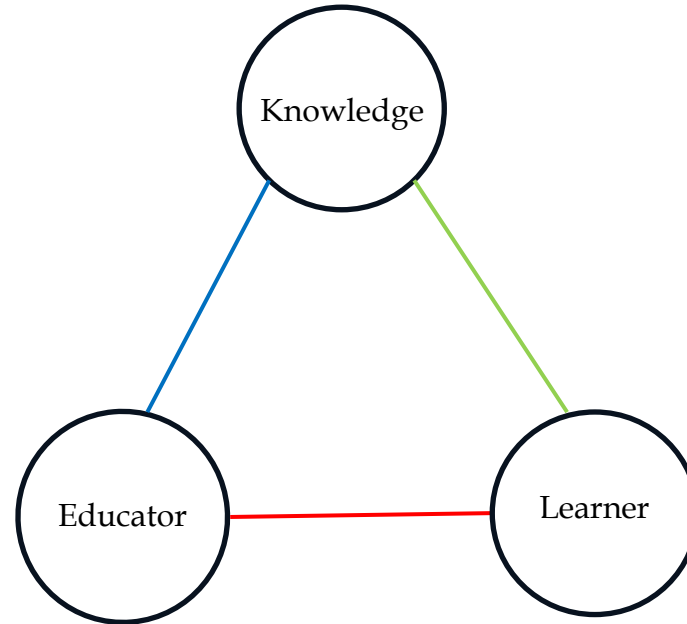


Theory of Action

Dr. Santiago Rincón-Gallardo

 @SRinconGallardo

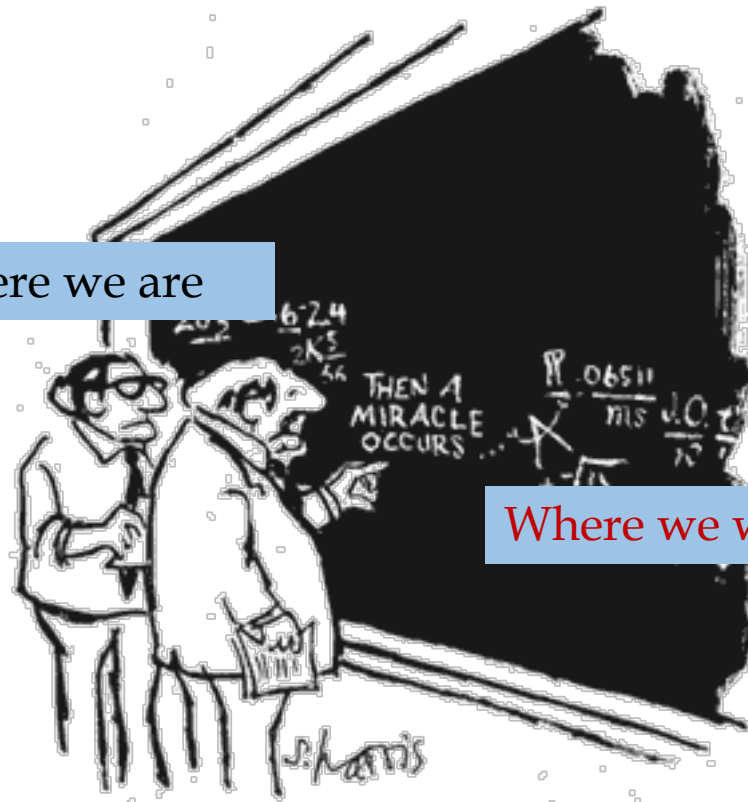
The Pedagogical Core



...key arena for learning
... key arena for wellbeing
... key arena for democracy
... key arena for equity

The influence of effective leaders
on the pedagogical core is
indirect, but intentional.

Where we are



Where we want to be

"I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE EXPLICIT HERE IN STEP TWO."

Theory of Action

A hypothesis that **links** our intentional **actions** **with** the **results** we want to see.

If [*strategy*]...

then [*results*]

because... [*assumptions*]

Theory of Action, 3 key requirements

1. Cause-effect relationship
2. Empirically falsifiable
3. Open-ended

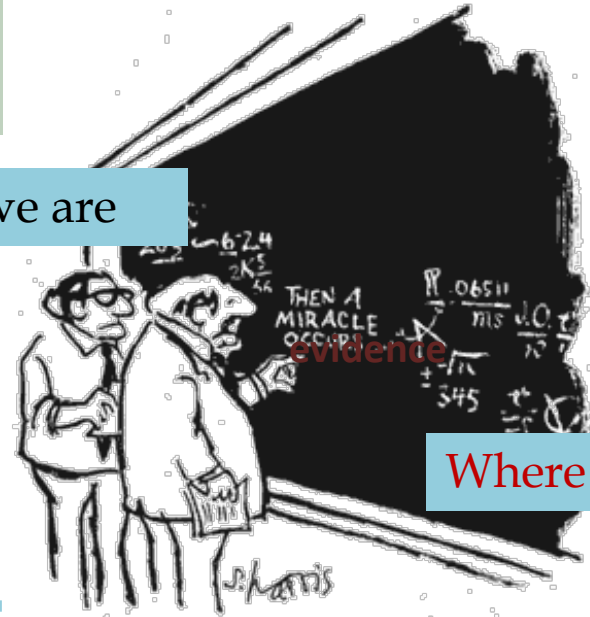
Continuous improvement cycles



Theory of Action

A hypothesis that *links* our *strategic actions* with the *results* we want to achieve

Where we are



Where we want to be

If [strategy]
... then [results]

because [assumptions]

"I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE EXPLICIT HERE IN STEP TWO."

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- 1. Cause-effect relationship
- 2. Empirically falsifiable
- 3. Open-ended

Theory of Action: The Model

If [strategy]

- Strategic Action 1
- Strategic Action 2
- Strategic Action 3
- Strategic Action 4
- Strategic Action 5

then [results]

- Goal 1
- Goal 2
- Goal 3


because [assumptions]

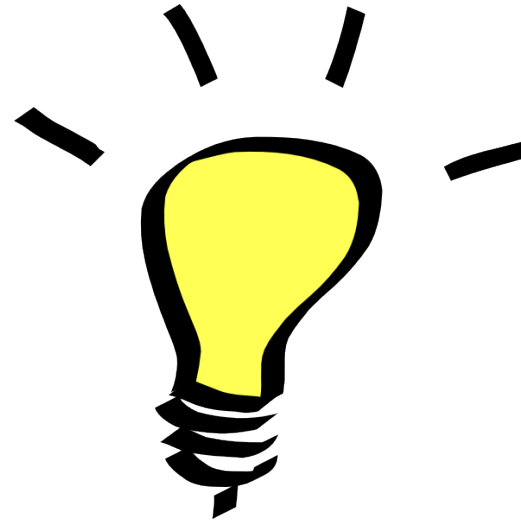
- Because 1
- Because 2
- Because 3

Where we are:

Our current state

Where we
want to be





Case Analysis: Grand Prairie
Public School District

Activity 1

Watch the interview with Supt. Sandy McDonald with the following questions in mind:

- What are the most important **results** achieved in GPPSD?
- What **specific actions** were undertaken to achieve those results?
- Why did these actions produce such results?

Be ready to share with the larger group.

Group Discussion

- What are the most important **results**?
- What **strategic actions** that have led to these results?
- **Why** did these actions produce such results?

Theory of Action: Grand Prairie Public Schools

If we organize and focus the work of our central office, schools, and classrooms on either directly improving teaching and learning or creating the conditions that contribute to optimal learning and wellbeing of our students
and if we create time and continuous opportunities for school leaders and teachers to practice and get better at talking about, working on, and continuously improving teaching and learning and collaborative inquiry.
and if we partner with local universities and create incentives for teacher candidates and beginning to learn ‘the Grand Prairie way’ in their initial education (e.g. teacher programs co-designed and co-taught by school district and universities, mentorships) and for teachers in the districts to continue their professional learning in ways that simultaneously nurture their interests and the district priorities (e.g. Masters degree paid for by the district)
and if we maintain clear, transparent, and ongoing communication with all stakeholders – board, the community, school leaders, teachers – for accountability and assurance purposes (e.g. school leaders showcasing their work in board meetings, communications campaigns telling the story of our school district).
and if we proactively inquire about teachers and school leaders’ plans to retire or leave the district the following year; stay attuned to and strategically plan to fulfill staff needs in the coming years; get our senior district leadership team and school leaders involved in interviewing, selecting, and placing talent in school leadership positions.

then we will have a strong, stable pool of talent to produce increasingly better and more equitable education to our students

Because our clear, strategic focus on our fundamental why – optimal learning and wellbeing for our students – will inspire everyone in the system to be part of and stay in the district

And because when school leaders and teachers feel effectively supported professionally to enhance their capacity to achieve optimal student learning and wellbeing, as well as cared for personally, they will grow loyal to the district and tell other talented candidates to come teach and lead here.

Crafting your Theory of Action

Theory of Action: The Model

If [strategy]

- Strategic Action 1
- Strategic Action 2
- Strategic Action 3
- Strategic Action 4
- Strategic Action 5

then [results]

- Goal 1
- Goal 2
- Goal 3

What would I like to see happening in our school authority as a result of our leadership?

How will we know we're getting there?

Where we are:

Our current state

Where we want to be

because [assumptions]

- Because 1
- Because 2
- Because 3

SMART Goals

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Relevant

Timebound

HEART Goals

Healthy

Enduring

Atttractive

Relevant

Truthful

SMART Goals

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Relevant
Timebound

HEART Goals

Healthy
Enduring
Atttractive
Relevant
Truthful



Activity 2. Where we want to be

Consider your current district-wide strategy , or a new purpose/ strategy you would like to pursue

Use the template available in the Handout. Fill in the red square at the bottom using the following prompt:

- What would we like to see happening in our school authority as a result of our leadership?
- How will we know we're getting there?

If helpful, use the core features of SMART and HEART goals as a reference.

Theory of Action: The Model

If [strategy]

- Strategic Action 1
- Strategic Action 2
- Strategic Action 3
- Strategic Action 4
- Strategic Action 5

then [results]

- Goal 1
- Goal 2
- Goal 3

because [assumptions]

- Because 1
- Because 2
- Because 3

Where we are:

Our current state

In relation with where we want to be, where are we now?

Where we want to be





Activity 2. Where we are

Now fill in the yellow box in the Theory of Action template using the following prompt:

- Where are we now in relation to where we want to be?
- How do we know?

Theory of Action: The Model

If [strategy]

- Strategic Action 1
- Strategic Action 2
- Strategic Action 3
- Strategic Action 4
- Strategic Action 5

What are the strategic actions most likely to cause the results we want?

then [results]

- Goal 1
- Goal 2
- Goal 3

because [assumptions]

- Because 1
- Because 2
- Because 3

Where we are:

Our current state

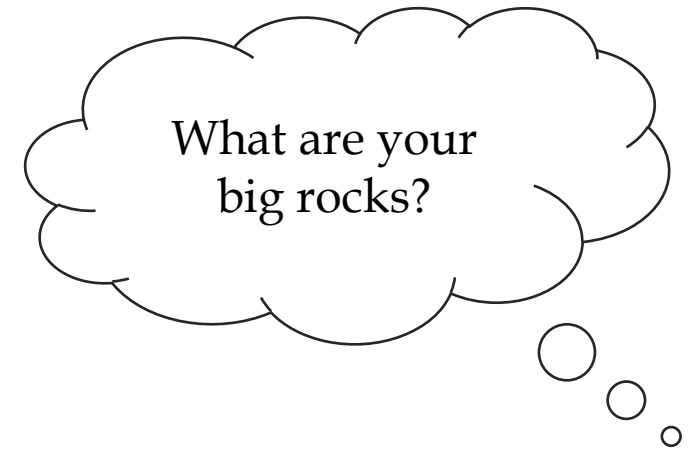
Where we want to be

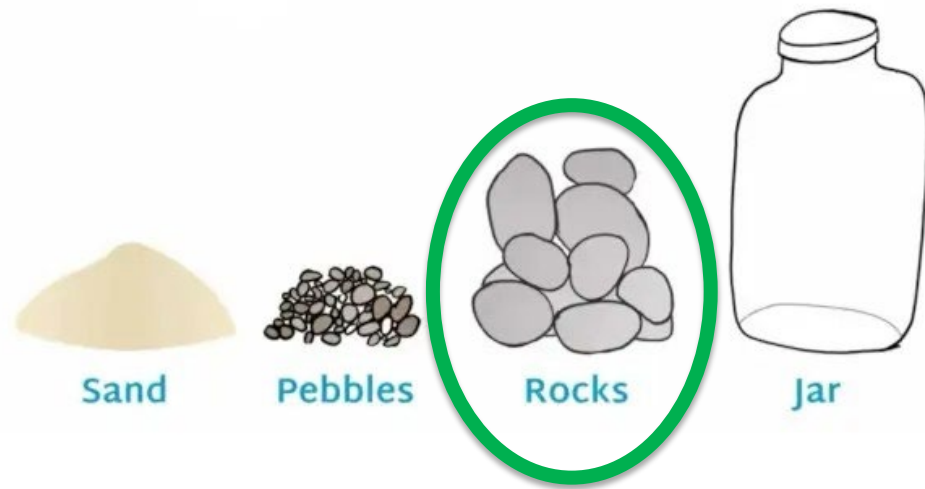


Why David Sometimes Wins



Strategy- How we turn *what we have* into *what we need* to get *what we want*.





Activity 4 What we will do

Now fill in the green box in the Template using the following prompt:

- What are the strategic actions most likely to cause the results we want,?



Theory of Action: The Model

If [strategy]

- Strategic Action 1
- Strategic Action 2
- Strategic Action 3
- Strategic Action 4
- Strategic Action 5

then [results]

- Goal 1
- Goal 2
- Goal 3

because [assumptions]

- Because 1
- Because 2
- Because 3

Where we are:

Our current state

Where we
want to be

What makes us believe
that ← these actions
will produce these
resultados ↓?

A theory of action will be more effective the more it is grounded on a clear, robust, and actionable definition of *how and why people learn* to do things differently.

What motivates us?

- Purpose
- Mastery
- Autonomy
- Connectedness

Pink, D. (2009) & Deci, R (2020)



A row of matches is shown against a dark background. The match on the far left is lit, with a bright yellow and orange flame rising from its tip. The other matches in the row are unlit and appear as a series of dark, textured heads on light-colored stems. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the match heads and the intensity of the flame.

Positive contagion

People adopt change when:

- It is intrinsically motivating
- They take part in its evolution
- They develop ownership along others



Activity 5 Our key assumptions

Now fill in the blue box in the Template using the following prompt:

- What makes us believe that our strategic actions will produce the results we want?

Feedback in Fishbowl



Feedback

- Respect
- Candor and care
- Basic agreement
 - The giver is free to talk with as much honesty and candor as they want
 - The receiver is free to accept or reject the suggestions



Feedback

- Deep listening (take notes)
- Clarifying questions
- Concise message:
 - 1-2 things I loved/ was impressed by/ grabbed my interest
 - 1-2 areas of improvement/suggestions
- Response by the presenter



Activity 6

Form groups of 3-4 with people from different school authorities.

Take turns presenting your draft theories of action. Use the following sequence for each presentation:

1. Presenter presents their Theory of Action (3-5 minutes)
2. Listeners ask clarifying questions, (2 mins.) and presenter responds (1 min.)
3. Group shares comments and feedback (3 mins.)
4. Presenter responds with their main takeaways from the feedback (1 min)

Continuous Improvement Cycles



Activity 7. Self-reflection

- What evidence do we have that can help us monitor the implementation and the results of our strategy?
- What new evidence do we need to gather and organize?
- What continuous improvement processes do we currently have available that are being or could be used to test our theory of action?
- What else should we be doing to ensure we continuously test and refine our theory of action?



Prioritizing Improvement of Teaching and Learning

T&L-ii. Theory of Action to Link District Strategic Actions with Improved Teaching and Learning

Leaders in effective districts place a special emphasis on exerting influence on the ‘pedagogical core’ – the interaction between teacher and student in the presence of content. This influence might be indirect, but it is intentional. Theories of Action represent a powerful tool to link key strategic actions of the central office with their intended effects on the pedagogical core.

T&L-ii. Theory of Action – District leaders...

BASIC	GETTING BETTER	CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVING	COMMENTS
<p>Develop a theory of action for an intentional strategy to influence the pedagogical core.</p>	<p>Place the district’s vision and goals for teaching and learning at the center of the district’s theory of action and improvement strategy. Communicate it widely.</p>	<p>Create a process to continuously test, refine and communicate changes in the theory of action and related adjustments in the district improvement strategy.</p>	<p>ToA for district goals. Focus on pedagogical core. Communicate ToA Process for revision.</p>
<p>Ensure that the district’s theory of action builds on the professional experiences and knowledge of district and school leaders.</p>	<p>Ensure that the theory of action is consistent with personal and evidence-based knowledge on effective teaching, school leadership, and district leadership.</p>	<p>Ensure that the theory of action is grounded in an explicit understanding of how and why people learn to do things differently and the actions of school and district leaders.</p>	<p>Evidence-based ToA. Adult learning principles.</p>
<p>Develop communication mechanisms to ensure that the district’s theory of action is widely known and understood by educators and leaders at the district and school levels</p>	<p>Ensure that expectations for district and school personnel in implementation of the theory of action are understood and linked to the practices of educators and leaders across the district.</p>	<p>Establish a process of organizational learning and communication to continuously test and reshape the district’s strategic actions and theory of action.</p>	<p>Scope & depth of knowledge of ToA. Links to existing practice of ToA. Organizational learning process.</p>

Practice Profile: Domains of Action and Essential Practices

Prioritizing Improvement of Teaching and Learning

- Learning and Pedagogy: Vision and Goals
- Theory of Action
- System coherence

Building Capacity through Support and Accountability

- Attract, support, retain talent
- Developing capacity for inclusive instructional leadership
- Develop cultures of effective collaboration

Sustaining an Open and Collaborative Culture

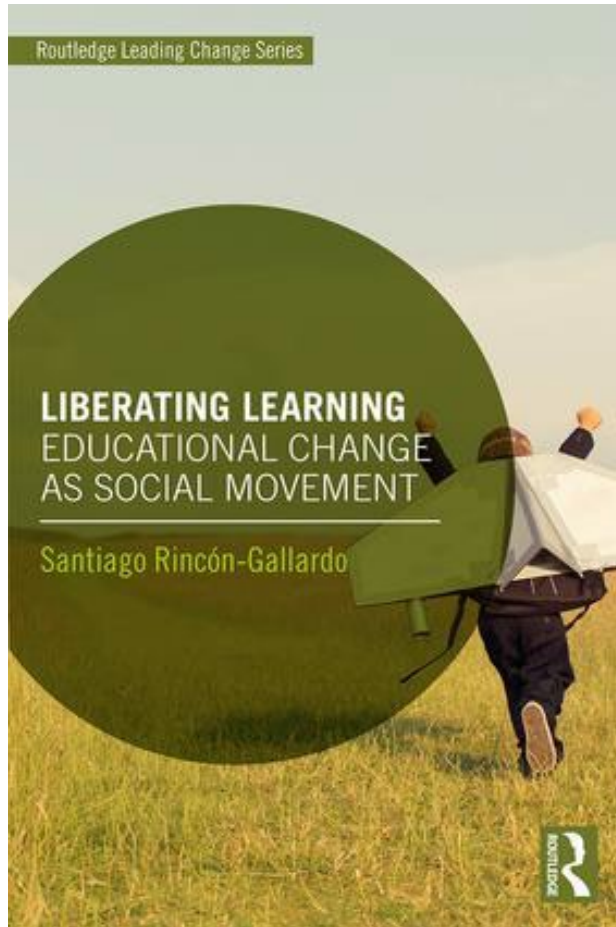
- Trust and reciprocal accountability
- Effective collaboration and shared leadership between central office and schools
- Connect and collaborate laterally and upward

Promoting Systemwide Learning

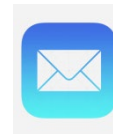
- Support and model learning
- Develop, test, and refine a theory of action
- Use evidence to hold schools and the district reciprocally accountable







Thank you!



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