

# PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLANNING PROCESS FOR PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS

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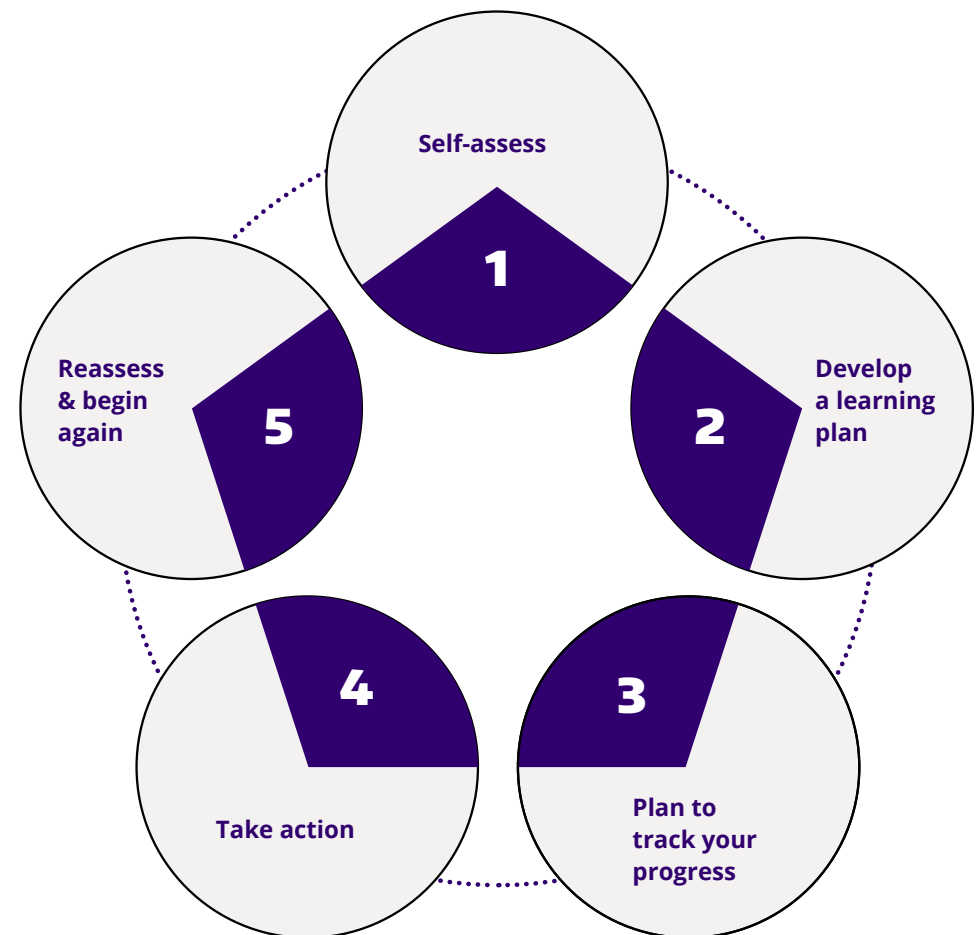
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*District Leadership Design Lab, (2020). Professional Growth Planning Process for Principal Supervisors. Seattle, WA: University of Washington.*  
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This professional growth planning process (PGPP) engages principal supervisors in leading their own learning toward their own and their districts' performance goals. Our approach builds on research on adult learning that shows professionals improve their practice when they lead their own growth as a regular part of their daily work.

But district professional development at best tends to get done to professionals rather than fostering professionals' leadership of their own learning day-to-day in real settings. As a classroom teacher and principal, you were probably pulled out of your school for workshops run by the central office. Union contracts likely designated specific time for your professional learning. Your district may have required you to submit goals for the year, but not to actually use them to develop and implement plans for realizing them. You received your evaluation results at the end of the year as a summary assessment rather than guide for your work. But now in your principal supervisory role, research and experience suggest you have to pivot away from such relative passive learning and toward active leadership of your own learning. Where to begin?

This PGPP suggests activities you can use to lead your own learning. You may also want to adapt this tool to help your principals lead their own learning. This tool stems from our own and others' research underscoring the importance of a cycle of inquiry approach that prompts you to: self-assess, develop a learning plan, plan to track your progress, take action, and reassess and begin again. We elaborate on each of these activities in the following five sections, and throughout we prompt you to use these ideas as jumping-off points to design a process that you understand and own.

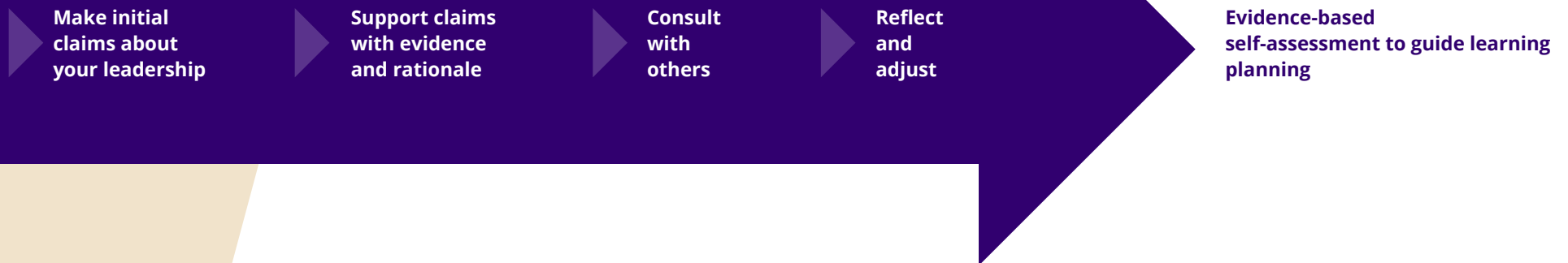
## CYCLE OF INQUIRY



# #1: SELF-ASSESS

First, work with evidence to assess how close your current practice is with the ways of working to which you aspire. Such self-assessments can help you see yourself on a pathway to reaching your goals—which is important to your actually progressing toward them—and identify meaningful plans for improvement. By the end, you will have a completed evidence-based self-assessment to guide your development of a learning plan. Figure 1 outlines the self-assessment process in this part.

**FIGURE 1 PROCESS FOR SELF-ASSESSING**



## GET ORGANIZED FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

Before you start, choose professional standards, such as the DL2 Principal Supervisor Performance Standards, to anchor your self-assessment. Then, integrate the standards into an organizer for capturing your work, using a rubric to help you measure the depth of your engagement in each standard. Table 1.1 provides one example.

**TABLE 1.1 SELF-ASSESSMENT ALONG YOUR PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

Claims					
	Not adopting	Adopting the talk	Engaging at a surface level	Engaging with understanding	Mastery
	Does not yet talk about their practice or engage in practices consistent with the standard.	Talks about their practice in ways consistent with the standard, but actual practice does not yet reflect the standard.	Practice begins to reflect the standard, but does not yet demonstrate deep understanding of which leadership practices are consistent with the standard or why to engage in those practices.	(1) Practice often reflects the standard and demonstrates deepening understanding of what practices are consistent with the standard and why to engage in those practices.  (2) Practices consistent with the standard are a regular part of daily practice.	(1) Practice routinely reflects the standard at the level of “engaging with understanding” across multiple contexts and years.  (2) Practice across settings and over time demonstrates the ability to improvise—to use the standard as a jumping-off point to develop new ways of working consistent with the standard and likely to contribute to progressively more powerful results.
<b>Standard 1 [write in]</b>					
<b>Evidence</b>					
<b>Rationale</b>					
<b>Standard 2 [write in]</b>					
<b>Evidence</b>					
<b>Rationale</b>					
...					

## MAKE INITIAL CLAIMS, AND SUPPORT THEM WITH EVIDENCE AND RATIONAL

As prompted in Table 1.1, for your self-assessment, make claims about your leadership along each standard and check your claim with evidence and an explicit rationale.

- *Claim: A clear, measurable statement about the quality of your current ability to lead along each standard.* When we make claims, rather than rely on numbers (e.g., “On Standard 4, I am a 3”), we literally describe ourselves in relation to each standard—an approach that improves the accuracy of our ratings. Scales such as those that proceed from “Basic” to “Proficient” do not always describe true markers of how people learn, so pay special attention to the measurability and validity of your scale.
- *Evidence: Concrete examples and other data that illustrate how you lead along each standard.* Evidence should make your leadership visible in ways that help you check the accuracy of your claim and provide a baseline for assessing your growth over time. Think broadly about what counts as true evidence of your leadership; this generally will not include school test scores but rather data from principal survey results, emails to and from principals, and notes from observations of your work with principals. Do the best with the data you have and plan to collect progressively better data each year. Table 1.2 provides some guidance on distinguishing strong from weak evidence of your own practice.
- *Rationale: Your explanation for why you think your evidence supports your claim.* When we pause to articulate our rationales, we make our thinking visible to ourselves and others, increasing the accuracy of our self-assessments and deepening our reflections. Writing down your evidence and rationales also creates a record of your thinking to which you can refer to over time.

### TABLE 1.2 STRONG VERSUS WEAK EVIDENCE

#### Strong evidence

- Describes *how* you lead
- Specifically supports the claim you are making about the quality of your leadership along specific standards
- For claims that suggest frequency of action across contexts, provides multiple examples across contexts
- For claims about level of understanding, includes descriptions showing your understanding related to the specific standard

#### Weak evidence

- Identifies activities in which you participated without describing how you led in those activities in relation to given standards
- Talks about your leadership without illustrating how your leadership reflects your claim about the quality of your leadership along specific standards
- Provides single examples
- Does not indicate how you understand the standard and your practice in relation to the standard

**TABLE 1.3 SELF-ASSESSMENT EXAMPLE**

<b>Standard 1: Dedicates their time to helping principals grow as instructional leaders</b>	<b>CLAIM</b>
	<p><b>Adopting the talk</b></p> <p><i>I talk about my leadership practice in ways consistent with dedicating my time to helping principals grow as instructional leaders but my actual practice does not yet reflect that I actually dedicate the majority of my time in this way.</i></p>
<b>Evidence</b>	
<p><i>My colleagues have observed me telling principals that my job is to focus as much of my time as possible on their instructional leadership. For instance, my supervisor's scripted notes at the January 6th meeting shows I said, "I'm in this with you. While you are maximizing your time with teachers, I am maximizing my time with you." But a review of my calendar shows that between January and May, I spent only about 35 percent of my time in a given week working directly with principals. For example, the week of February 6th I spent about two hours each in 4 schools and otherwise was in central office and community meetings related to school staffing, high school reform, school boundaries, and parent complaints.</i></p>	
<b>Rationale</b>	
<p><i>I have had my assistant edit my calendar so it reflects how I actually spend my time rather than how I planned to spend my time, so it provides solid evidence of the amount of time I actually spent with principals as well as the limited extent to which my other tasks were in direct enough support of principals' growth as instructional leaders. For instance, sometimes when I work on staffing, that work is to ensure principals do not lose time on instruction. But in most of the cases on my calendar during that period, I was working on more general staffing issues or doing staffing tasks for principals instead of teaching them how to do them.</i></p>	

As an example of this process, one principal supervisor assessing herself on the DL2 Principal Supervisor Performance Standards wrote the responses shown in Table 1.3.

## CONSULT WITH OTHERS

Sharing your work with others for feedback can increase your understanding of the standards, your claims, and your evidence as well as the accuracy of your ratings. Here is one suggested protocol for this process:

1. Choose one claim-evidence-rationale set and give your partner time to review your work.
2. Pose questions to solicit their critical feedback, such as:
  - What clarifying questions do you have about this claim-evidence-rationale set?
  - How well does my evidence help you see the quality of my leadership?
  - How well does my evidence actually support the claim I am making?
  - How well does my rationale explain why I think my evidence supports my claim?
  - Anything else?
3. Switch roles with your partner.
4. Repeat.
5. Use the feedback to improve your self-assessment.



## #2: DEVELOP A LEARNING PLAN

This section guides you in moving from learning goals to developing an actual plan for realizing those goals. You will base your learning plan on research showing that adults learn to deepen their practice not mainly through formal learning opportunities like conferences or workshops but by accessing learning supports while doing their daily work. By the end, you will have an intentional learning plan likely to help you realize your growth targets. Figure 2 outlines the process of developing a learning plan.

**FIGURE 2 PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING A LEARNING PLAN**



## GET ORGANIZED TO DEVELOP A LEARNING PLAN

First, develop a template for representing your learning plan. Table 2.1 provides one suggestion with the basic elements that help you interrogate and strengthen your own choices about what to include in your plan.

**TABLE 2.1 LEARNING PLAN**

Self-assessment	Resources and opportunities	Growth goals	Rationale
I am starting at this level of leadership capacity related to my focus standards.	And if I utilize these learning resources and opportunities in these particular ways ...	... then I will be able to make this claim about my leadership along my focus standards by the spring.	And I think so because ...

## CHOOSE FOCUS STANDARDS

All the leadership performance standards you are using are no doubt important aspects of your leadership, but addressing them all likely will stretch you too thin. Research on the development of expertise shows that adults grow in multiple areas by going deep in a few and transferring that learning to other areas. So choose two or three standards as your focus for this year and, in later years, gradually add more standards. In the process, focus on standards on which you rated yourself relatively high. Focusing on your strengths increases your motivation to learn and gives you a chance to become familiar with the professional growth process before tackling your more challenging standards. If you are using Table 2.1, enter the claims about your leadership along with your focus standards in the first column.

## IDENTIFY LEARNING RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Now, identify the *learning resources and opportunities* that will help you grow along your focus standards this year. As you do, remember that various research on adult learning shows that formal settings outside our regular work, like professional conferences and workshops at the central office, are among the least supportive forms of professional growth especially compared to those we access as we go about our daily routine.

Remember, too, that the question here is not: What next leadership actions will I take that relate to a given standard? Rather, ask yourself: What will I do next *to support my learning* along each of my focus standards? Especially experienced leaders tend to assume that simply by performing certain leadership actions (e.g., providing coaching, running a meeting) they will grow in the process. We do improve our leadership as we go about our daily work, but when we do so *in certain ways*—for example, when you receive feedback or coaching as you work or document how you perform a particular task and deeply reflect on what you did.

## LINK LEARNING RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO YOUR FOCUS STANDARDS

Next, use the results of your brainstorming to begin aligning particular learning resources and opportunities to each focus standard, using the Resource and Opportunity Map (ROMp) shown in Table 2.2 or some other organizer. Remember that the same learning resource or opportunity could help you grow along multiple standards, so you don't necessarily need an entirely new set of resources and opportunities for each standard. Do try to distinguish *how* you will need to engage with each resource or opportunity to support your growth on a particular standard. In the process, avoid shorthand, which could suggest you are not thinking deeply enough about your learning plan and may be hard for you to decipher later.

Once you've mapped out your learning resources and opportunities, make sure you've captured your thinking in your learning plan (Table 2.1). For example, you may plan to attend a conference, but which specific sessions? How will you network with particular people as learning resources? Spell out those details of your participation in your plan. Articulating your rationale—why you think a particular learning support may be helpful—is one way to check that you have described each resource and opportunity at a sufficient level of detail.

**TABLE 2.2 RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES MAP (ROM<sub>p</sub>) EXAMPLE**

Focus standard	List	Detail	Explain
<p>1. Support the learning of other adults through a teaching and learning stance in ways that increase equitable learning for each student.</p>	<p>Book, <i>Everyday Antiracism</i></p>	<p>Get on agenda of principal supervisor meeting for group book talk that I facilitate. Get feedback on facilitation plan from Michael. During meeting, have Kim take notes of my moves and participants' engagement. Debrief with participants. Review notes and discuss with Michael.</p>	<p>If I first practice facilitating this book talk with my colleagues, then I will receive important practice and feedback to strengthen how I do it with my principals from a teaching and learning stance.</p>
	<p>Michael</p>	<p>Schedule him to observe me facilitating the book talk including time to debrief.</p> <p>Schedule two opportunities for him to shadow me during one-on-one visits with principals and for real-time coaching and feedback.</p>	<p>Michael will be honest with me about how well I am doing. He also provides better feedback when he takes notes, so I will specifically prompt him to do that.</p>

## SET GROWTH TARGETS

If you access those resources and opportunities, how far do you think you can grow along each standard? One whole level? Part or most of the way toward that level? Use questions like those to set ambitious but realistic growth targets. Checking your rationale can help you ensure you identify the right targets. Use Table 2.1 or your other organizer to capture your drafts and your initial full learning plan.

## CONSULT WITH OTHERS

Feedback at this point may be especially helpful to ensuring that you: (1) specify the learning resources and opportunities you will access, and (2) emphasize learning on the job. The following protocol may be useful for this purpose:

1. Choose your plan for growth along one standard and give your partner a chance to review.
2. Pose questions such as:
  - What clarifying questions do you have about what my plan involves?
  - How well have I specified what I will do when?
  - To what extent does my learning plan emphasize learning on the job?
  - Other resources and opportunities I might consider? Ones to reconsider or omit?
  - How well does my rationale explain why I think my specific plans will help me grow along that standard? Suggestions for improvement?
  - Anything else?
3. Switch roles with your partner.
4. Repeat for your other focus standard(s).
5. Use the feedback to improve your learning plan.

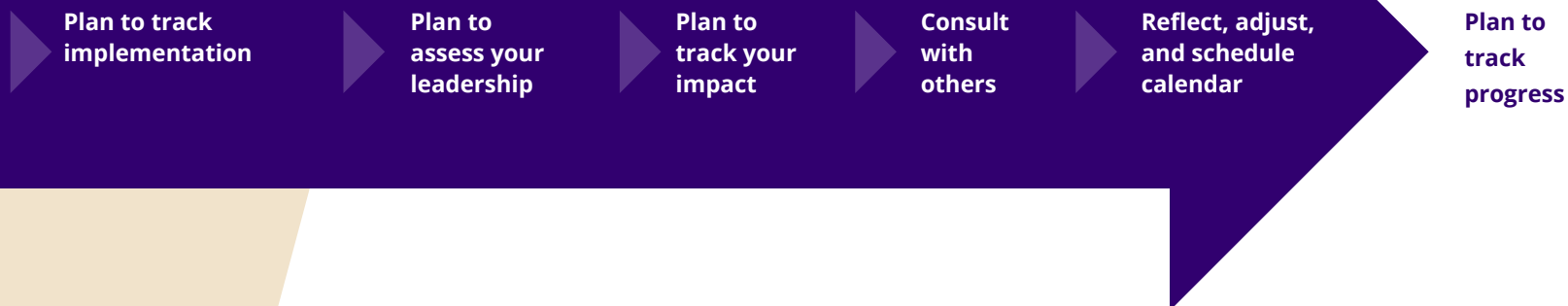
## REFLECT, ADJUST, AND SCHEDULE YOUR CALENDAR ACCORDINGLY

Move the tasks in your learning plan into your work calendar. For example, remember that feedback you wanted to get from your colleagues? When will you connect with them before the observation to brief them on what would be helpful? Is the session they will observe on their calendars? Have you blocked off time to prepare for the session? When will you debrief? If you have someone who helps you with your calendar, consider asking them to schedule meetings and work time based on your learning plan.

# #3: PLAN TO TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

In this section, you will plan to assess progress before you take action on your learning plan to help ensure that you are collecting the data you need all along the way to make midcourse corrections and understand your growth toward your leadership targets over time. Chances are your district's data system will not provide the data you need to understand your progress. Be sure to take full advantage of available data, but definitely plan to collect new data yourself. By the end, you will have a plan to assess the extent to which you have implemented your learning plan, grown in your own leadership, and supported principals' growth as instructional leaders. Figure 3 outlines the process of developing a plan to track your progress.

**FIGURE 3 PROCESS FOR TRACKING YOUR PROGRESS**



## GET ORGANIZED TO PLAN TO TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

First, develop templates for capturing your plan to track your progress. Throughout, we provide some examples. However you choose to proceed, make sure your templates prompt you to spell out the following basic components of a plan to assess progress:

- *Measures*. What you would see happening if implementation were occurring at a particular level.
- *Data collection activities*. How you will capture information to determine if those things are happening.

## PLAN TO TRACK LEARNING PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

*To what extent am I doing what I said I would do in my learning plan? Completely? Well?* Sometimes we do not realize our growth goals, not because we did not develop the right plan, but because we did not fully implement it. Tracking the quality of your plan's implementation can help you make that distinction. Table 3.1 prompts you to include the basic features of a plan to assess implementation and provides an example.

**TABLE 3.1 PLAN TO ASSESS IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUR LEARNING PLAN**

Learning resources and opportunities (from #2)	Measures	Data collection activities
If I utilize these learning resources and opportunities ...	... which I will know I am using because I will see this concrete evidence in practice ...	... which I will collect in the following ways.
<i>Michael observing me lead the book study meeting.</i>	<i>Meetings and debrief/feedback sessions occur.  I have a set of observation notes from Michael.  My notes from the debrief sessions indicate that Michael's feedback deepened my understanding of the quality of my leadership along this standard.</i>	<i>Have assistant color-code activities on my calendar as I complete them.</i>

## PLAN TO ASSESS YOUR LEADERSHIP

*How have I led along each standard?* Too often, leaders lack the basic evidence they need to understand their growth because they do not collect the right evidence along the way. Plan to identify and track meaningful measures and evidence of your growth along your focus standards. In the process, remember that data about your leadership is just that—information about moves you make day-to-day. Take care not to confuse this with data about how teachers or other adults work, which is information about their practice and, possibly, the impact of your leadership (which you will plan to track in the next section). Table 3.2 prompts you to include the basic features of a plan to assess your leadership and provides an example.

**TABLE 3.2 PLAN TO ASSESS YOUR LEADERSHIP**

Learning resources and opportunities (from #2)	Measures	Data collection activities
If I am progressing toward these growth goals ...	... then I will see the following in my own practice ...	... which I will document in the following ways.
<p><i>Focus standard: My leadership practice in one-on-one meetings often reflects that I am leading the learning of principals in ways that will help them grow as instructional leaders and demonstrates that I understand what taking such a stance involves and why to take one.</i></p>	<p><i>Score above 3.5 on the DL2 Annual Survey of Principals on joint work, modeling, and tool use in one-on-one settings.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>—Spring survey administration</i></li> <li><i>—Results provided to us before summer</i></li> </ul>
<p><i>Secondary standard: My leadership practice in my principals meetings often reflects that I am leading the learning of principals in ways that will help them grow as instructional leaders and demonstrates that I understand what such a stance involves and why to take one.</i></p>	<p><i>Score above 3.5 on the DL2 Annual Survey of Principals on joint work, modeling, and tool use in communities of practice meetings.</i></p> <p><i>Michael's observation notes consistently show me modeling for principals how to engage in instructional leadership.</i></p> <p><i>My lesson plans for my principals' meetings will contain differentiated prompts that are designed to support particular learning for each of my principals.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>—Spring survey administration</i></li> <li><i>—Results provided to us before summer</i></li> <li><i>—Remind Michael to take notes and ask him to upload notes to shared OneNote folder.</i></li> <li><i>—upload book study lesson plan to OneNote.</i></li> </ul>



## PLAN TO TRACK YOUR IMPACT

To what extent has my leadership had an impact on others that matters to results for students? Your influence on student learning is likely indirect, coming through your work with principals, which in turn should strengthen the quality of classroom teaching for each and every student. Plan to collect data mainly about your principals to help you understand your impact. (See Table 3.3). As you develop this plan, remember to be realistic. Many conditions besides your work with principals will affect their leadership. Ideally, in your work to differentiate supports for principals you are already collecting information on principal growth. Or, if principals are engaged in their own professional growth planning process, you can use the data they collect for this part of your process.

**TABLE 3.3 PLAN TO ASSESS IMPACT**

Growth goals	Direct impact (adults)	Indirect impact (adults)	Ultimate impact (students)
If realize these growth goals (from part 2) ...	... then I am likely to see these changes in the adults I work with most directly ...	... which in turn may lead to these changes in the practice of teachers (or other adults—in this case the principals my colleagues support)..	... which may contribute to the following improvements in student learning, especially those historically underserved by public schools.
My leadership practice in my principals meetings often reflects that I am learning of principals in ways that will help them grow as instructional leaders and demonstrates that I understand what such a stance involves and why to take one.	On the DL2 Annual Survey of Principals, at least 80% of my principals will report that they increased the amount of time they spend on instructional leadership tasks, that they have grown in their ability to engage in instructional leadership, and that the principals meetings I have facilitated have supported them with both.	The percentage of teachers my principals rate as proficient or highly proficient will go down, because they are deepening their understanding of what counts as high-quality teaching.	No expected impact in this first year.  By next year, climate surveys will show that students are significantly more likely to report that their teachers care about and challenge them.

## CONSULT WITH OTHERS

Feedback from colleagues may be especially helpful when it comes to your plans to assess progress, especially regarding: (1) the likelihood that your data will help you track your progress in the ways you expect, and (2) ideas for how to marshal the assistance of others in data collection. The following protocol may be useful for this purpose:

1. Start with one plan to track progress and give your partner time to read your work.
2. Pose questions to solicit feedback, such as:
  - In your own words, what do you understand this plan involves in terms of measures and data collection?
  - How well have I specified actual measures of progress? How likely are those measures to help me understand my progress? Suggestions for improvement?
  - How likely are my data collection methods to help me assess my progress well? Am I drawing on existing data sources but also creating new ones?
  - Who else might be able to help me collect data?
  - Anything else?
3. Switch roles with your partner, providing them with feedback.
4. Repeat for your other progress tracking plan(s).
5. Use the feedback to improve your learning plan.

## REFLECT, ADJUST, AND MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Move the data collection tasks from your tracking plans into your work calendar and those of others who will help you with data collection. For example, remember that meeting you intended to conduct to practice engaging others in challenging conversations about racial equity? If someone will take notes for you at that meeting, make sure the meeting is on their calendar. Also put a reminder on your calendar to collect and clean up the notes, as necessary. At this time, you may want to set up a system for cataloging data over time.

# #4: TAKE ACTION

Taking action on your professional growth means ensuring you implement your learning and progress tracking plans and that you use your experience to make adjustments along the way. The following questions may help you think through how you will hold yourself accountable for following through on all three:

1. Will checking in with a partner help me hold myself accountable? If so, who should that partner be? When will we meet? What will I prepare for those meetings?
2. Will specifying a set day each month help me check in with a colleague and/or block out time for my own work and reflection? If so, which date? (Consider blocking out time on your calendar now.)
3. Since the adults I support should also be holding themselves accountable for taking their own actions, how might I model for them how I check in with myself about my learning plan and plan to assess progress and, in the process, make sure I am doing what I said I would do?
4. How will I use my meetings with my own supervisor to check in on the actions I am taking and my progress?

# #5: REASSESS AND BEGIN AGAIN

Even though you will have been monitoring your progress throughout the year, take time before you turn your mind to the next school year and return to #1 and reassess your ability to lead along each of your standards. Now, you should have the benefit of more data to reflect on and, likely, to celebrate. If you are engaging in professional growth planning with your team, consider scheduling an end-of-year celebration to share areas for growth and lessons learned.

As you reassess, keep in mind the following:

- Don't wait. Complete an annual analysis of your work before this year ends when your data and experiences are fresher in your mind than they would be closer to the start of the next school year.
- Even though this is not your first time conducting your self-assessment, #1 may take you longer each year if you have progressively more and better data.
- Your ratings may be lower now than they were at the start of the year. That's okay and potentially a good sign that you now understand your standards better and have a sharper sense of your own practice in relation to the standards.
- This professional growth planning process is yours to develop. How do you want to adapt this process to use next year? Consider making those shifts to your working protocols now while your experience is fresh in your mind.

DISTRICT LEADERSHIP  
**DESIGN LAB**

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