WHY

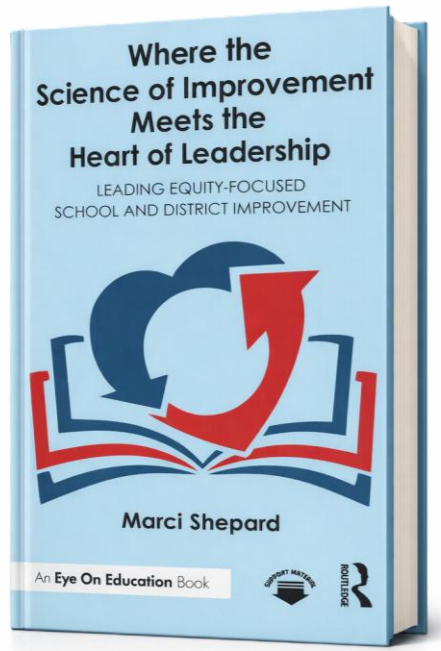
Equity, Culture, and Leadership Values

Marci Shepard, PhD, EdD



Where the Science of Improvement Meets the Heart of Leadership

LEADING EQUITY-FOCUSED SCHOOL AND DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT



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Technical leadership – Implementing improvement principles and disciplined inquiry

Where the Science of Improvement Meets the Heart of Leadership

LEADING EQUITY-FOCUSED SCHOOL AND DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT

Relational leadership – Cultural conditions of collaboration, shared ownership, and psychological safety

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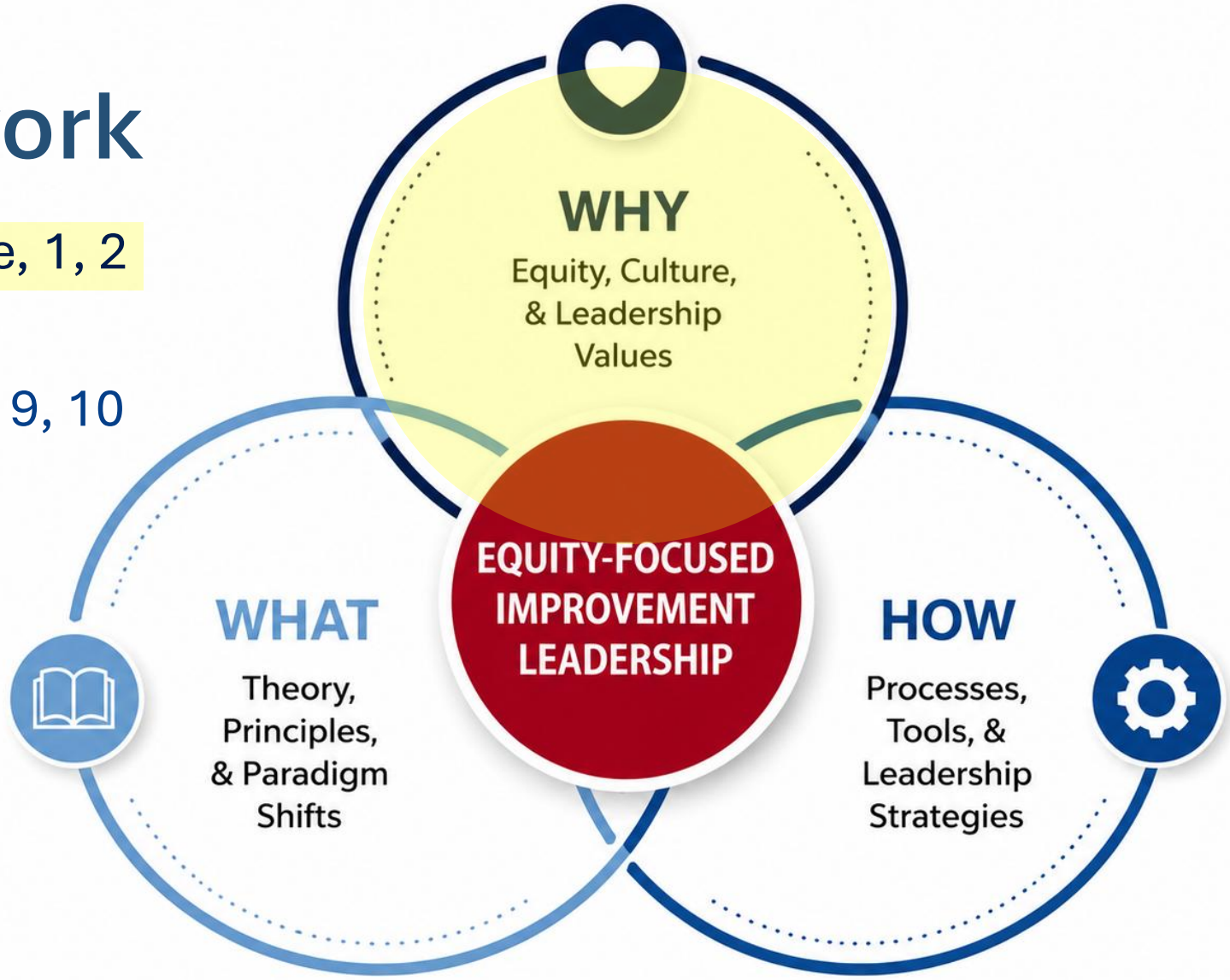
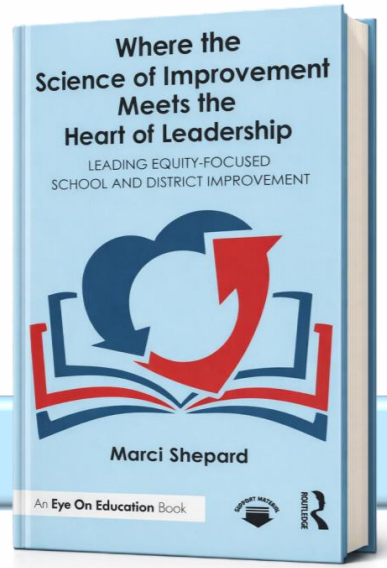
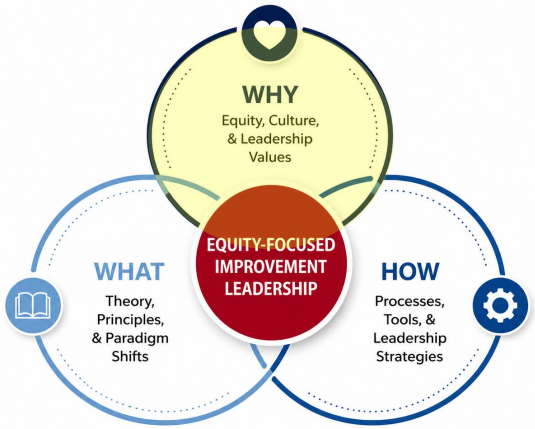
Framework

- Why: Preface, 1, 2
- What: 3, 4, 5
- How: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10







Download at Routledge *Where the Science of Improvement Meets the Heart of Leadership* under Support Material.

The Instructional Design of Every Chapter

A consistent structure that moves learners from understanding to leadership.

1 PREPARE TO LEARN
Establishes the WHY

- Learning Target & Success Criteria
- Relevant NELP Standards
- Icebreaker
- Case Vignette

2 BUILD UNDERSTANDING
Develops the WHAT

- Research & Content
- Voices of Leaders

3 APPLY & EXTEND LEARNING
Practices the HOW

- Reflection Questions
- Try This Activities & Downloadable Improvement Tools
- Leadership-in-Action Story
- References



FROM **WHY** → TO **HOW**

Preparing leaders who **understand improvement**

Preparing leaders who **can lead improvement**

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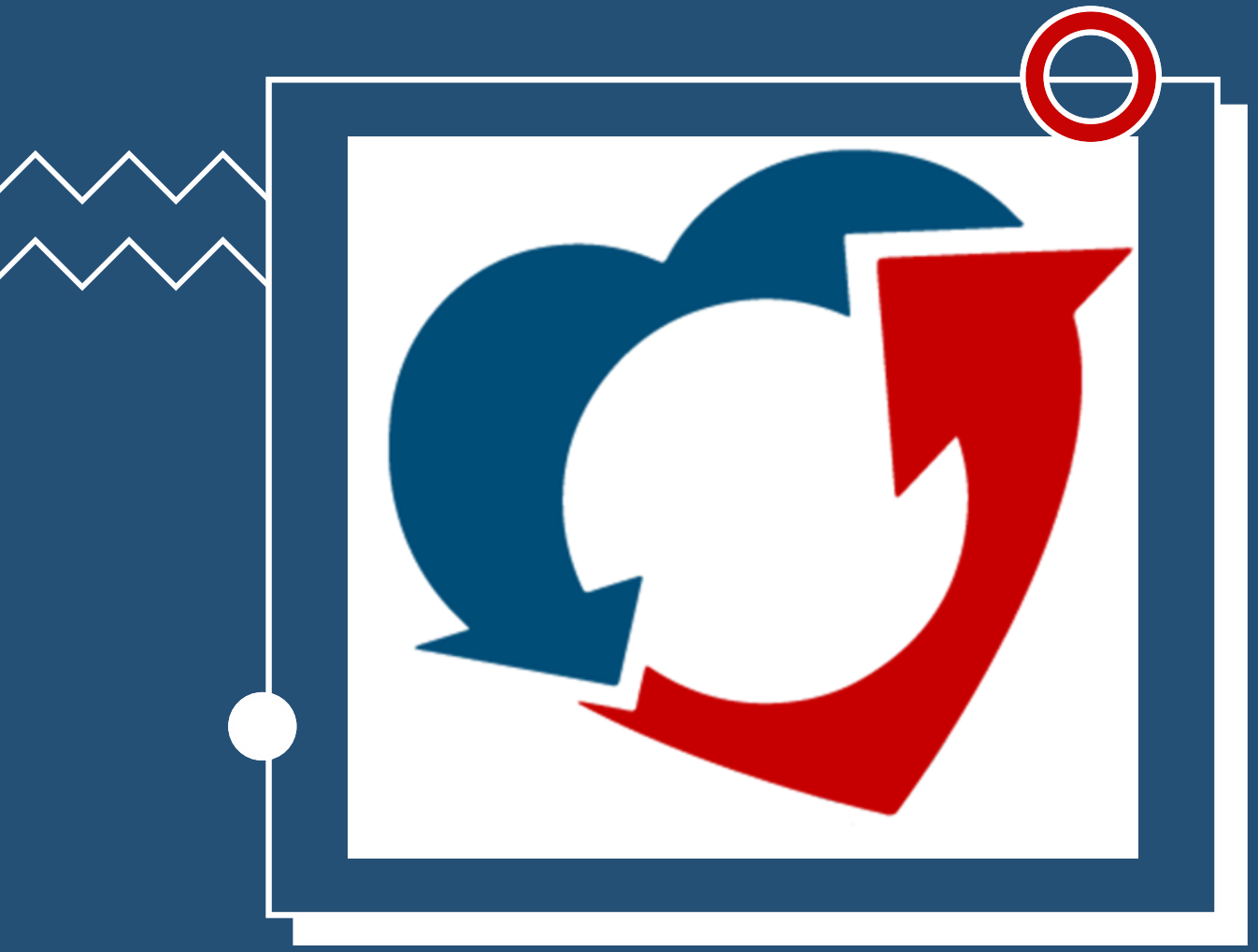

Preface

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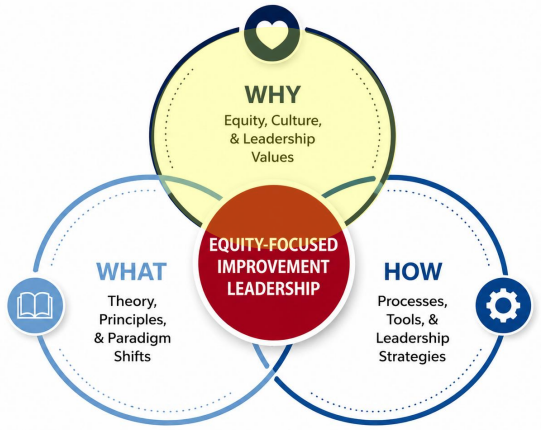


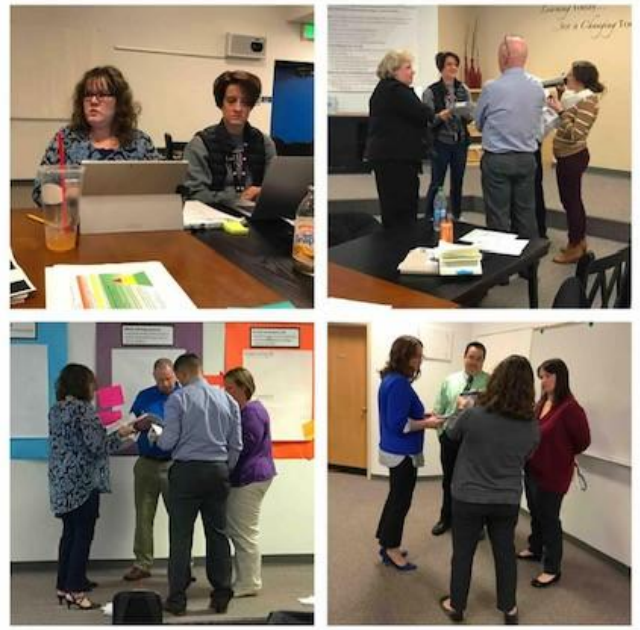
Where the Science of Improvement Meets the Heart of Leadership

PREFACE

LEADING EQUITY-FOCUSED SCHOOL AND DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT

- Systems that ensure every one succeeds
- Start with the local context
- Improve *with* people, not *for* people

Important learning and diving into data with OSD's leadership team on barriers that prevent EACH student from being READY - ABCs (Attendance, Behavior/discipline, & Course grades). This team is passionately committed!



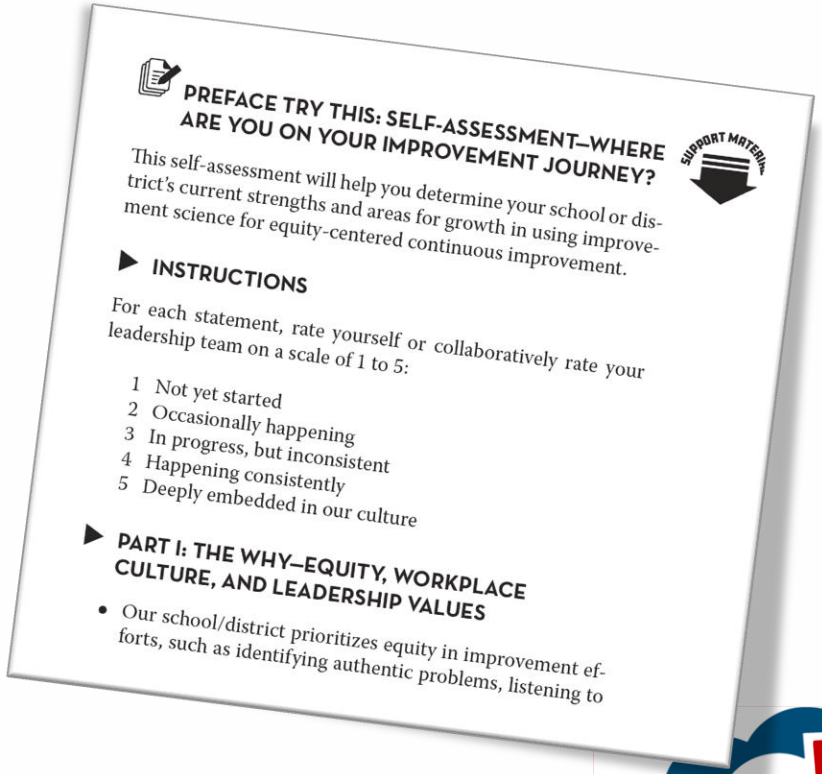
Preface Partners

In your own words:

- What's problem is the book addressing?
- Why does equity matter?

"Try this"

- What are your unit's strengths (Why, What, How)?
- Where is the greatest need for growth?
- Which chapter(s) will matter most for your work?



PREFACE TRY THIS: SELF-ASSESSMENT—WHERE ARE YOU ON YOUR IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY?

SUPPORT MATERIAL

This self-assessment will help you determine your school or district's current strengths and areas for growth in using improvement science for equity-centered continuous improvement.

INSTRUCTIONS

For each statement, rate yourself or collaboratively rate your leadership team on a scale of 1 to 5:

1 Not yet started
2 Occasionally happening
3 In progress, but inconsistent
4 Happening consistently
5 Deeply embedded in our culture

PART I: THE WHY—EQUITY, WORKPLACE CULTURE, AND LEADERSHIP VALUES

- Our school/district prioritizes equity in improvement efforts, such as identifying authentic problems, listening to

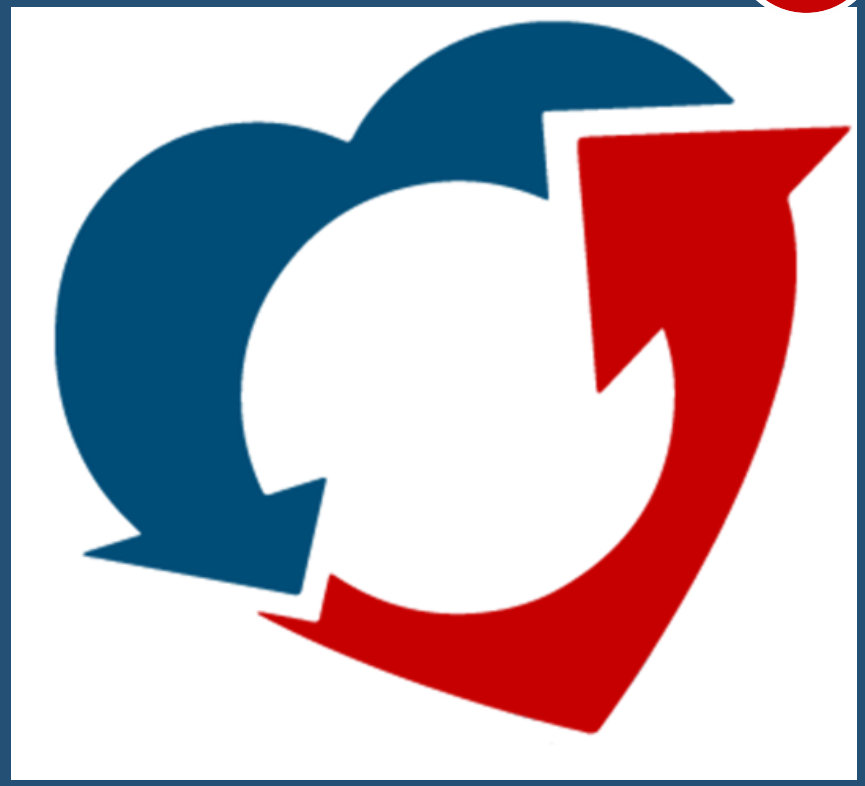
PREFACE

Preface

A continuous improvement stance means being dissatisfied with the status quo.

What is one inequitable outcome in your work that keeps you up at night?





Chapter 1

Introduction: Workplace Culture and Improvement Science

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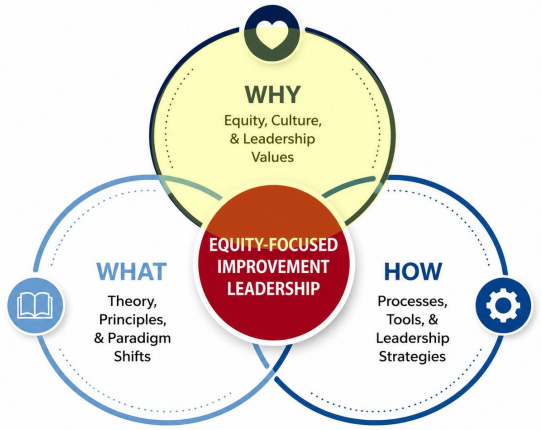

Where the Science of Improvement Meets the Heart of Leadership

CHAPTER 1

LEADING EQUITY-FOCUSED

SCHOOL AND DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT

- Collaborative, iterative problem-solving by understanding the system, testing change ideas, and scaling what works.
- Systems-thinking - Improving the system that produces the problem
- Coherence – Improvement at scale is part of our equity imperative

In District Leadership Team right now framing our Instructional Technology work around Improvement Science for continuous improvement! #LifeReady #AuthenticLearning



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Connecting WHY, WHAT, and HOW

Purpose + improvement strategy + conditions (culture)

CHAPTER 1

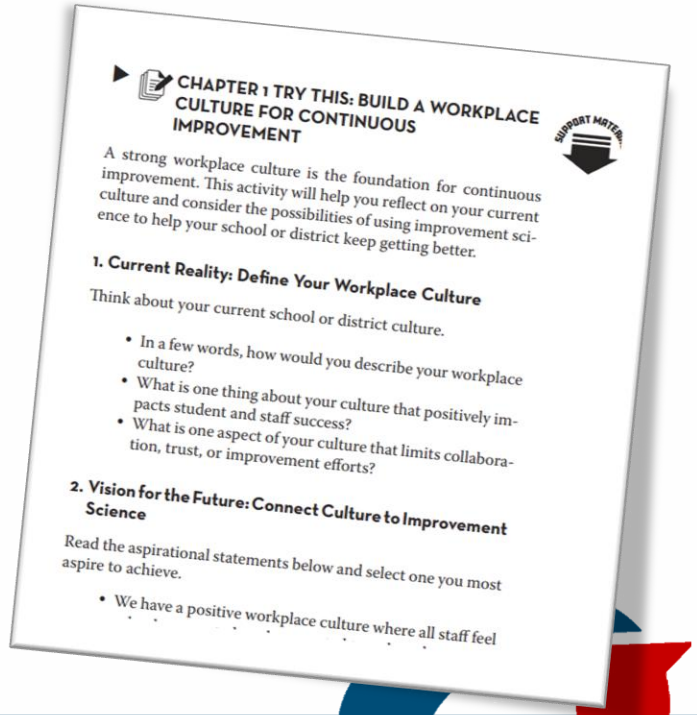
"We will shift from focusing solely on what leaders implement to how they create the conditions for staff to engage in meaningful, lasting change, all driven by their compelling, equity-focused why" (p. 10).

What connections have you observed or experienced between workplace culture and successful (or unsuccessful) improvement efforts? What influence did leadership have on that?

Chapter 1 "Try This"



1. Share your description of your unit's current culture.
2. What is your aspiration for your culture? Why?



CHAPTER 1 TRY THIS: BUILD A WORKPLACE CULTURE FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

SUPPORT MATERIAL

A strong workplace culture is the foundation for continuous improvement. This activity will help you reflect on your current culture and consider the possibilities of using improvement science to help your school or district keep getting better.

1. Current Reality: Define Your Workplace Culture

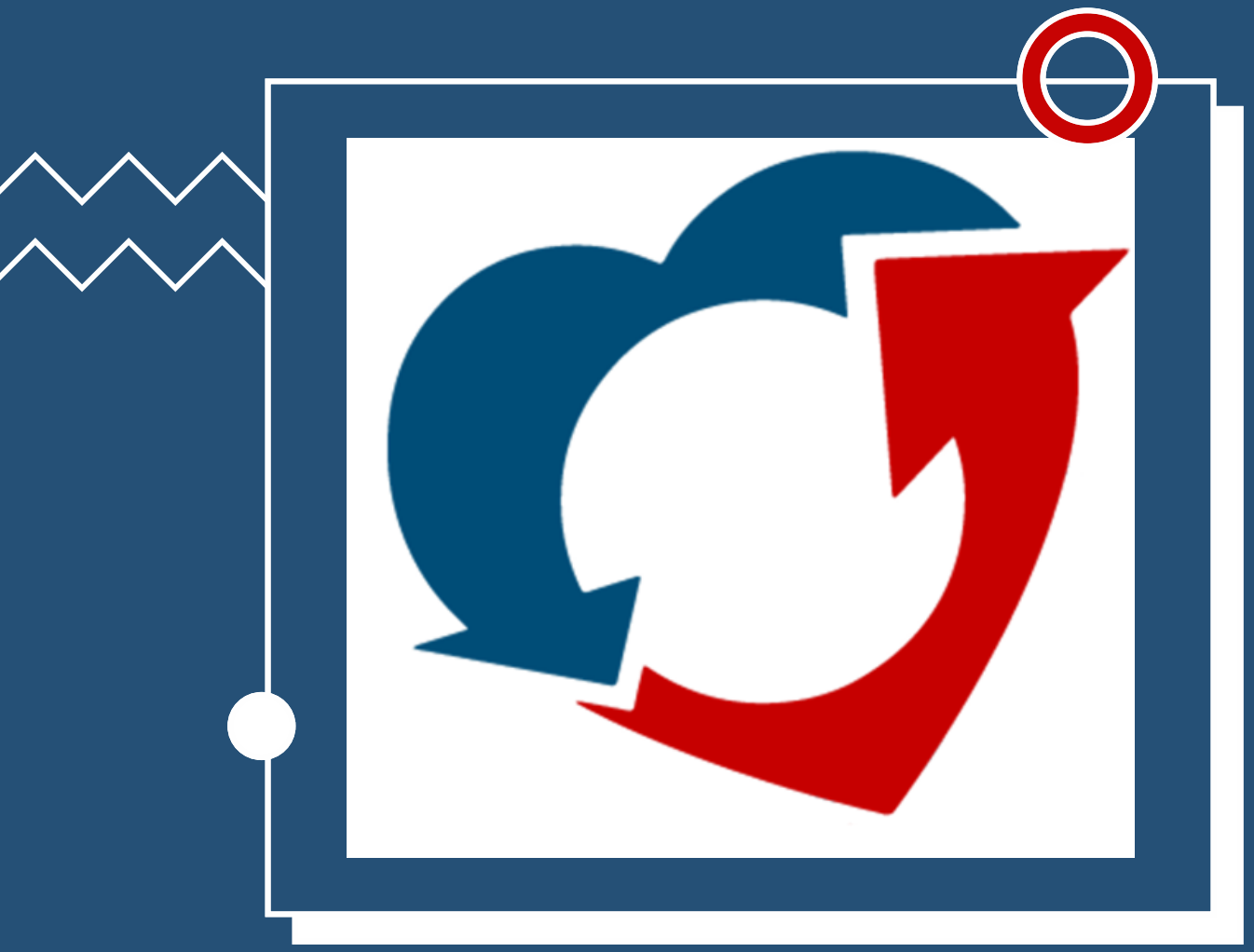
Think about your current school or district culture.

- In a few words, how would you describe your workplace culture?
- What is one thing about your culture that positively impacts student and staff success?
- What is one aspect of your culture that limits collaboration, trust, or improvement efforts?

2. Vision for the Future: Connect Culture to Improvement Science

Read the aspirational statements below and select one you most aspire to achieve.

- We have a positive workplace culture where all staff feel



Chapter 2

Meet Three (Educational) Leaders Who Use Improvement Science

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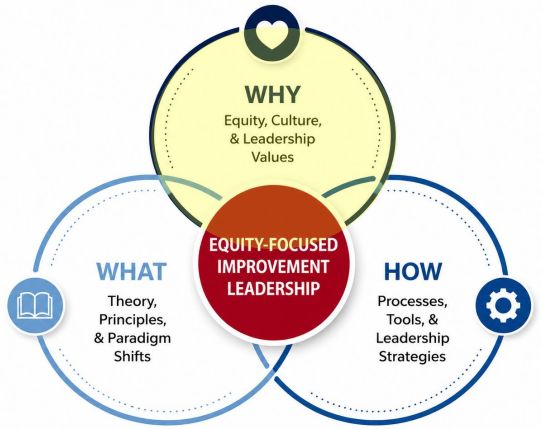
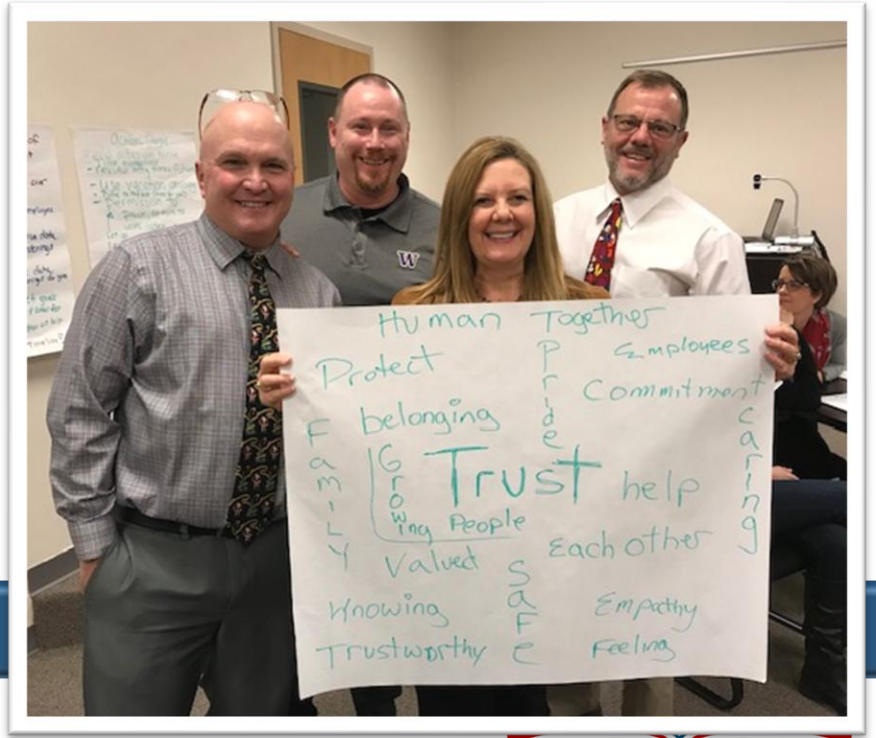


CHAPTER 2

Where the Science of Improvement Meets the Heart of Leadership

LEADING EQUITY-FOCUSED SCHOOL AND DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT

- Begins with *who* we are
- Turns vision into action by creating the conditions for improvement
- Learns from other leaders in the field



Who You Are As A Leader

CHAPTER 2

The leaders - Kyle, Melanie, and Shawn - shared their stories. Their stories communicated who they are as a leader (p. 19-24).

What resonated with you about the three leaders?

What's your story?

Leaders often need to introduce themselves in meetings.

- Private think time: Jot down your introduction (including your name, experience, current role)



Leaders in Action

CHAPTER 2

These three leaders had five common characteristics (p. 24-28):

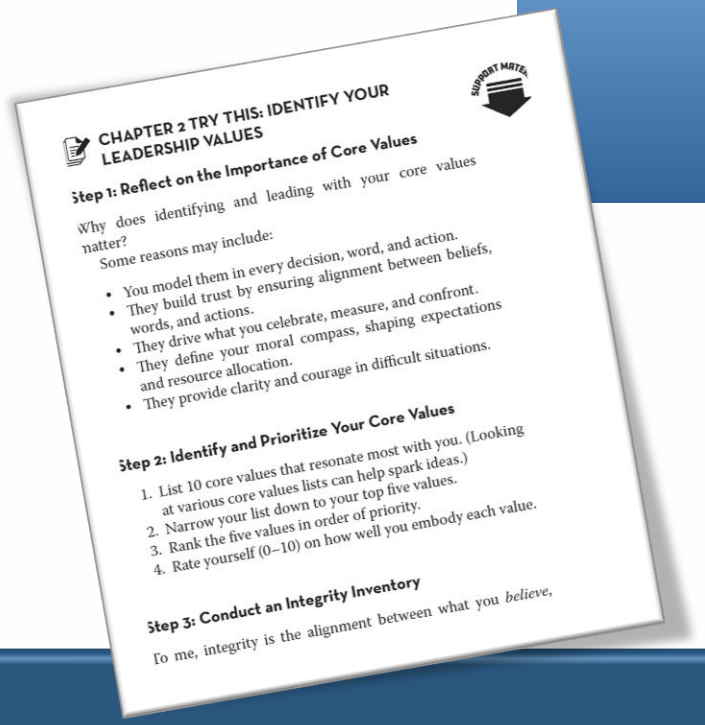
- Transforming culture
- Leading with equity
- Leading with vulnerability & reflection
- Thinking in systems and instruction
- Prioritizing collaboration

Which one are you most drawn to? Why?

The way you lead comes from what you value.

CHAPTER 2

Why does identifying and leading with your core values matter?



CHAPTER 2 TRY THIS: IDENTIFY YOUR LEADERSHIP VALUES

Step 1: Reflect on the Importance of Core Values

Why does identifying and leading with your core values matter?

Some reasons may include:

- You model them in every decision, word, and action.
- They build trust by ensuring alignment between beliefs, words, and actions.
- They drive what you celebrate, measure, and confront.
- They define your moral compass, shaping expectations and resource allocation.
- They provide clarity and courage in difficult situations.

Step 2: Identify and Prioritize Your Core Values

1. List 10 core values that resonate most with you. (Looking at various core values lists can help spark ideas.)
2. Narrow your list down to your top five values.
3. Rank the five values in order of priority.
4. Rate yourself (0–10) on how well you embody each value.

Step 3: Conduct an Integrity Inventory

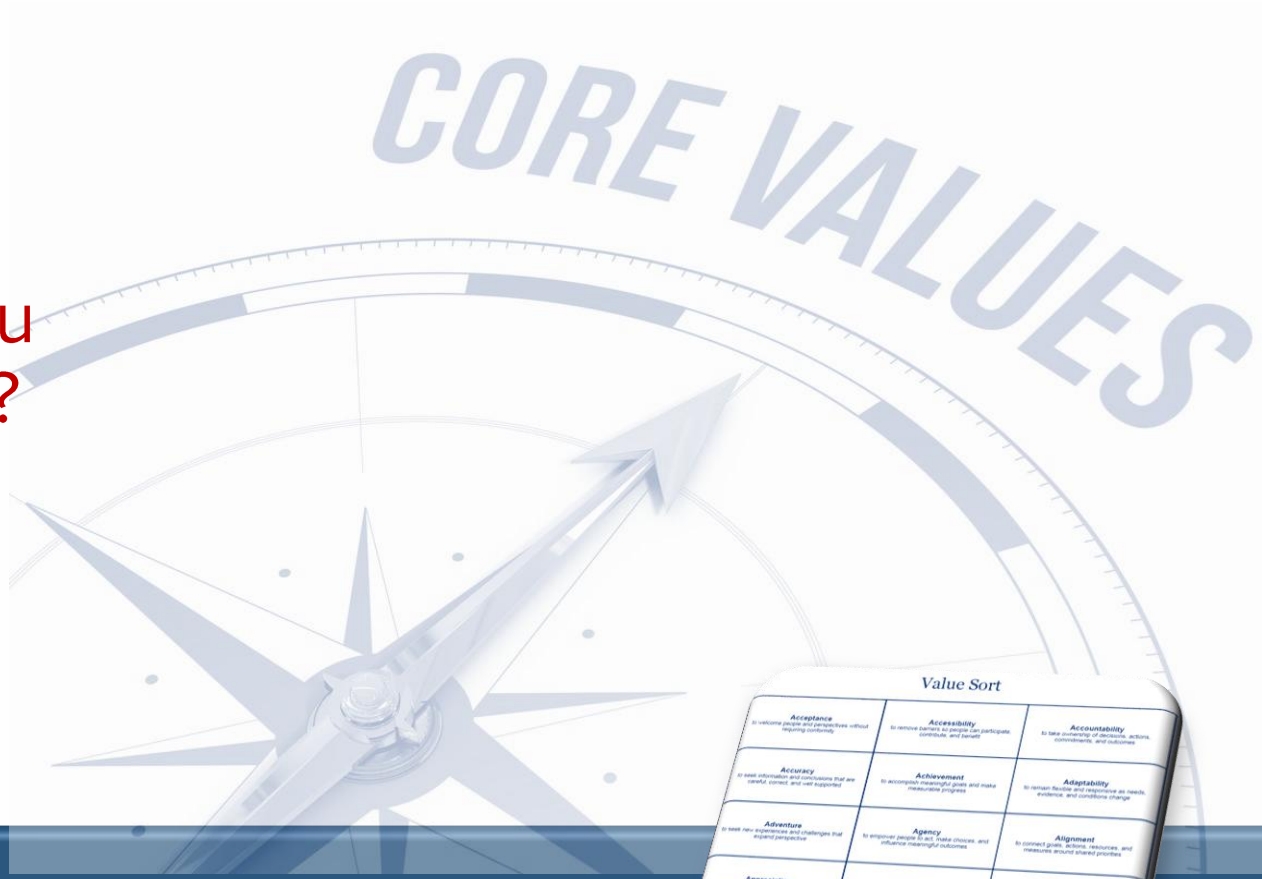
To me, integrity is the alignment between what you *believe*,

CHAPTER 2

Core Values

- List or star 10 core values
- Narrow to 5
- Rank them in order
- Rate them 0-10: How are you doing living out your values?

People are drawn to authenticity!



CHAPTER 2

Core Values and Integrity

Integrity:

Alignment between what we be*lieve* + *say* + *do*

What do your stated values look and sound like?

CHAPTER 2

Integrity Inventory

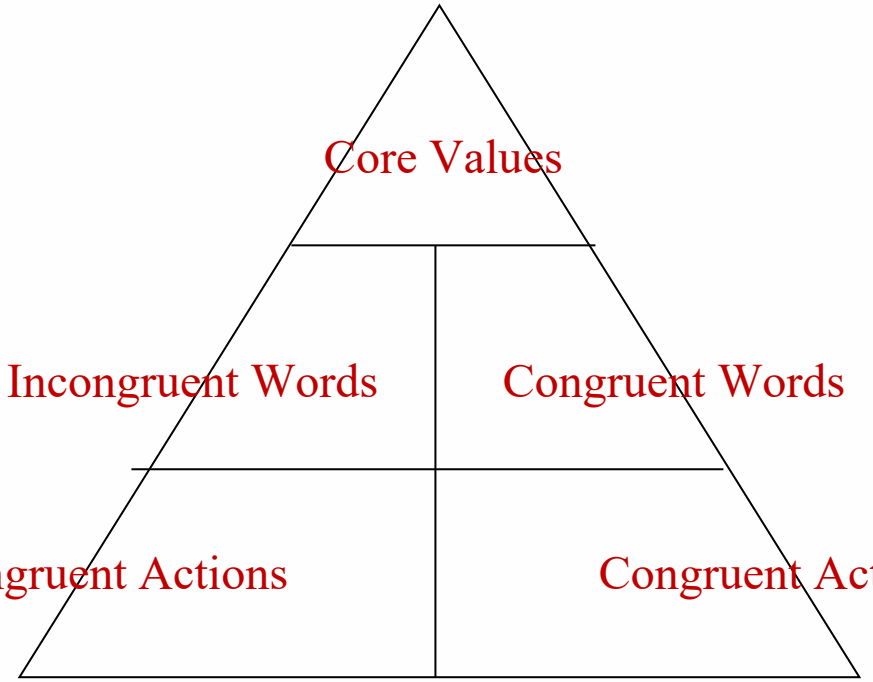
Believe

+

Say

+ -

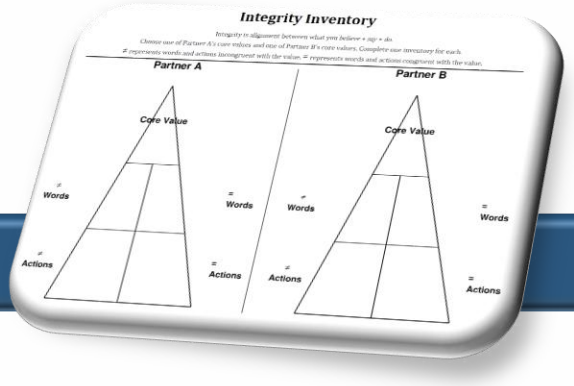
Do



+

Pick one of Partner A's core values and complete the integrity inventory.

Pick one of Partner B's core values and complete the integrity inventory.



CHAPTER 2

"You cannot achieve a value; you can only manifest it by acting in accordance with it. Your values not only tell you where to focus your efforts and energies but also provide you with a new source of motivation."

Steven C. Hayes



CHAPTER 2

Your Leadership Introduction

Our leaders reflected what they believe in their stories.

- Go back to your leadership introduction. Make sure your values are reflected.

You're at a leadership meeting or mixer.
Stand up and introduce yourself to someone in our group.

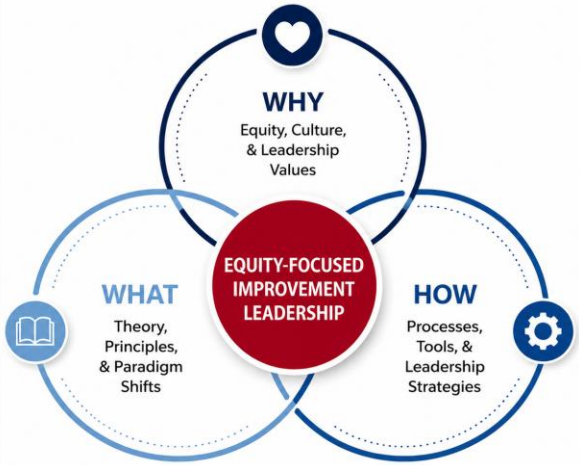
- Share what you do
- Share **why** you do it (your values)

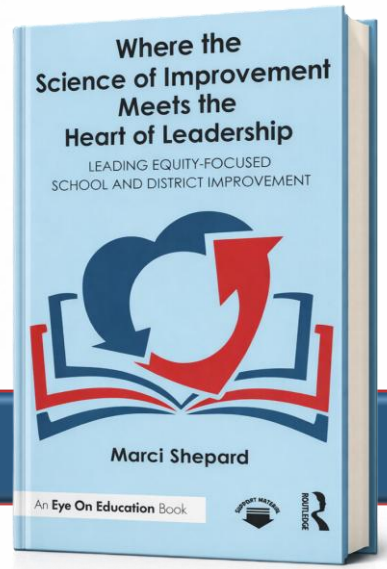


FEEDBACK?

QUESTIONS?

COMMENTS?





"Leaders shape culture. Culture fuels improvement. Equity ensures it matters."

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