Culture Lens - Read the Room Set Up

Hang the three slides for **Chapter 7** together in one area of the room, the three slides for **Chapter 8** together in a second area, and the three slides for **Chapter 9** together in a third area. Each set of three slides creates one **culture lens station** for participants to visit during the activity.

Shepard, M. (2026). *Where the science of improvement meets the heart of leadership: Leading equity-focused school and district improvement*. Routledge.

Building a Positive Workplace Culture

Bridging the Vision-Implementation Gap

CHAPTER 7



Vision: Leaders envisioned a purpose-driven, high-trust, collaborative workplace where staff feel valued, connected, and energized by the work.

Implementation Gap: Staff often feel disjointed from a lack of focus, hierarchy, siloes, and compliance-oriented work.

> *"People work hard when they feel seen, valued, and connected to the mission. That starts with leadership."*

Challenges: Top-down Leadership Structures Limiting Engagement & Working in Siloes

(Shepard, 2026)

Building a Positive Workplace Culture

Bridging the Vision-Implementation Gap

CHAPTER 7

Bridging Vision and Implementation: Leadership Actions



Cast a Clear Vision

- Help staff see themselves in the vision
- Embed the vision into the daily work
- Make the vision visible



Model the Culture

- Be visible, present, and connected
- Participate in inquiry alongside staff
- Show reflection, adaption, and curiosity



Share Stories of Impact

- Highlight and celebrate successes
- Normalize learning from failure
- Show how staff contributions advance the mission

(Shepard, 2026)

CHAPTER 7

Building a Positive Workplace Culture

Bridging the Vision-Implementation Gap

Think about your improvement effort.

Challenge	Strategy
Where might there be a gap between what is intended and what people actually experience?	What could help close that gap?

(Shepard, 2026)

Empowering Staff Ownership

Bridging the Vision-Implementation Gap

CHAPTER 8



Vision: Leaders want staff to initiate and lead improvement through inquiry and meaningful measures that support continuous learning.

Implementation Gap: Staff often experience improvement as something done *to* them rather than *with* them, limiting ownership, confidence, and capacity to facilitate change.

> *"When staff get to pick what they're going to do, they engage at a whole new level. It's their work, not mine."*

Challenges: Leader-Led Rather than Staff-Driven Inquiry & Lack of Meaningful Measures

(Shepard, 2026)

Empowering Staff Ownership

Bridging the Vision-Implementation Gap

CHAPTER 8

Bridging Vision and Implementation: Leadership Actions



Build Capacity

- Teach improvement processes & tools
- Use meaningful measures
- Develop staff at all levels



Distribute Leadership

- Identify key leaders at all levels
- Gradual release of leadership responsibility
- Build a leadership bench



Provide Structures & Supports

- Systematize collaboration time
- Provide tools, protocols, & meaningful measures
- Establish learning networks

(Shepard, 2026)

Empowering Staff Ownership

Bridging the Vision-Implementation Gap

CHAPTER 8

Think about your improvement effort.

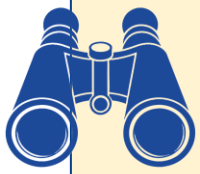
Challenge	Strategy
Who needs to own or participate in this work (but might not yet)?	What could increase meaningful ownership?

(Shepard, 2026)

CHAPTER 9

Fostering Staff Vulnerability

Bridging the Vision-Implementation Gap



Vision: Leaders want a culture where staff feel safe to take risks, tackle tough equity-focused problems, and openly share what they learn.

Implementation Gap: Staff often play it safe, avoid the deep equity-focused work, and teams tend to operate in silos.

> *"There has to be a culture of safety to have a level of vulnerability and collaboration if you're going to make real change. People aren't going to be vulnerable if they don't feel safe."*

Challenges: Hesitant to Take Risks, Focusing on Operational or Surface-Level Problems Instead of Student-Centered Problems & Limited Sharing Beyond Immediate Teams

(Shepard, 2026)

Fostering Staff Vulnerability

Bridging the Vision-Implementation Gap

CHAPTER 9

Bridging Vision and Implementation: Leadership Actions



Choosing a Real Problem – Examining Student Equity Gaps

- Define the problem
- Center equity
- Make it relevant



Engage in Disciplined Inquiry Around Student Equity Gaps

- Equity-focused disciplined inquiry
- Avoid the training trap
- Elevate equity in inquiry



Spread & Scale Solutions Related to Equity Gaps

- Cultivate shared learning
- Scale through adaptation
- Maintain context-specific ownership while scaling

(Shepard, 2026)

CHAPTER 9

Fostering Staff Vulnerability

Bridging the Vision-Implementation Gap

Think about your improvement effort.

Challenge	Strategy
Where will people need to take a risk, acknowledge a problem, share evidence, or learn openly?	What could help create the conditions for that vulnerability?

(Shepard, 2026)