Developing Balanced Systems of Assessments
National Landscape Scan of States: Balanced Systems of Assessments

Paul Leather, Center for Innovation in Education

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Balanced Systems of Assessments in the Time of COVID 19

(and thoughts regarding Accountability)

A Letter From Gene Wilhoit: Response to the Secretary's Letter September, 2020

https://www.leadingwithlearning.org/post/as-you-respond-to-secretary-devos-letter-you-may-want-to-consider
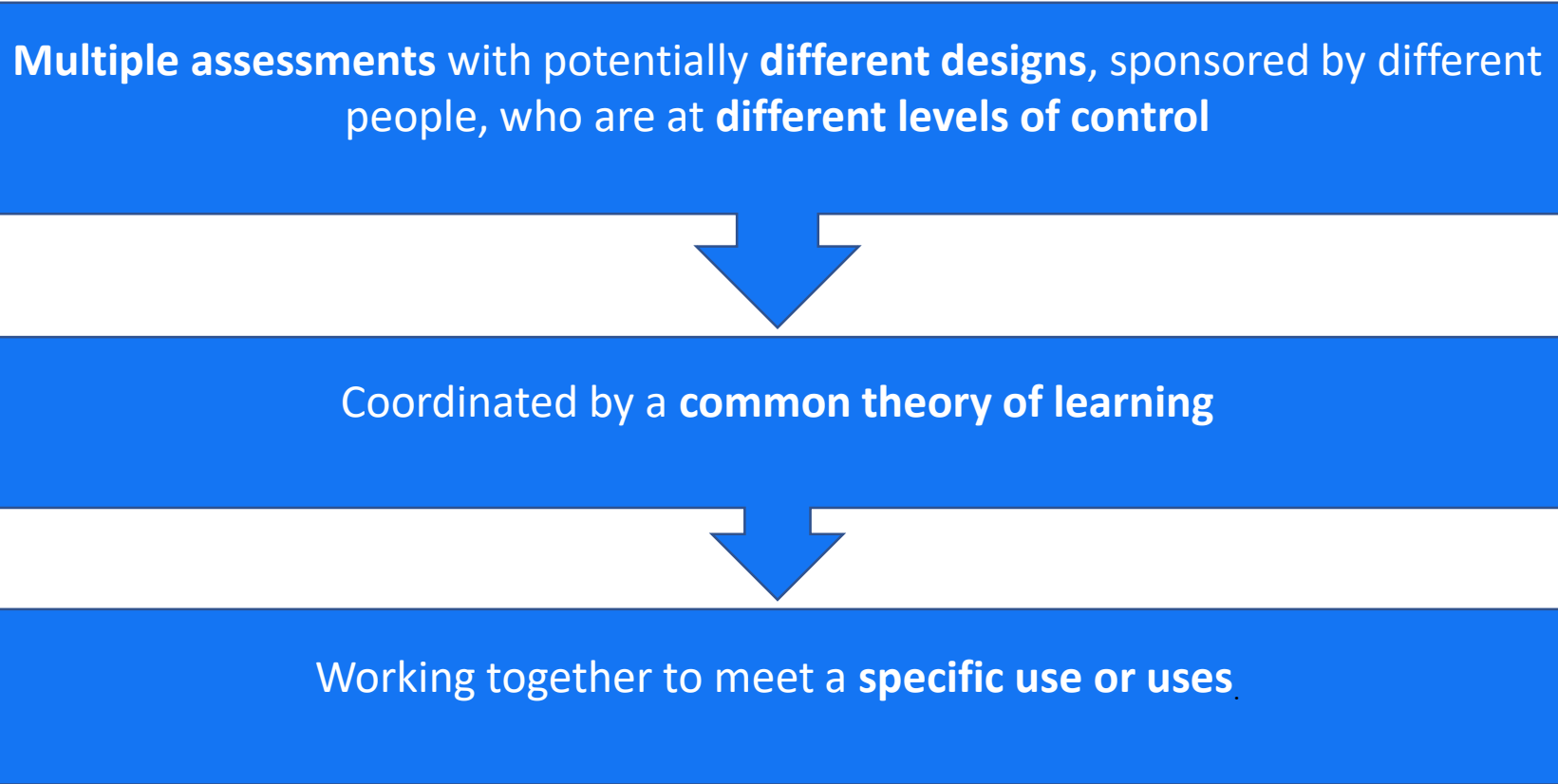
Assessment in This Moment of COVID -- 19

- Many States/Districts/Schools have returned or are returning to former state Systems of Assessments

- Psychometricians have warned us – Comparability is questionable, inferences even more so.

- We are encouraged to assess with an asterisk, looking for learning loss primarily, focusing more on Opportunity to Learn measures

- Like having a car engine die and asking others to push to get where we are going….

- Why not try another way?

Definition of Comprehensive, Balanced Assessment System:

Multiple assessments with potentially **different designs**, sponsored by different people, who are at **different levels of control**

Coordinated by a **common theory of learning**

Working together to meet a **specific use or uses**.

A Tricky Balance: The Challenges And Opportunities Of Balanced Systems Of Assessment, S. Marion, et al NCME 2019

Presentation, N. Dadey, *Center for Assessment. NCSA, June, 2018*

Why? Because in Today's Schools, We have:

Too many assessments

given by too many people

for too many purposes

all providing too little information.

Nathan Dadey, *Center for Assessment*
NCSA, June, 2018

Two Levels of Assessment and Accountability -- Two Different Sets of Purposes:

State/Federal:

- Equity – Comparability of Opportunities to Learn
  - Use Cases:
    - School and District Performance
    - Evaluation of Improvement Processes
    - Education Funding

Local – District/School/Classroom:

- Address Student Learning Needs
  - Use Cases:
    - Measure Student Learning and Growth
    - Curriculum and Instruction Decisions
    - Local Accountability:
   - Educator Evaluation
      - Resource Allocation

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The Look of Balanced, Innovative Assessment Systems Emerging Pre-Covid:

- **Loosely Coupled** Assessments for different purposes at different levels

- State/Federal – **Small Footprint State Assessments in core content** to
  - Monitoring equity across districts
  - Funding Formulas
  - Allocation of School Improvement Resources

- **District/School** – **Common assessments** for formative purposes around curriculum and instruction

- **Classroom** – **Performance Assessments** (Performance Tasks/Portfolio Defense/Capstones) for students to demonstrate learning, tied to a Portrait of a Learner/Graduate

- **More Focus on Horizontal**, **less on Vertical Cohesion**, **particularly in the classroom**, building on Instruction, curriculum, authentic Learning and assessment.
  – Lorrie Shepard

- This **Shift of Balance To the Classroom** requires that we learn to **Support and Trust Our Teachers!**
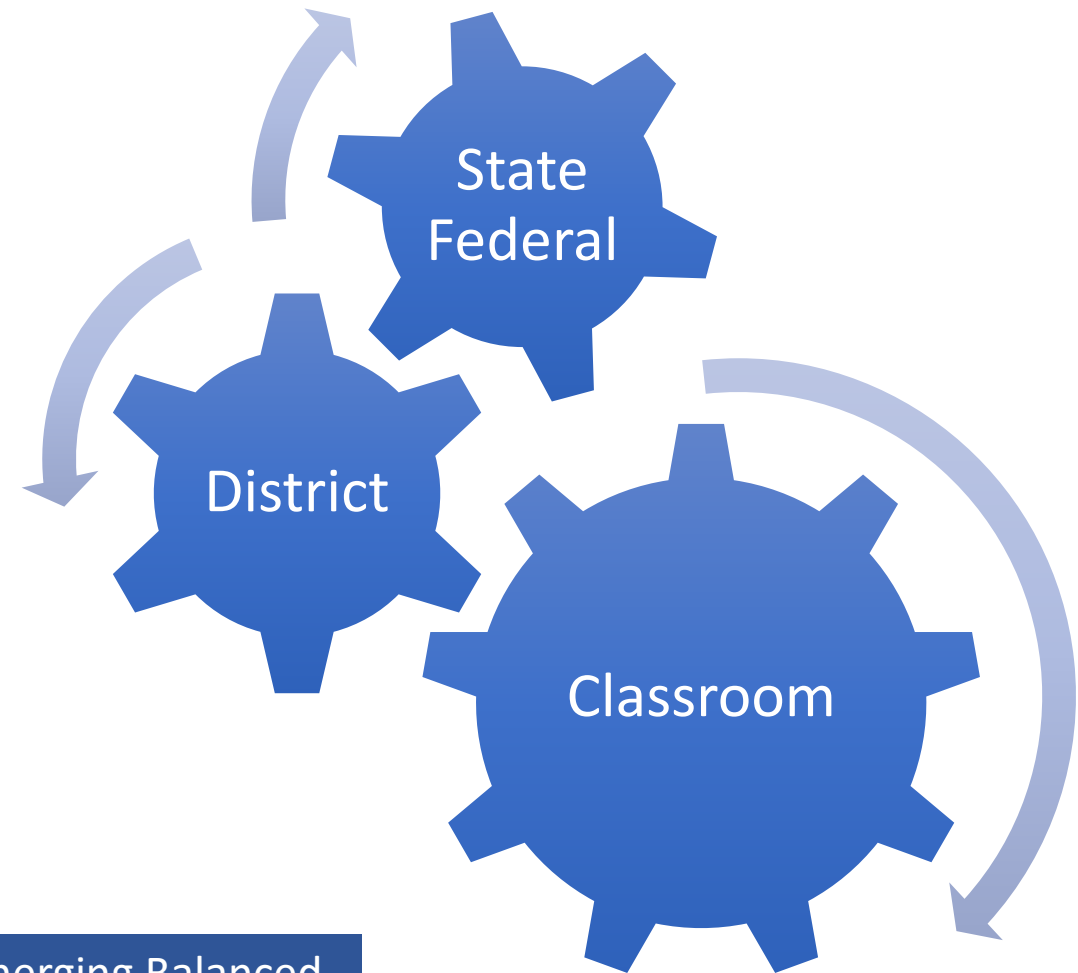
Emerging Balanced Systems --

Design Principles for New Systems of Assessment Shepard, et al
Phi Beta Kaplan 2017

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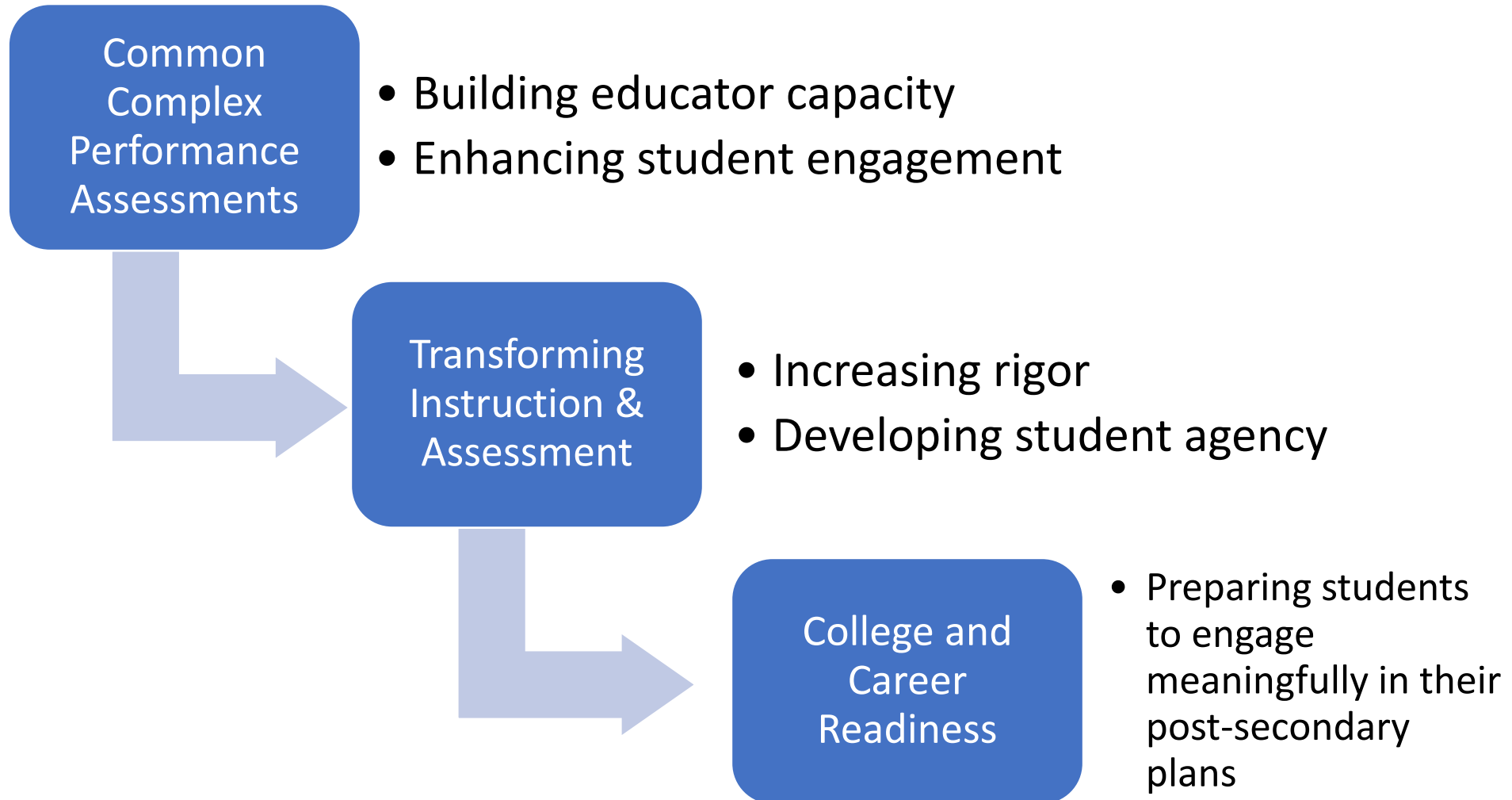
A Scan of Innovative Assessment Systems Nationally

https://www.leadingwithlearning.org/performance-assessment-map

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NH PACE is a "re-Balanced" Assessment System

- The emphasis on local assessments and **collaboratively-created "common tasks"** along with the limited use of the state assessment helps to **rebalance the system**

- Such a system supports multiple stakeholders:
  - Students
  - Teachers
  - Parents
  - District & School Leaders
  - Policy Makers

Marion_NCLS_May 9, 2018

State Purpose -- Comparable Performance, but PACE is really about classroom impact!

Common Complex Performance Assessments

- Building educator capacity
- Enhancing student engagement

Transforming Instruction & Assessment

- Increasing rigor
- Developing student agency

College and Career Readiness

- Preparing students to engage meaningfully in their post-secondary plans

Marion_NCLS_May 9, 2018

New Mexico – An Emerging re-Balanced System --

PARCC

+

Local Community Expectations

→

Small Footprint

State Test

+

Community of Practice Advancing Local Capstones based on Community Wisdom & Graduate Profiles
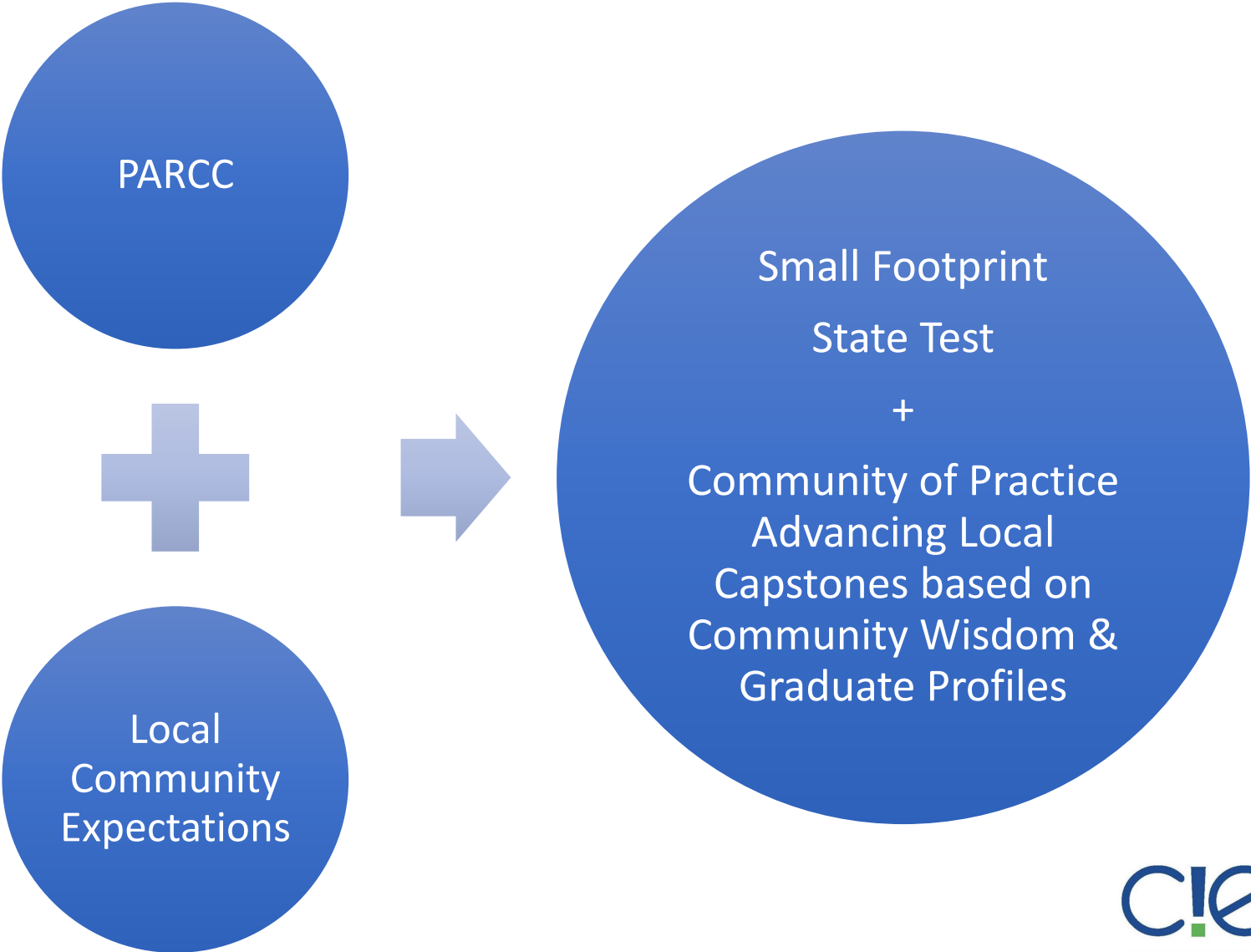
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In this complex time...

→ Given the power of current state level accountability and assessments to unhelpfully constrain learning and innovation...

→ How might a visionary leader use a shared redesign process to lead back to the true and reciprocal idea of accountability Richard Elmore spoke of in 2002 --

"For every increment of performance I demand from you, I have an equal responsibility to provide you with the capacity to meet that expectation. Likewise, for every investment you make in my skill and knowledge, I have a reciprocal responsibility to demonstrate some new increment in performance." (Elmore 2002)

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To re-Balance the System Requires a Different Stance --

How best to lead through complexity?

- *Embrace the idea that we are leading a complex enterprise in a complex time.*
- *Calls for cycles of probing first, then sense making, followed by responding*
- *Partner with those at the local level that are seeking the same outcome*
- *See and seek the expertise of those closest to the ground.*
- *Expand membership and open up processes.*
- Look for rigid constraints that impede probing, learning & innovation

- Define *enabling constraints* to help pull people out of chaos so they can work with complexity.

Recognize complexity transforms how we do business

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How Might Policy and Educational Leaders Lead in These Complex Times?

	Looks like less of this...	and more of this
Learning is the work	Knowing exactly where you are going	Asking important questions
Deep inquiry on equity	Avoiding uncomfortable truths	Exploring thorny issues
Convene many perspectives	Focus groups and surveys	Learning communities that explicitly include students and families on the margins
Disrupt silos, respect affinities	Department meetings siloed from all-staff meetings	Role-alike groups and identity-based groups weaving in and out of teams working across hierarchies and boundaries
Interrupt patterns of oppression	Highest paid person in the room has sway	Treating everyone like an expert
Co-create for shared responsibility	Change via memo and press release	Shared compacts, plans. Marshalling shared political weight.
Make systems more open	Closed meetings where the "real" decisions happen.	These ways of working spreading from one project team to another. Communities of communities.

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Leave You with This Question –

How Might You, Policy and Educational Leaders, Create "Enabling Constraints" In This Moment?

- To Support New System Development?

- To Continue to Address Equitable Opportunity For All Children, AND

- To Improve, Innovate, and Meet The Needs Of Our States and Communities?

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Thank You!

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