Transformation Design District Self-Assessment: A Guide

The Transformation Design District Self-Assessment is for school districts that are reimagining learning to prepare each student—and, in particular, those who have been marginalized by racism and other forms of inequity—for success in school and beyond. With this tool, you can examine your district's use of a set of core practices to bring about enduring and fundamental changes, a true transformation of learning for students. These practices, drawn from the Transformation Design framework, were developed from studying change in business, social movements, public organizations, and education, as well as what change looks like in leading districts that have successfully transformed the learning experience in their schools with positive outcomes for their students.

Whether you are at the beginning of your learning transformation journey or many years along, you can use the Transformation Design District Self-Assessment to evaluate the extent that your district currently uses the Transformation Design core practices, identify your districts' strengths, and gain insights that will accelerate your progress. Transforming learning requires us to reimagine not just what we change but also how we change, and completing the district self-assessment will help you better serve your students, families, and community.

Let's get started!

This guide provides recommendations for conducting the Transformation Design District Self-Assessment, organized in six steps:

1. Understanding the Transformation Design Framework
2. Gathering Your Team
3. Defining Your Purpose
4. Conducting the Self-Assessment
5. Exploring the Self-Assessment Results
6. Moving from Reflection to Action

1. Understanding the Transformation Design Framework

Let's take a step back to build common understanding of the Transformation Design framework. Briefly introduced above, it is an approach to educational systems change that is more inclusive, iterative, and imaginative than what is often used in K-12 education. It takes the principles behind next gen learning and reflects those principles in the process required to get there.

The Transformation Design framework identifies the practices required to bring about enduring, fundamental changes in mindsets, school designs, student learning experiences, and student success outcomes—and to do so inclusively and equitably. It focuses on the process of managing and leading this transformation.

Transformation Design

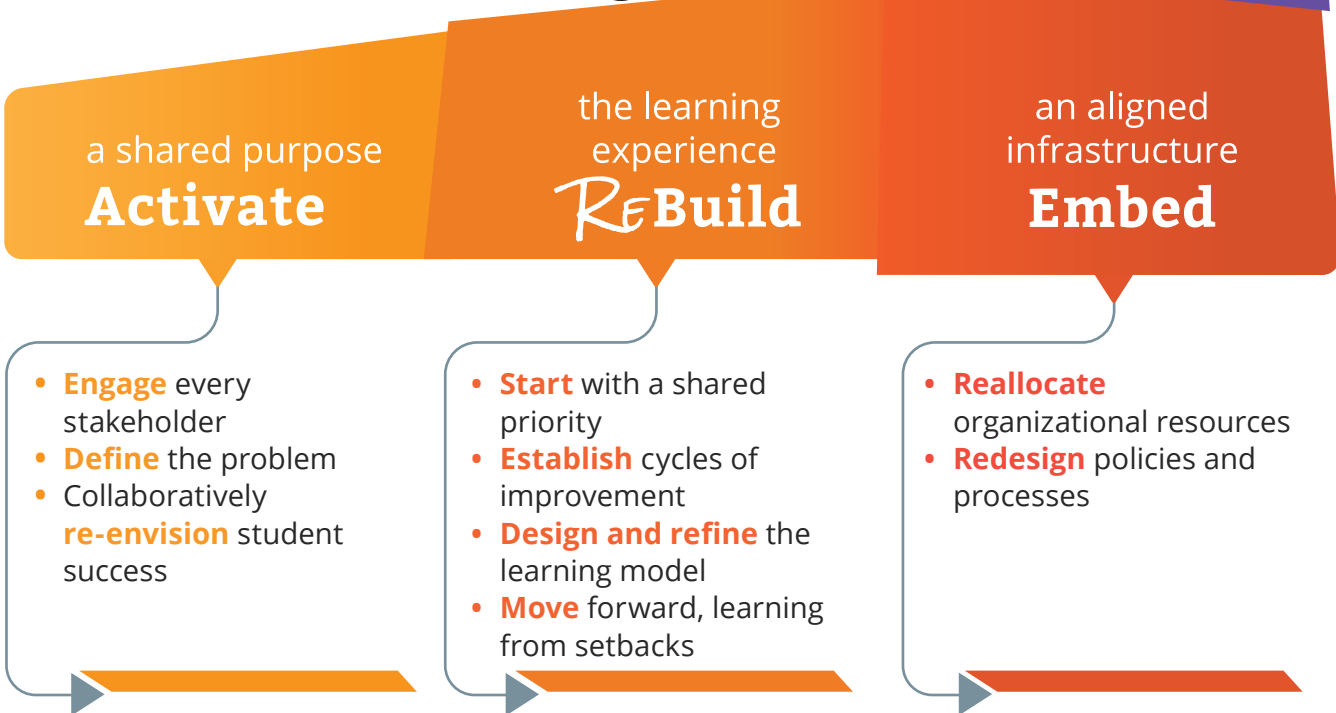| Activate	Build	Embed
change agents	an inclusive environment	a culture of innovation
a shared purpose	the learning experience	an aligned infrastructure
Activate	**ReBuild**	**Embed**

The framework reflects a dynamic process that 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: personal and cultural practices (blue) and learning and structural practices (orange). Change moves forward by cycling between the two practices as the district builds toward an enduring and sustainable learning transformation.

Each core practice is further segmented into 2-4 specific actions. With the Transformation Design District Self-Assessment, participants will rate the extent to which your district community uses each of the actions.

- **Invite and empower** stakeholders
- **Map** roles by strengths
- **Cultivate** leadership capacity

- **Distribute** leadership
- **Confront** existing inequities
- **Foster** interpersonal connections
- **Listen.** Then **communicate.**

- **Measure** progress and **celebrate** people
- **Deepen** collective responsibility

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- **Engage** every stakeholder
- **Define** the problem
- Collaboratively **re-envision** student success

- **Start** with a shared priority
- **Establish** cycles of improvement
- **Design and refine** the learning model
- **Move** forward, learning from setbacks

- **Reallocate** organizational resources
- **Redesign** policies and processes

Although the 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.

To learn more about the framework, visit www.transformation-design.org.

We encourage you to apply the core practices of the Transformation Design framework as you engage in the district self-assessment process. To aid you in this effort, we highlight recommendations in this guide that embody the Transformation Design core practices. We also encourage you to model a similar transparency with your community.

2. Gathering Your Team

The Core Team: The self-assessment is designed for use by a core team (or teams) of diverse stakeholders who are guiding the district's learning transformation.The core team should represent a variety of district community roles, such as teachers, administrators, students, families, school board members, and community and business leaders. When a diverse group of stakeholders leads the learning transformation, a district **Distributes Leadership**, an action within the Transformation Design core practice **Build an Inclusive Environment.**

Furthermore, a district that intentionally creates a core team that includes individuals whose voices have historically been excluded from decision-making is taking a leading step to **Confront Existing Inequities,** another action to **Build an Inclusive Environment.** Those who have experienced marginalization because of racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression can provide an array of valuable perspectives about the learning transformation. They can engage with stakeholders throughout your community and uncover concerns as well as opportunities that might otherwise be overlooked. In addition to diversifying itself, the core team should establish agreements for working together and for surfacing and addressing unspoken power dynamics, microaggressions, and other forms of discriminatory interactions.

Everyone on the core team should complete the self-assessment form and participate in exploring the gathered feedback to determine next steps in response to what you learn.

Other Participants: The self-assessment form is designed to be completed by individuals on the core team, but others who are familiar with the Transformation Design framework also may complete it. Throughout this guide, individuals who complete the self-assessment form are referred to as "participants."

Participants do not need to know everything that is happening across your district, but they should have insight into its systems, processes, and culture. Consider inviting district administrators, school leaders, school board members, or committee members who are not members of the core team but could provide additional insight into your district's learning transformation. However, we advise against broadly disseminating the self-assessment. While it's important to gather input from a variety of stakeholders (**Engage Every Stakeholder** is one action to **Activate a Shared Purpose**), we recommend using focus groups, interviews, or surveys *focused on specific elements of the framework that particular stakeholders are best positioned to reflect on and inform*.

Facilitator: We recommend that the core team identify a member(s) of the core team or an external facilitator(s) to facilitate the self-assessment process. The facilitator guides the core team through the most challenging part of the district self-assessment: making sense of the gathered feedback to celebrate strengths and successes, conducting "deep dives" into specific practices, and determining actions to take in response.

Note: facilitators should be the only individuals with access to the spreadsheet of self-assessment form submissions, and only for the purposes of aggregating the feedback to share with the core team. Limiting access to the "raw data" protects participants' privacy. It allows their feedback to remain confidential, encouraging more forthright ratings and preventing bias from seeping into the core team's analysis. Confidentiality is particularly important in environments where high levels of trust do not yet exist.

3. Defining Your Purpose

Any self-assessment is an opportunity to learn and grow. This district self-assessment will help your team reflect on your learning transformation and is one way to **Establish Cycles of Improvement**, an action within the core practice *RE***Build the Learning Experience**. What are your district's

Why ask why? Spending time identifying and understanding the reasons behind an action taken by the district is one example of practices that **Activate a Shared Purpose**.

goals for conducting the Transformation Design District Self-Assessment? Bring the core team together to define your purpose and communicate that purpose with the wider district community.

4. Conducting the Self-Assessment

The self-assessment form is designed to be completed individually. It is available in two formats:

1. **Google Form.** May be used to collect feedback, automatically entering responses in a spreadsheet. Useful for large groups and when anonymity is essential.

2. **PDF Template.** May be used to collect feedback, but responses will need to be manually entered into a spreadsheet. Useful for smaller groups with high levels of trust. May also be used as a note-catcher for individuals to use while completing the Google form and/or exploring the results.

Using either format, participants evaluate the extent that your district community uses each action in the Transformation Design framework along the following scale:

    1- Not yet in use
    2- Emerging: Testing in a few areas of the district
    3- Growing: Implementing across most of the district, primarily in early stages
    4- Sustaining: Continuously refining as a core characteristic of the district's community

For each action, participants are asked to include examples and artifacts to support their rating. The examples and artifacts provide evidence for the core team to explore when reviewing the feedback.

Before completing the self-assessment:

1. The core team should develop a shared understanding of the following:
   a. The Transformation Design framework
   b. Your district's goals for the self-assessment
   c. The steps in this guide, including any customizations
   d. Group agreements for working together (e.g., 4+ Agreements)
   e. Commitments to use the feedback provided

2. The core team should designate a facilitator(s) and identify participants to complete the self-assessment form.

3. The core team and facilitator(s) should prepare the self-assessment form:

The Google Form
- Copy the form to a Google account owned by the facilitator.
- Create the response spreadsheet (>Responses>Create Spreadsheet icon). Set sharing settings to private.
- Customize the introduction to reflect your district's goals and commitment to using the feedback provided.
- Add your district logo and colors.
- Customize the Confirmation Message participants see after completing the form (>Settings>Presentation).

The PDF Template
- Copy the PDF to a file folder owned by the facilitator.
- Create a spreadsheet to compile responses.
- Customize the introduction to reflect your district's goals and commitment to using the feedback provided.
- Add your district logo and colors.
- Identify how completed forms will be submitted anonymously.

When completing the self-assessment:

1. **Send a pre-invitation.** Alert participants that they are invited to complete the self-assessment, when the form will be available, and when it will be due.

2. **Send the invitation.** Include a link or copy of the self-assessment form and the due date. The invitation should identify the district's goals and commitments to using the feedback provided. It also should emphasize the need for honest ratings and explain how individual responses will remain confidential.

3. **Send friendly reminders.** To encourage participation, send a brief reminder half-way through the time period and one-day before the due date. Since responses are anonymous, be sure to acknowledge those who have already completed the form and thank them for participating.

4. **Complete the self-assessment form.** All members of the core team and other participants individually and independently complete the self-assessment form by the due date.

5. Explore the Self-Assessment Results

Facilitator Task: Aggregate the feedback. Before the core team meets to explore the self-assessment results, the facilitator reviews the data to aggregate the feedback and note trends.

1. Copy the data visualizations provided by the Google form (>Responses>Summary>Copy Chart icon) into a shareable file —OR— Record the aggregated results in a copy of the PDF template: for each action, identify the number of people who rated it a 1, 2, 3, or 4.

2. Identify a sampling of examples, artifacts, and questions to share as evidence.

3. Note trends of agreement and variance in ratings provided by participants. Use an organizer like the Trends Chart provided below to share the findings with the core team.

TRENDS CHART

Strength	Making Progress	Area of Development	Wide Variance
In this column, list actions with ratings that are mostly 3 or 4.	In this column, list actions with ratings that are mostly 2 or 3.	In this column, list actions with ratings that are mostly 1 or 2.	In this column, list actions where participants have very different ratings or where a trend is unclear.

Note: Similar ratings among participants may not indicate agreement. For example, consider the action **Define the Problem** within the core practice **Activate a Shared Purpose.** Participants may give a high rating because they believe the problem has been clearly defined district-wide, while individual participants may actually define the problem differently. It's important to review the examples and artifacts they provide to explore this possibility. In such cases, mark those actions for further investigation.

4. Disseminate the findings to the core team. Many core team members may be inexperienced with reviewing data, so provide guidance to help individuals make meaning of the Trends Chart and the examples and artifacts. Provide ample time for individuals to review the Trends Chart and prepare reflections, questions, and insights before discussing the findings as a group. You may provide the core team with the discussion question prompts (provided below) to support their individual review. Consider whether to share findings during a meeting or in advance by email. A meeting enables the facilitator to provide a verbal explanation alongside the Trends Chart and offers core team members a chance to ask questions. However, if findings are shared during a meeting, remember to provide time for individual reflection before engaging in group discussion, whether by scheduling multiple meetings or by incorporating reflection time into the agenda.

Core Team Task: Review the feedback together. Design your review meeting(s) or workshop with the goal of developing a collective understanding among core team members of the self-assessment feedback and how Transformation Design is currently practiced in your district. We suggest incorporating the following approach which sets up the core team to take action on the self-assessment findings.

1. The core team revisits the previously agreed-upon goals of the self-assessment process, group agreements for working together, and commitments to use the feedback provided.

2. The facilitator presents the data visualizations and Trends Chart to the core team.

3. The core team discusses the findings. Pay attention to your interpersonal communication and power dynamics and intentionally create space for voices that are often marginalized. The facilitator can model and support productive, inclusive practices when guiding the discussion(s); we encourage using a discussion protocol to further foster productive, inclusive conversations. Consider the following question prompts to guide the discussion:

- What are the major strengths of the district? Identify clusters of strengths in the core practices of the Transformation Design framework. Review the artifacts. Identify factors that contribute to the strengths.

- Where is the district making progress? Identify clusters in the core practices of the Transformation Design framework. Review the artifacts. Identify factors that limit & contribute to progress. Identify trends in which segments of the district use the action and which do not; explore systemic inequities that may contribute to the uneven trends.

- What are the areas of development for your district? Identify clusters in the core practices of the Transformation Design framework. Review the artifacts. Identify factors that limit the district's progress in the areas of development. Consider what opportunities may encourage their development.

- Where is there wide variance in ratings? Identify clusters in the core practices of the Transformation Design framework. Review the artifacts. Identify district dynamics that may influence ratings and consider whether a consensus rating is possible.

> *Teams that have previously engaged in conversations where multiple perspectives and disagreement is encouraged are likely to have more fruitful discussions about the district self-assessment findings. To develop trust for courageous conversations, we encourage teams to set agreements, use discussion protocols, and positively recognize constructive conflict as it happens during the process. These approaches foster productive, inclusive conversations and help* **Build an Inclusive Environment.**

4. The core team takes an "equity pause" to reflect on the team's interpersonal communication and analysis of trends through a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We encourage teams to create time in their district self-assessment process to **Confront Existing Inequities,** an action within the core practice **Build an Inclusive Environment.** As described by equityXdesign creators Caroline Hill, Michelle Molitor, and Christine Ortiz, "Strategic equity pauses stop the clock to reflect on our language, ideas, and hunches in the context of a discourse of transformation. Without this moment to think, our brains default to the familiar and the known, making a repeat of past practice likely."

5. The core team summarizes the findings into a snapshot of your district's learning transformation. First, adjust the Trends Chart as needed, including moving actions to new columns and redefining the columns to better align with your district's experience. Then, complete the Snapshot Chart below to **Measure Progress and Celebrate People,** an action within the core practice **Embed a Culture of Innovation.** Create a brief but vivid description of the findings to describe how Transformation Design is currently practiced in your district. Identify the progress your district has made to date that should be celebrated, list questions that are left unanswered, and identify commitments that galvanize core team members to move forward.

SNAPSHOT CHART

Our Transformation Design Snapshot		
In this box, provide a brief but vivid summary of your findings. If you could take a "snapshot" photograph of how Transformation Design is currently practiced, what would it show?		
Progress to Celebrate	Unanswered Questions	Commitments and Forward Energy

6. Record tasks that emerge from the discussion. Use the Task Table below to ensure the tasks are completed and to provide accountability for the agreed-upon commitments to use the self-assessment feedback. We pre-populated the table with some recommended next steps.

TASK TABLE

Task	Timeline	People Responsible	Communication Plan (Listen & Share)	Success Criteria
Celebrations: Identify specific ways to celebrate strengths, within groups and district-wide:				
Communications: Report what you did and what you learned with the participants who were invited to complete the self-assessment form.				
Communications: List ways to invite the broader community into the self-assessment process and share what you did and what you learned: **1.** **2.** **3.**				
Going Deeper: Identify 2-3 actions from the Transformation Design framework to collectively explore using the Transformation Design Deep Dive Guides, as described in the next section.				

6. Moving from Reflection to Action

There are many ways that a district might follow up on its self-assessment work: professional learning, policy changes, action plans, deeper exploration, and more. In this section, we provide "Deep Dive Guides" for core teams interested in focusing on specific actions in the Transformation Design framework. The Deep Dive Guides help core teams develop a strategy that will strengthen the use of a Transformation Design action across the district. Building off of what was learned from the self-assessment, teams can now shift to taking bold action. The guides provide key questions to consider, resources to guide your learning, artifacts from leading districts to inspire you, space to dream and design, and a template to create an action plan. The goal is to ensure that your learning transformation creates meaningful changes in both learning experiences and outcomes for students—and that these changes will endure over the long-term.
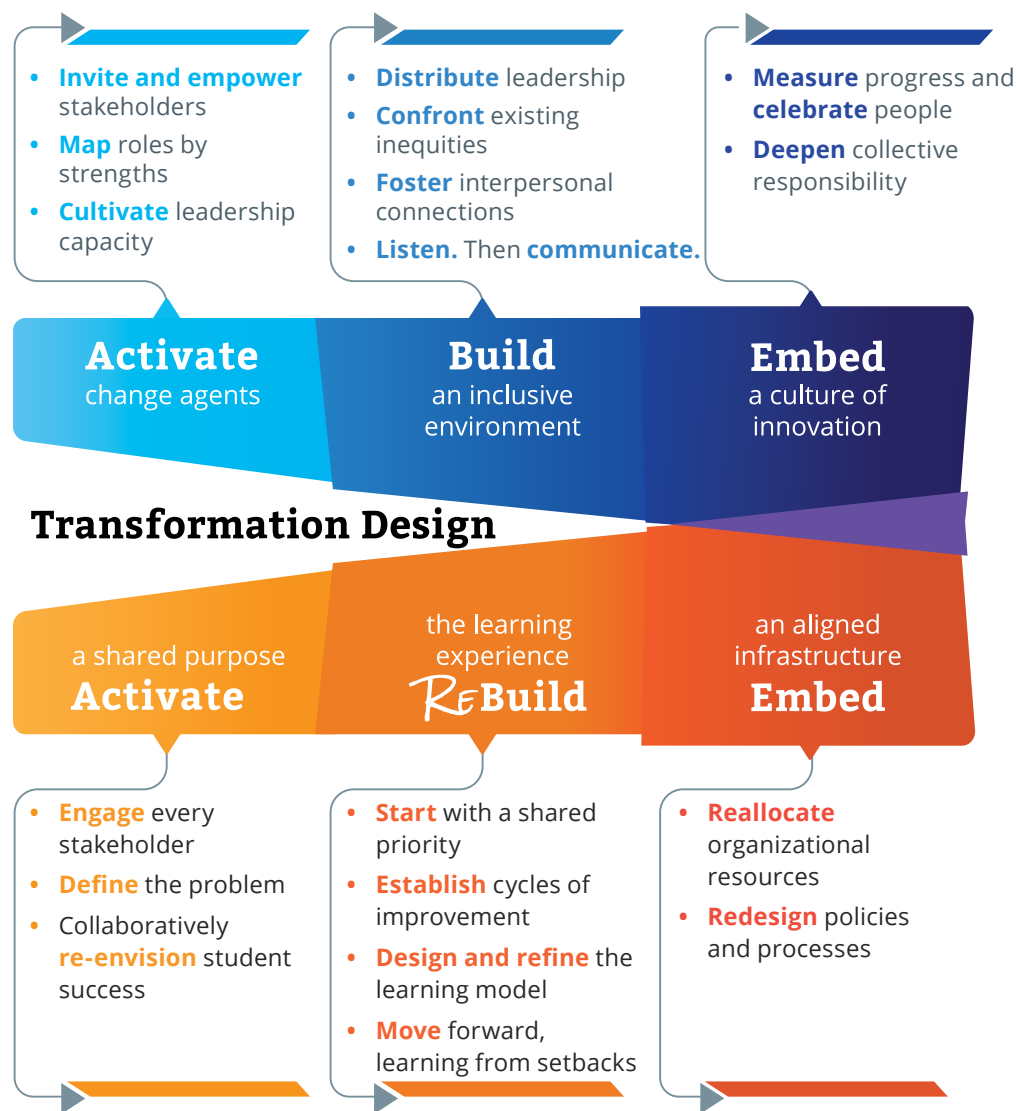
Gather Your Deep Dive Team: Use the Deep Dive opportunity to engage the core team(s) and others in developing a deeper understanding of Transformation Design. Consider whether the core team will work as a unit or break off into sub-teams that lead individual Deep Dive Guides. Consider **Activating Change Agents** by including district community members who are not on the core team(s). And consider inviting someone from a partner organization or district who might provide a valuable external perspective on your district's transformation.

Choose 2-3 Transformation Design actions. Collectively identify 2-3 actions from the Transformation Design framework for further development using the following recommendations:

1. **Start with Strengths.** Choose one action that the core team identified as a strength. It is tempting to jump right into areas that you think need development, but we recommend starting with what is going well in your district. A strengths-based approach, where you **Map Roles by Strengths** (within **Activate Change Agents**), provides stakeholder change agents with motivation to continue making progress in the learning transformation. And you can build on the momentum already underway in your district to develop even more strengths. When choosing the strength to investigate with a Deep Dive, consider the following questions:

    a. Which strength might be seen as a defining characteristic of your district's approach to transforming learning and can accelerate your progress?

    b. Which strength, and the factors that contribute to it, might you leverage to advance and develop other Transformation Design actions?

2. **Investigate Areas of Development.** Choose 1-2 additional actions. For guidance, review the Snapshot Chart above, specifically the "Commitments and Excitement" column. Consider actions that can build off the strength you identified based on its position in the Transformation Design framework:

    a. An action that is within the same Transformation Design practice as the strength.

    b. An action that is within the same Transformation Design phase, but on the opposite side of its practice pair.

    c. An action that is part of the next Transformation Design phase, on the same side of the practice pair.

Begin Your Deep Dive: The Deep Dive Guides provide a step-by-step process for reflection, discovery, creation, and action planning. The guides lead your team to develop concrete strategies to advance your district's use of a Transformation Design action, in service of bringing about a learning transformation for your students that will endure. Using the links below, create copies of the guides for each team member and begin your deep dive!

- **Invite and empower** stakeholders
- **Map** roles by strengths
- **Cultivate** leadership capacity

- **Distribute** leadership
- **Confront** existing inequities
- **Foster** interpersonal connections
- **Listen.** Then **communicate.**

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- **Reallocate** organizational resources
- **Redesign** policies and processes

Reminders:

- Deep dive teams should establish goals, group agreements, and commitments to action.

- Deep dive teams should be empowered to make decisions during their deep dive investigation.

- Invite stakeholders to learn alongside your deep dive teams; communicate what the teams are doing, why they are doing it, and what they are learning.

- Use equity-seeking approaches in your deep dive investigations; take equity pauses.

- It's enticing to think that completing a Deep Dive Guide means that your district can check that Transformation Design action off a to-do list. But iteration is a critical component of the Transformation Design framework (**Establish Cycles of Improvement** within *RE***Build the Learning Experience**) because learning is a lifelong endeavor. Expect messy, non-linear work and the need to revisit your district's progress on these actions over time. Even when actions become embedded into your district's systems—"the way we do things here"—your district community will need to continually revisit and refine the core practices of Transformation Design.

Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) is a nonprofit initiative that empowers educators and communities to reimagine and transform the student learning experience, cultivating academics, life skills, wellness, and citizenship so that students can thrive in a world of rapid change.