

# Leading in Four Dimensions

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Developing Organizational Capabilities for  
Collaborative, Continuous Improvement

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The Mary Ann Remick Leadership Program

University of Notre Dame

# Dedication

Robert Owen Murphy  
(1926-2023)

- University of Notre Dame '51
- Special Agent, FBI
- Lector, Basilica of the Sacred Heart
- South Bend resident



## Today's Talk

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*How can organizational partners work together to **nurture and sustain** collaborative continuous improvement towards **strong equity**?*

- Collaboration as the Heart of Continuous Improvement
- Developing Collaborative Capabilities through Improvement Partnerships
- Leading in Four Dimensions and the Fourth Dimension of Continuous Improvement

# Spotlighting Systemic Inequities

## From 'Brutal Audit' to 'Salutary Failure'

*The ability to deal with a crisis situation is largely dependent on the structures that have been developed before the chaos arrives.*

Patrick Lagadec, 1993, p. 54

***Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets.***

Paul Batalden, Institute of Healthcare Improvement





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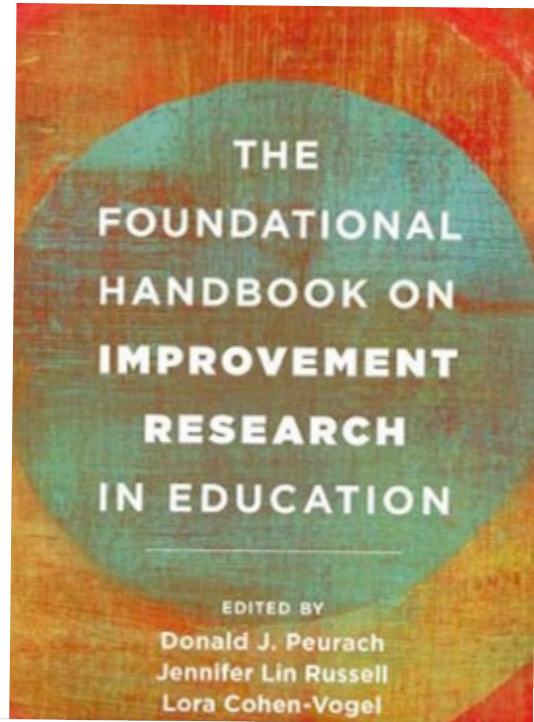
# The Start of the Road – Collaboration as *Necessity*

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**Strong democracy** requires collaboration among diverse stakeholders to first recognize and then confront the reproduction of inequities through the everyday structural and systemic aspects of schools, school systems, and the society in which these have come to be embedded. (*Barber, 1984*)

**Strong equity** “*acknowledges the complex and intersecting historical, economic, and social systems that create inequalities*” (*Cochran Smith et al., 2017, p. 581*).





## Section I Introduction

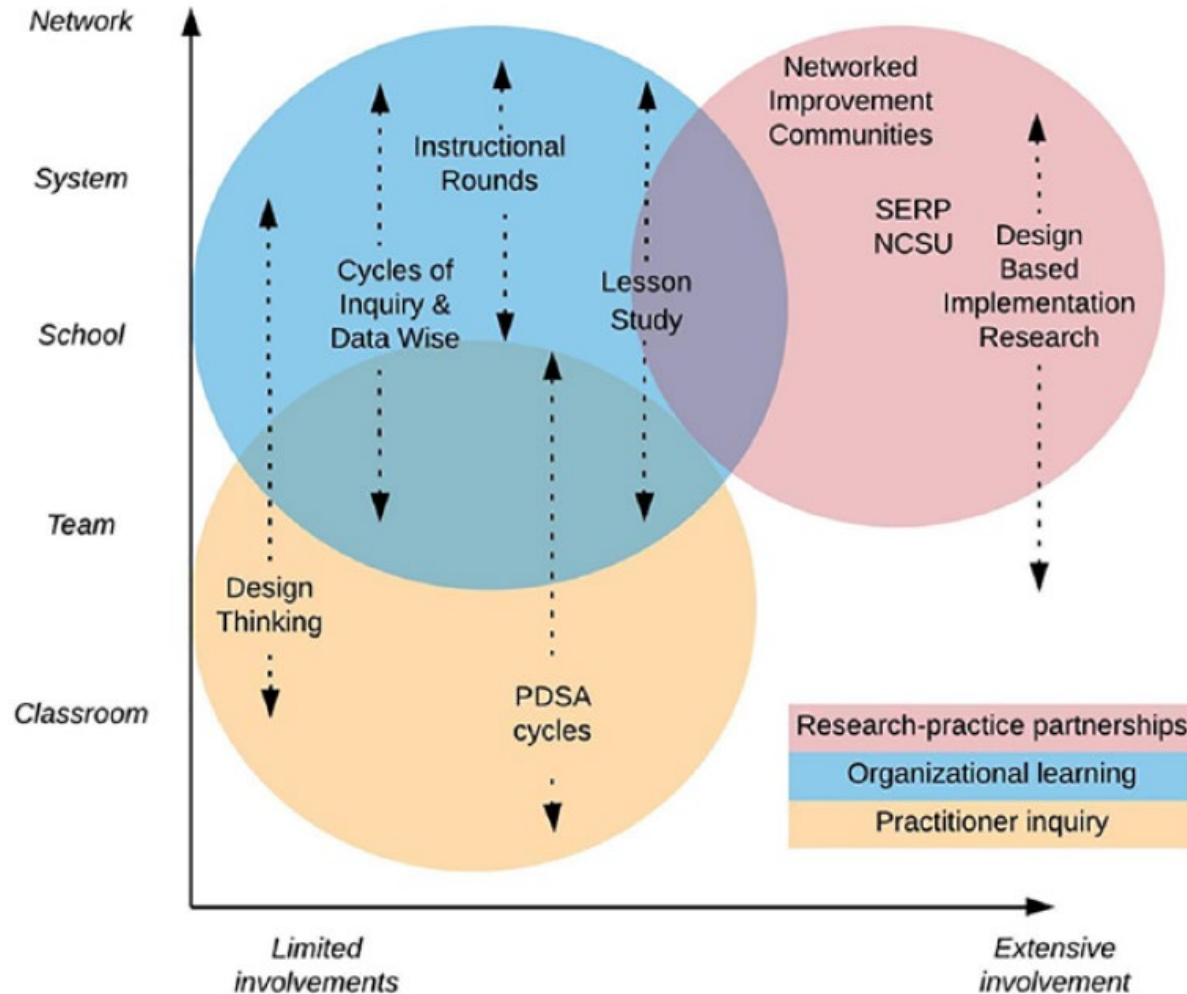
FOUNDATIONS OF IMPROVEMENT  
RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

*David Eddy-Spicer and William R. Penuel*



# Collaborative Continuous Improvement in Education Today

Typical level at which the method focuses



## ***Design-based Implementation Research***

e.g., Fishman et al., 2013

## ***Community-engaged Research***

e.g., Bang et al., 2015

## ***Social Design Experiments***

e.g., Gutierrez et al., 2020

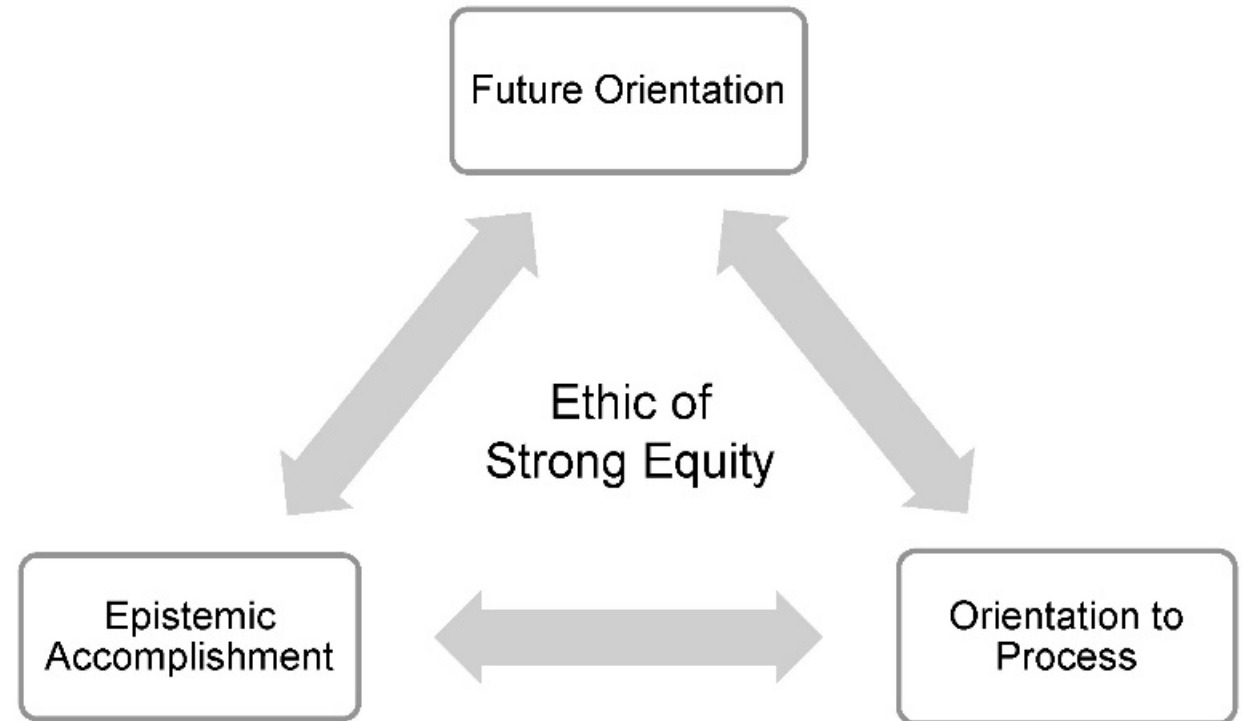
## ***Networked Improvement Communities***

e.g., Russell et al., 2017

Figure source: Yurkofsky et al., 2020, p. 407

Equity  
Grounded  
Collaborative  
Continuous  
Improvement

*How can organizational partners work together to nurture and sustain collaborative continuous improvement towards **strong equity**?*



***Accomplishing Meaningful Equity***

(Eddy-Spicer & Gomez, 2022)



# Core Principles of Collaborative Continuous Improvement

- **“What” - Technical**
  - Formal methods of producing, using, and refining practical knowledge
- **“Where” - Practical**
  - Enacted in local contexts to address local opportunities, needs, and problems
- **“How” – Organizational**
  - Enacted in community through inclusive structures that bring together diverse actors & knowledge
- **“Why” – Cultural**
  - Anchored in norms of *appreciation, criticality, and equity*  
(adapted from Peurach, 2024)

# Equity Grounded Collaborative Continuous Improvement

*How can organizational partners work together to nurture and sustain collaborative continuous improvement towards **strong equity?***

## SYSTEM CAPABILITIES

Infrastructuring

*...activities that aim to redesign components, relations, and routines of schools and districts that influence what takes place in classrooms.*

(Penuel, 2017)

## COORDINATION CAPABILITIES

Co-developing Power

through horizontal relations of authority  
*The most essential work of the leader is to create more leaders.*

(Follett, 1957)



## SOCIALIZATION CAPABILITIES

Building Community & Identity

*... relational trust built on sustained connections and shared identity as members of a group*

(Bryk & Schneider, 2002)

## MORAL & ETHICAL CAPABILITIES

Envisioning Possible Futures

*...the moral commitment to center fairness and justice in the work and goals of collaborative continuous improvement.*

(Peurach, 2024)



**Carnegie Foundation**  
for the Advancement of Teaching

**iLEAD**

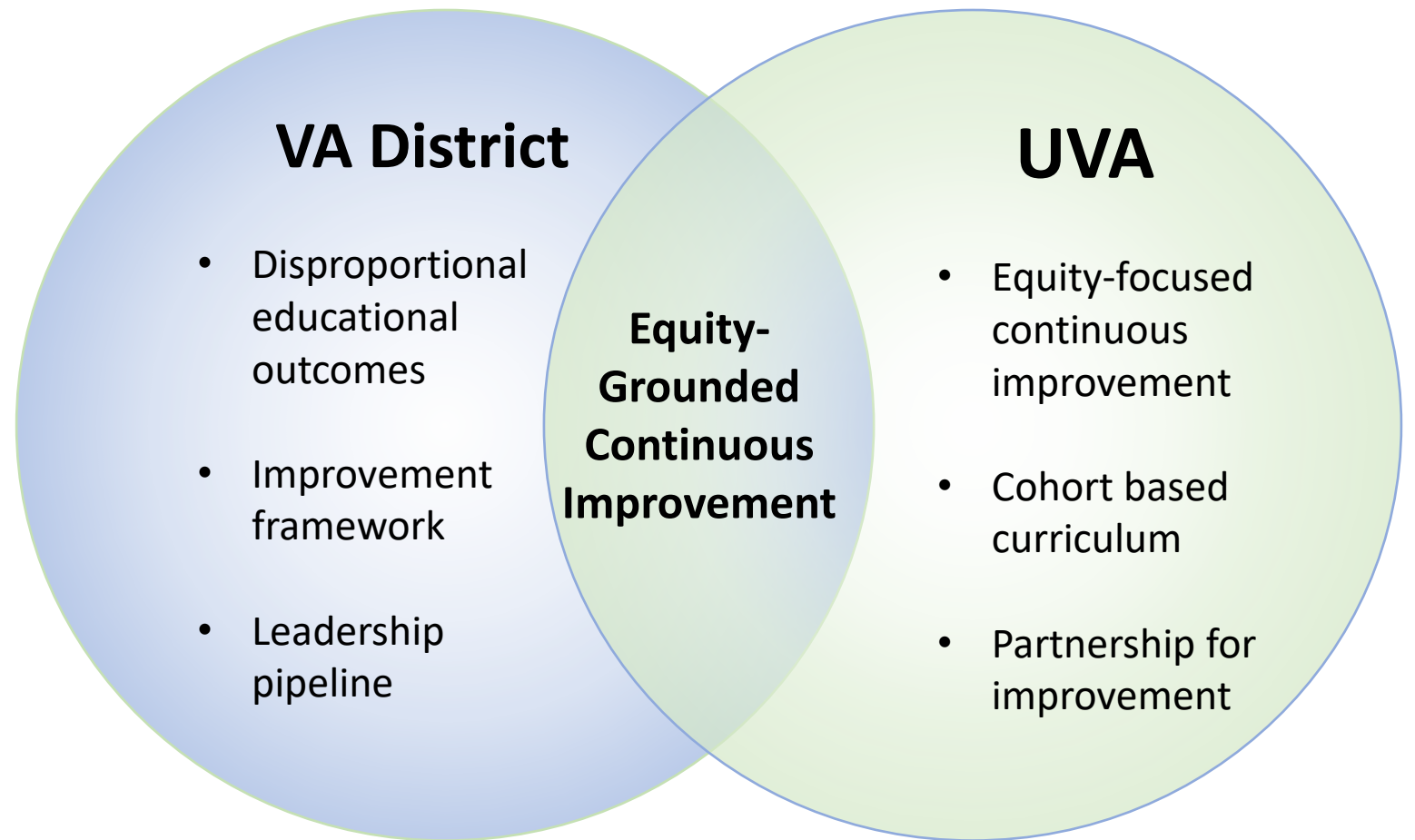
## Developing Capabilities: District-University Improvement Partnership Network

*The Improvement Leadership Education and Development (iLEAD) network: 13 district-university partnerships committed to the use of **improvement science to develop leaders, address local problems of practice, and promote equitable educational opportunities** and outcomes for all students.*



## Four Dimensions: Equity-Oriented *Collaborative Capabilities*

*How can  
**organizational  
partners** work  
together to nurture  
and sustain  
collaborative  
continuous  
improvement towards  
**strong equity?***



# Stakeholder Engagement

Support for Adaptive Change



Evidenced Informed Learning

# Stakeholder Mindset

Instructional Infrastructure,  
Support & Accountability Systems

**Leader Prep  
& Ongoing Development:**  
Integrated Improvement Processes,  
Team & Individual Coaching

Classroom & Teacher Supports



# Third Grade Improvement Cycle

- 1. Identify the Problem** A small number of students from each of 4 classes are not meeting behavioral expectations. These students impede instructional time, therefore instructional pacing is delayed.
- 2. Gather Data** Teacher shares: layers of reinforcement (whole class, small group, individual)

Target Area (Data: Who, What, When)	Measurable Goal	Commitment Level (1-5)	Action Steps	When
So much noise all the time!	Crystal Clear Expectations (Right before task)	5	Write out expectations for each task	Tomorrow
So hardy!			Get them to repeat	
off task	Follow up with		Praise (clip chart) Make Corrections	



Aspiring School Leader – Blair J., M.Ed.  
*Teacher Leader*



# Central Office Leader – Tinkhani W., Ed.D. *Director of School Improvement*

## Supports to Schools...



### "Re-imagined" SIIP Meetings

- Greatest success - Staff from the following departments have committed to attending the meetings:
  - Special Educ. Dept
  - Social Worker
  - Coordinator of Equity and Diversity
  - Curriculum Development & Support



### Division Level Leaders Supporting the SIIP Process

- Provides an opportunity for staff to hear about challenges and successes at the division level
- Office Hours
- Specialists
- All schools receive feedback after each SIIP: Reflections And Next Steps

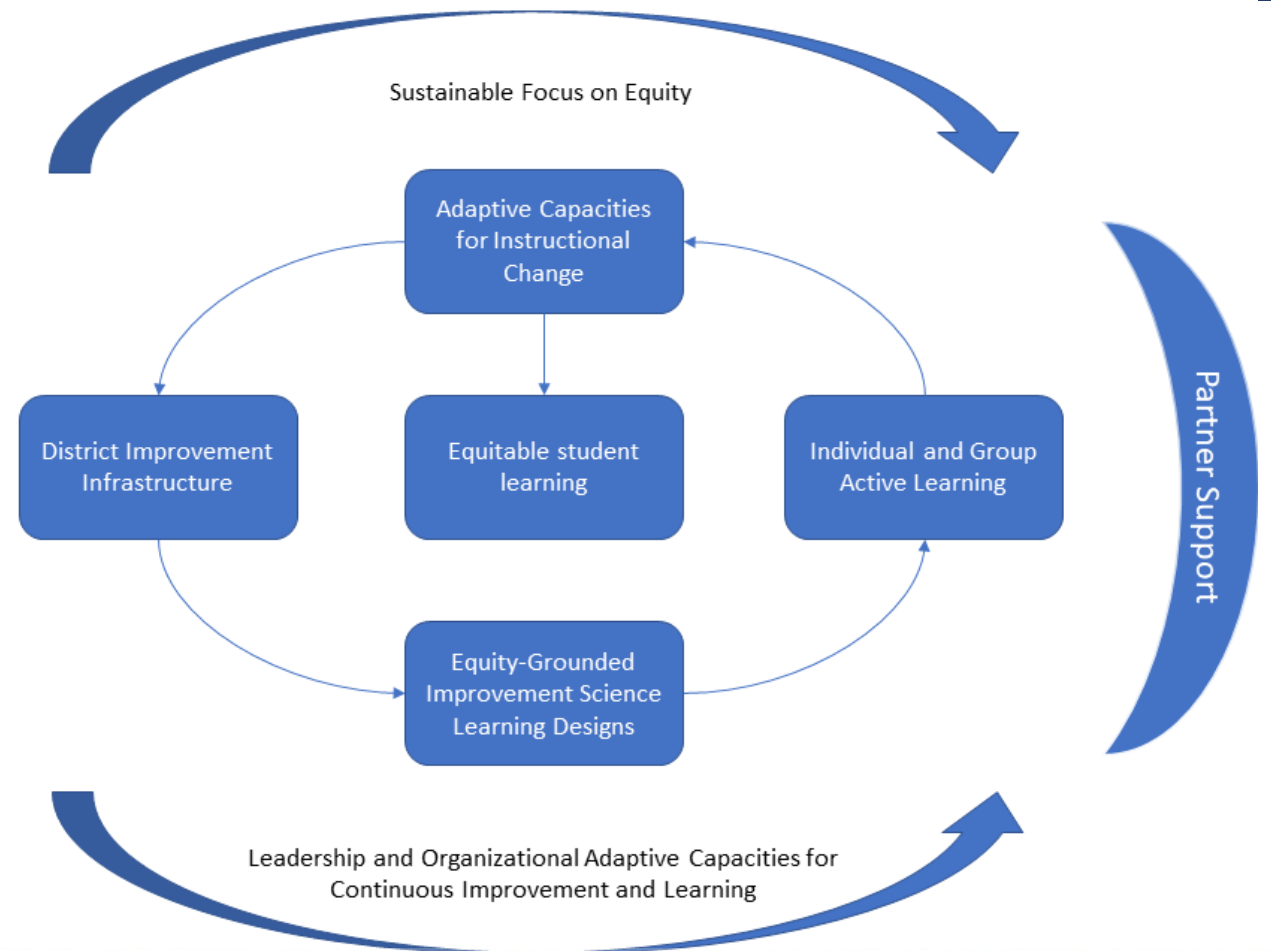


### Teaming with Specialists - targeted supports

- CD & S Content Specialists
- Goal 2: Students with disabilities or other subgroups; Dept of Special Education
- Professional Learning - EL Supports; T
- 1 Instruction, etc
- Reflections - supporting learning walk buildings; attending planning sessions; faculty meetings, SIIP specific goal meetings



# System Leader – Thomas T., Ed.D. *Deputy Superintendent*



*Assumptions:*

- a) focus on equity; b) embrace of improvement science; c) emphasis on active learning;*
- d) enacting short cycle inquiry; and e) external partner support*

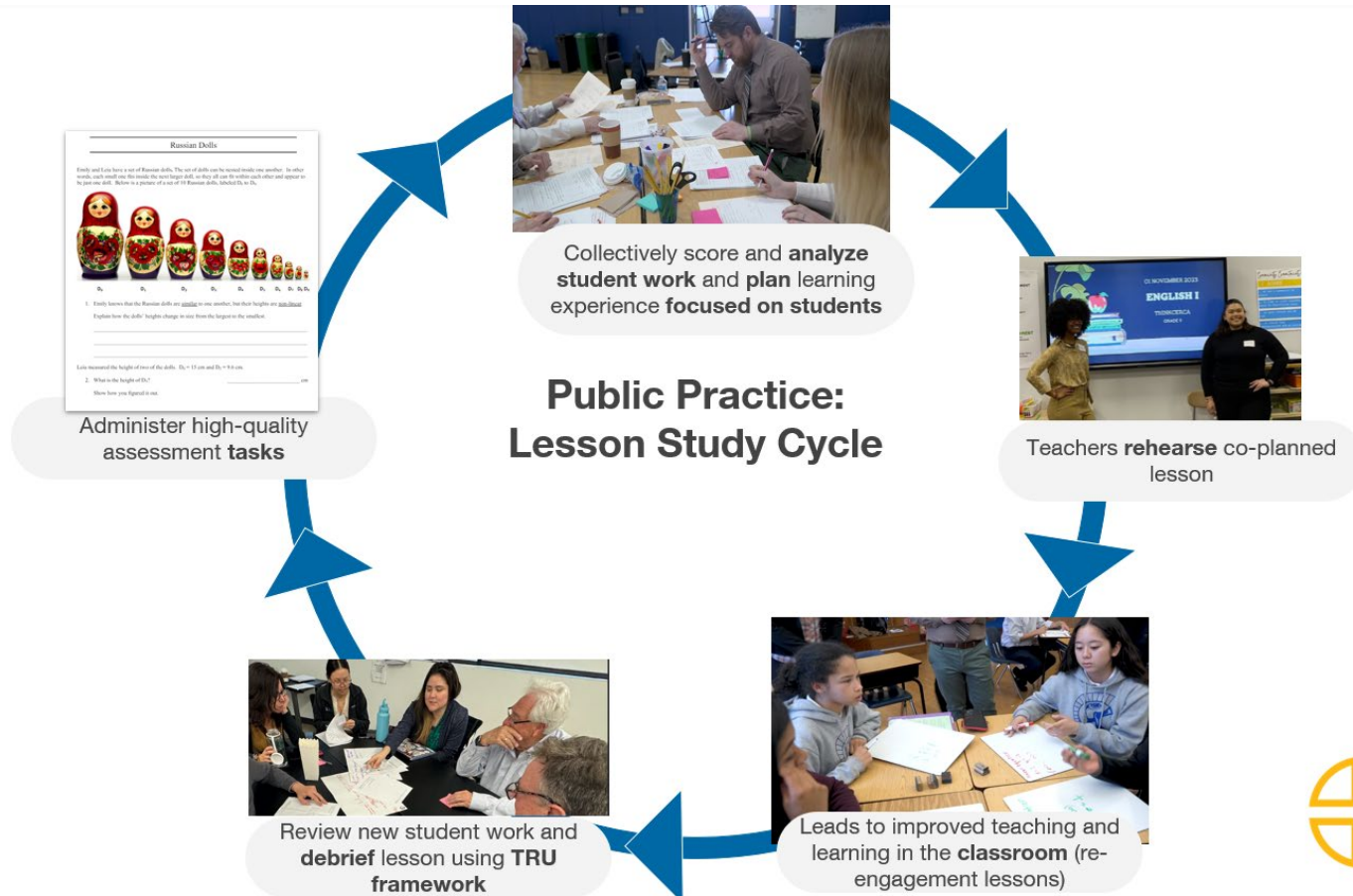
# Developing Collaborative Capability in Four Dimensions

	<b>System <i>Infrastructuring</i></b>	<b>Coordination <i>Co-developing Power</i></b>	<b>Socialization <i>Community &amp; Identity</i></b>	<b>Moral &amp; Ethical <i>Envisioning Futures</i></b>
<b><i>Teacher Leader</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-creating the tools and routines for carrying out MTSS with integrity in classrooms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convening colleagues and learning from salutary failure</li> <li>• Sharing expertise with university faculty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating teacher community</li> <li>• Building identity as improvement leaders at school level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocating for equity and social justice at the school level</li> </ul>
<b><i>Central Office Leader</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resourcing local experiments</li> <li>• Identifying positive deviants</li> <li>• Building systems to spread change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-developing power with teachers and local leaders</li> <li>• Determining research agenda with university faculty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating community among principal supervisors</li> <li>• Building identity as improvement leaders at district level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocating for equity and social justice at the district level</li> </ul>
<b><i>System Leader</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing policy and formal structures (e.g., MoU; Portrait of a Graduate)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating district leadership pathways</li> <li>• Crafting policy w/ state leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing community of practice with university &amp; state colleagues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embracing ‘brutal audit’ and lessons from salutary failures</li> <li>• Provoking colleagues to action</li> </ul>



# The Fourth Dimension?

## Cristo Rey Network Learning HUBs



# Developing Collaborative Capabilities

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- Building collaborative capabilities for partnership is essential to the work of improvement.
- Developing capabilities entails braiding across organizations as well as across levels within your organization.
- The fourth dimension, moral and ethical capabilities, provides a foundation for all others when nurturing capacity for strong equity.





# Building *Your* Collaborative Capabilities

- Start with a “coalition of the willing”
- Start with an openness to give-and-take in developing a working relationship
- Start by identifying what you hope to learn from each other
- ***Start small and keep braiding***

adapted from Penuel & Gallagher, 2017



# Help Develop *Our* Collective Collaborative Capabilities

towards an “Improvement Movement”



Transforming Education in an  
Interconnected World

- [\*Transforming Education Series\*](#)
- [Improvement Scholars Network](#)



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and HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

# Thank You! & Questions?

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