RESETTING THE PACE OF EDUCATION REFORM:
Lessons of Continuous Improvement

Partnering with Commonwealth schools and districts focused on continuous learning and improving student outcomes has had a profound impact on how the Rennie Center thinks about effective and sustainable change. This knowledge has guided the creation of Rennie's Change Management Framework, a rigorous, structured approach to planning and implementing district and school improvement strategies. The Rennie Center's Change Management Framework outlines a set of steps that teams of educators can use to manage their own improvement processes. The Framework is organized around two key ideas:

1. **Defining the purpose and approach (the "what"):** Teams must first have clarity about the reason for embarking on any reform strategy by articulating the problem that they are trying to address and by defining success metrics. Once these critical pieces are confirmed, the team must select practices or interventions that will address the problem and help them reach their intended outcomes.

2. **Determining the methods for achieving goals (the "how"):** After clarifying the purpose, goal, and potential approaches for improvement, the team must delineate how they plan to lead, support, test, continually learn from, and refine implementation.

By bringing together the **what** and the **how**, the Change Management Framework is intended to help teams design and maintain effective improvement strategies resulting in sustainable education reform.

THE **WHAT**

PRINCIPLE 1: Defining a Problem of Practice
Identify and prioritize a shared challenge, investigating the underlying causes and establishing a common understanding of the need for change.

PRINCIPLE 2: Planning for Outcomes
Define quantifiable outcomes aligned with the problem of practice and develop interim measures to track progress.

PRINCIPLE 3: Identify a Potential Intervention
Investigate both research-informed practices and effective local practices to select a strategy to move toward desired outcomes.

THE **HOW**

PRINCIPLE 4: Trusting and Committed Team
Bring together diverse team members who are responsible for implementing changes.

PRINCIPLE 5: Effective Operations
Establish effective operations (such as financial and human resources) to execute improvement efforts effectively.

PRINCIPLE 6: Continuous Learning
Engage in a systematic method to integrate, sustain, and scale-up interventions.

While the Change Management Framework outlines a method for districts and schools interested in planning and implementing change, it can also be used as a lens for understanding and documenting other local change processes. The three local examples highlighted in this year's Condition of Education report provide a window into improvement efforts happening across the Commonwealth. By examining the steps leaders and practitioners in each of these communities have taken to customize a change process, the Rennie Center hopes to pinpoint the conditions required to integrate effective improvement strategies into local change processes.

For more information on the change management process, please see renniecenter.org/change-management.

For the latest data on student progress in Massachusetts, visit our data dashboard: renniecenter.org/data.

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A Local Lens on Improvement: Learning from Practitioners

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The examples highlighted below each outline one key component of a local improvement effort. For a full description of these local improvement efforts, please see the Action Guide.

Defining an Actionable Problem of Practice: A community-wide approach to addressing school readiness.

Developing a clear definition of an actionable problem of practice is the first step in mapping out an improvement plan. Strengthening the transition between preK and kindergarten enabled early educators in Springfield to identify specific contributing causes to the community-wide gap in readiness and explore factors that could drive improvement.

CONSIDER, HAS YOUR TEAM:

- Developed a clear understanding of the need for change by identifying common challenges through careful analysis?
- Defined and agreed on the underlying causes to build consensus?
- Articulated a sense of ownership for the challenge in an actionable problem of practice statement?

To learn more about Springfield's problem of practice, see pages 6-9.

Planning for Outcomes: A statewide, multi-community approach that strengthens the secondary-to-postsecondary transition.

Visualizing what success should look like provides teams with a clear direction, enabling them to plot out intermediate steps and make real-time adjustments when benchmarks aren't reached. By reflecting on local and state-wide indicators, 100 Males to College sites purposefully identify and set targets for program and student outcomes.

CONSIDER, HAS YOUR TEAM:

- Planned for outcomes by articulating quantifiable, measurable program goals?
- Identified measurement techniques to monitor and determine progress?
- Fostered local partnerships to build capacity and tools that can document progress?

To learn more about 100 Males to College planning for outcomes, see pages 14-18.

Identify a Potential Intervention: A school-wide adoption to improve teaching and learning.

In response to an expanding and diversifying student body, staff at the Henderson K-12 school in Dorchester sought to identify a clear and coordinated approach to teaching and learning that provided a shared language, set of tools, and expectations.

CONSIDER, HAS YOUR TEAM:

- Built a common notion of local context and needs among educators?
- Identified programmatic components that align with best practice?
- Considered the "fit" between programmatic components and the local environment?

To learn more about the Henderson's intervention, see pages 10-13.

THE STATE SUPPORTS

Each of these local examples also provide important insight into how the state—by supporting communities in doing the hard work of continuous learning—can bolster local change processes. Here are some strategies that pinpoint how:

- Focus on linking systems with practical tools and resources to connect communities.
- Enhance incentives for shared professional development to encourage community-level coherence.
- Foster agency collaboration to address child outcomes and strengthen the school-community landscape.

- Increase professional development and learning for all educators to support the fidelity of implementation of strategies.
- Expand pathways for educator licensure with options for dual licenses, to enhance educators' expertise.

- Convene communities of educators to collaborate on local planning and implementation efforts.
- Enhance access to and use of common data across schools, agencies, and community partners.

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