission and vision; (4) Use consistent messaging to sustain focus on the mission and vision; (5) Identify the systems and components required for the new model; (6) Focus on developing the leadership skills needed for transformational change; (7) Learn and engage in effective teamwork practices; (8) Make lifelong learning outcomes part of the core curriculum; (9) Maintain a relentless focus on results, especially improved learner achievement; (10) Center communication and goal setting around learner achievement. The checklist and recommended strategies are available for free download with registration from Marzano Resources. **Source:** _Beyond Reform: Systemic Shifts Toward Personalized Learning_, by Lindsay Unified School District, 2017.

Personalized Learning Journeys: By studying the implementation journeys of two school districts and one charter school that are shifting toward personalized learning, FSG found that the paths of each organization were distinct. They identified different lessons emerging from each case study. Within the unique approaches, however, five commonalities stood out: (1) Culture building as a foundation; (2) Staggered rollout; (3) Second wave innovation: partnering for expertise; (4) Leaders "threaded" values of personalization throughout the system; and (5) Kept moving despite obstacles. Regarding change management, the authors observed that the approach to managing change was "more complex and more reflective of the values of personalized learning than traditional conceptions of change management." **Source:** _Journeys to Personalized Learning_, FSG, July 2018.

Deeper Learning Dozen Theory of Change: As an action project and an exploration into district-wide change toward equitable, deeper learning for students and adults, the Deeper Learning Dozen is a community of practice for the superintendents of 12 districts in the U.S. and Canada. The foundation of the project's theory of change is three interrelated principles that are grounded in both systems change and emergence change models: (1) Inequity is structural, (2) Adult learning and student learning are symmetrical, and (3) Leadership accelerates emergence. The community of practice works together to support changes in practice and outcomes through cycles of inquiry, design, and improvement. The desired changes are articulated by three goals: (1) Increased number of deeper learning experiences for both students and adults, (2) Increased equity in access to deeper learning experiences and outcome of education, and (3) Supportive changes in the discourse, process, and structures of school districts and their schools. **Sources**: DeeperLearningDozen.org, _The Deeper Learning Dozen: Transforming School Districts to Support Deeper Learning for All: A Hypothesis_ by John Watkins, Amelia Peterson, and Jal Mehta, October 2018.

Appendix A: Additional Change Management Sources

Education

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[Why the Lean Start-Up Changes Everything](), Steve Blank, *Harvard Business Review*, May 2013.

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[Five Steps to Building an Effective Impact Network](), David Ehrlichman, David Sawyer, and Jane Wei-Skillern, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, November 11, 2015.

[Shifting Cultures: A Change Management Guide for Hospital Leaders](), Becker's Hospital Review

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[Change Management in Government](), Frank Ostroff, *Harvard Business Review*, May 2006

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