

# Beyond Hope and Hard Work

School teams engaged in improvement efforts understand that this work is incredibly challenging. Improvement requires strategic and energetic leadership, consistent engagement of everyone at the school, trust between team members, and deliberate use of data-driven change management techniques.

Because instructional expertise is not sufficient to create lasting school improvement, our proven approach embeds instructional supports within a flexible framework for using data to ensure leadership can increase trust, manage through challenges, and build upon successes.



## The North Star

**Does everyone in your school share a concrete vision for what success looks like?**

If we asked your staff to describe what they would see in the classrooms and adult meeting spaces in your school once you have fulfilled this vision, would they all describe the same thing?



## The Roadmap

**Does everyone share the same beliefs about the priority work that will make this vision a reality?**

If we asked your staff to list the top three high-leverage initiatives that everyone in the school is focused on to improve student outcomes, would they all list the same things?



## The Navigation

**Are your school's structures, practices, and people set up to ensure success in achieving your vision?**

If we asked your staff how they know if they are on track to achieve your school's vision, would they all describe in similar ways how they use data to continuously learn and improve?

## Deeply Understanding Your Context

There are many great ideas in education, but they don't all work everywhere. Ensuring that every student has the opportunity to learn requires adapting best practices for implementation within specific school contexts. We begin every engagement by conducting an initial landscape analysis to understanding what you're doing and to clarify what's working and what isn't. This enables us to identify which tools, strategies, and actions are the most appropriate to your situation and mission.

## Supporting Instructional Improvements

Keeping aligned curriculum and effective instruction at the center of school improvement efforts anchors powerful change in the daily instructional practice of teachers. This, in turn, drives improvements in student engagement and learning. Successful change requires uninterrupted focus on teaching and learning. The foundation of our instructional supports is ongoing coaching and professional learning with a priority on high-fidelity use of aligned instructional materials.

## Building Your Capacity to Manage for Impact

Driving the speed and level of improvement, as well as growing school capacity to sustain the change in the long-run, must be a deliberate part of your plan. Our suite of change management supports include comprehensive leadership coaching, design and implementation of tailored data-driven continuous improvement practices, and facilitation of improvement networks of teachers and school leaders to accelerate the pace of learning and change.

We provide the tools, urgency, focus, and best practices to help school leaders bring their teams with them through the hard work of creating a shared vision, focusing on powerful approaches to meet their goals, and building the structures, practices, and capacity that will result in lasting improvement.

### Contact Us

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## Supporting School Improvement

Significant gains in district and school achievement happens when educators intentionally improve instruction. Yet, in the high stakes and highly visible school accountability environment, sustainable change requires more than just rolling out the right teaching initiatives. Turning initial shifts in practice into lasting improvements requires deliberate focus on change management and on growing an improvement culture. We support schools to reach their goals by:

Deeply understanding  
your context

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### DEEPLY UNDERSTANDING YOUR CONTEXT

**We begin every engagement by conducting an initial landscape analysis to understanding what you're doing and to clarify what's working and what isn't. This enables us to see your strengths and challenges clearly, and clarify which tools, strategies, and actions are the most appropriate to your situation and mission.**

During the landscape analysis, we collect quantitative and qualitative data via surveys, existing data set analysis, and stakeholder interviews and focus groups (including with teachers and students). Our purpose is to capture the intersecting elements of assessments, student performance data, instructional materials, instructional practices, curricula, and school and district structures that support collaboration and professional learning.

We work with you to use this picture of the local context, strengths, and challenges to select high-leverage strategies to improve instruction, school climate, and manage change with the ultimate goal of increasing student achievement. As part of strategy identification, we work with key school stakeholders to determine initial metrics we will use as school progress indicators and facilitate the school team to plan for the launch of continuous improvement routines.

Through this learning process, we come to agreement on the specific supports necessary for success, align our expectations, and frame the continuous improvement strategies and timeline for the work ahead.

### SUPPORTING INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

**Successful change requires uninterrupted focus on teaching and learning. The foundation of our instructional supports is ongoing coaching and job-embedded professional learning with a priority on deep understanding of college- and career-ready standards and use of best practices in improving alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum.**

#### TEACHER SUPPORTS

Given the degree of difficulty in making the shifts in practice required by the state's college and career-ready standards, teachers need much more support than one-time or even periodic training. Understanding the standards and how to apply them in practice is an ongoing process for all educators. Lack of progress on fully implementing the standards is usually a result of systemic school and district-wide practices, not individual teachers who "don't get it."

Our teachers supports are provided by educators who have seen them in action and who will support with them on improving their practice. With guidance from national curriculum experts, we work with teacher teams to (a) identify where they feel they need the most help, (b) leverage existing PLCs or other collaborative structures to conduct data-driven learning and practice opportunities, and (c) establish data-driven feedback loops to determine if the planning adjustments are translating into instructional practice changes that lead to improved learning.

#### INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP COACHING

Working with district and school leaders, our experts provide on-site and virtual targeted supports to build sustainable change through the lense of instructional leadership. Our team provides tailored coaching for instructional leaders in the school on the most critical aspects of academic improvement: focusing on instructional priorities; aligning curriculum, instruction, and practice to meet rigorous standards; providing meaningful feedback to teachers; and engaging families as partners to increase student learning.

## BUILDING YOUR TEAM'S CAPACITY TO MANAGE FOR IMPACT

**Deliberately managing for impact matters in driving the speed and quality of improvement, as well as growing school capacity to sustain the change in the long-run. Our change management supports include: change management coaching for leaders, design and implementation of tailored, data-driven continuous improvement practices, and facilitation of learning networks of teachers and school leaders to accelerate the pace of learning and change.**

### CHANGE MANAGEMENT COACHING FOR LEADERS

Struggling districts and schools frequently adopt new initiatives which over promise and under deliver. Often these efforts fail because school and district leaders lack the support and structures to carefully manage for high-quality, sustainable implementation. To transform low performing schools and drive sustainability, school leadership teams can be coached to adopt the skills and habits of strong performance managers. Our school-specific coaching for principals and other building leaders focuses on the critical academic vision-setting, alignment, prioritization, collaborative engagement of stakeholders, data use for improvement, and lead learner roles they must play to improve student outcomes.



#### FOCUSED LEADERSHIP

*How you face in the same direction*

- Clear, Shared Vision
- Actionable Priorities
- Organizational Readiness
- Removing Barriers



#### PEOPLE-CENTERED PRACTICES

*How you work together*

- Stakeholder Input
- Communications Practices
- Distributed Leadership
- Organizational Collaboration



#### LEARNING CULTURE

*How you learn, adjust and improve along the way*

- Enable Reflection and Learning
- Growing Expertise
- Data Access
- Data Use

### DATA-CENTERED COLLABORATION FOR IMPROVEMENT

Continuous improvement relies on a collection of mindsets: aversion to blame, unwillingness to accept the status quo, belief in educator ability, respect for truth in the form of evidence, and seeing failure as an intrinsic part of learning. Data drives continuous improvement, but the data we use in education is always about people and is therefore often messy, incomplete, and complex. Using data in collaborative spaces is critical to creating focus, aligning efforts and driving progress, but it is not easy and is often uncomfortable (especially when herculean efforts are not achieving results).

Additionally, no one data source provides all the necessary information to enable strong decisions, so teams must triangulate a picture of what is happening using multiple qualitative and quantitative data sources. Formative data we may use with schools include: student work analysis, interim/benchmark assessment results, grades, attendance, suspensions, reflection surveys, and classroom observation data.

We provide data preparation, analysis, and visualization supports, facilitation of data-driven improvement sessions, and explicit coaching of teacher leaders to build their capacity for managing change with data. Our comprehensive approach to gathering and interpreting data for decision-making fosters essential conversations about effectively managing high-stakes implementation for impact.

### CROSS-SCHOOL LEARNING NETWORKS

The power of networks is in accelerating learning and building shared accountability for results in service of deepening our collective impact. Network participants build relationships while inspiring each other to confront difficult challenges and believe impact is possible, acting as thought-partners in problem-solving with one another, sharing ideas and models for different ways to do the work, and testing ideas with role-alike colleagues. Learning and scaling often happens faster and more effectively when groups are engaged in similar work across different contexts and they come together to systematically compare and share experiences and outcomes.

By bringing similarly situated schools together in cohorts, our process expedites the identification and replication of positive outliers, norms the difficulty of the work across schools to strengthen participant resilience, and teases out common, recurring issues that require district-level involvement for their solution.

**Our supports transform the ways in which principals lead, teachers deliver instruction, and schools collaborate within and across buildings around implementation of improvement strategies.**