



Central Office Transformation

for Equitable Teaching & Learning

SELF-STUDY GUIDE 2.0

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Want to deepen your understanding of how your school district central office can become a powerful engine of equitable teaching and learning? Wondering how to get started?

We designed this self-study guide to support you with both—to help individuals and groups learn the latest research on how central offices matter to equitable teaching and learning and identify starting places and next steps. The series is:

Forward-thinking. Focused not on the running of central offices as they are but on the development of the central offices we need to drive equitable teaching and learning.

Research-based. Anchored in the latest research connecting daily central office work with support for equitable teaching and learning districtwide.

Rooted in active learning strategies. Engaging participants in actively using the research to lead their central offices forward.

Research and experience show that central offices matter to equitable teaching and learning—experiences that ensure all students learn rigorous, standards-based content and that consistently center, elevate, and value the knowledge, cultures, and success of students who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and students of color.

But central offices were set up over a century ago to handle business and regulatory functions and to socialize and sort students, not to advance teaching and learning quality or equity.

Realizing equitable teaching and learning at any sustainable scale, then, requires fundamentally new ways of working throughout central offices—and such change is possible.

By working through this self-study guide, district leaders will:

- ✓ Deepen their understanding of the latest research on how school district central offices matter to equitable teaching and learning
- ✓ Expand their imagination about how to lead in ways that reflect and innovate beyond the research
- ✓ Strengthen their approaches to equitable teaching and learning in their district

Contents and format

The six parts of this guide engage you with research from the University of Washington's District Leadership Design Lab (DL2)—which is some of the main empirical scholarship in the field on the relationship between central office work and equitable teaching and learning. The findings are also supported by related research in the learning and organizational sciences.

The parts are:

- 1 INTRODUCTION p. 4**
- 2 TEACHING AND LEARNING p. 11**
- 3 HUMAN RESOURCES p.23**
- 4 PRINCIPAL SUPERVISION p. 35**
- 5 OPERATIONS p. 47**
- 6 CABINET p. 59**

The first half of each part addresses common limitations with central office work and the second half features research on transforming that work to support equitable teaching and learning. Activities within each part guide you through the following learning process.



EXPLORE the research-based ideas individually



EXTEND your thinking and plans by taking a deeper dive into the research



ENGAGE with a broader team



REFLECT on your learning and identify next steps

Who should use this guide

Individual central office leaders and staff to deepen their own understanding of main concepts and make strategic decisions about how to involve others.

Superintendent's Cabinets to guide their sponsorship and collaborative leadership of central office transformation for equitable teaching and learning.

Leaders and staff involved with Teaching & Learning, Human Resources, Principal Supervision, and Operations to inform their vision of their own work and deepen their understanding of changes in other parts of the central offices that may have implications for how they operate.

Leaders and staff in parts of the central office not directly addressed in the research or this guide to explore possible implications of the research for their work and to spark their thinking about what transformation for equitable teaching and learning could look like for them.

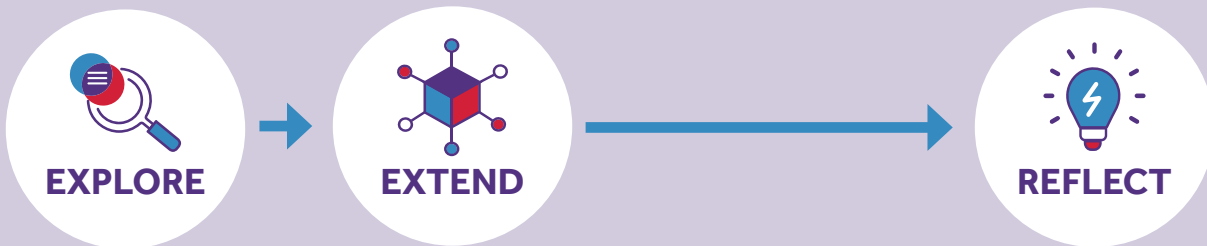
How to use this guide

We recommend you start with the introduction for grounding in foundational ideas. Then, turn to the part most relevant to your work. Eventually engage with all the parts, since shifts in any one central office unit depend on particular, aligned changes in others.

For example, staff who work on curriculum, teacher professional development, or school improvement planning would first engage with Part 1 and then move to Part 2: Teaching & Learning. Those involved with professional development and evaluation of school principals would also begin with Part 1 and then work through Part 4: Principal Supervision. After Part 1, Cabinet members might start with the part most relevant to the unit(s) they oversee and then turn to Part 6: Cabinet for ideas about how to work with their executive-level colleagues.

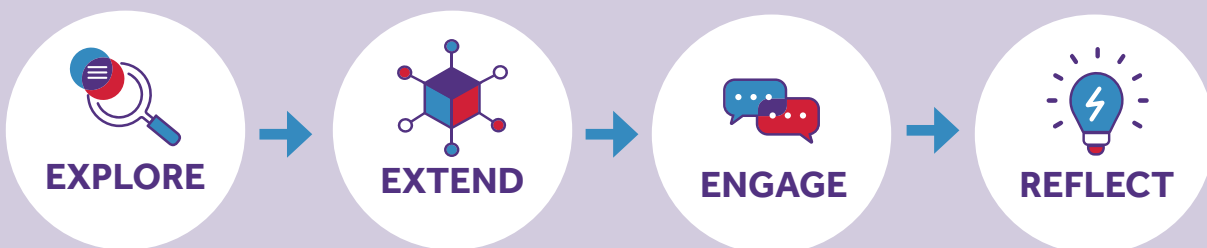
For individuals

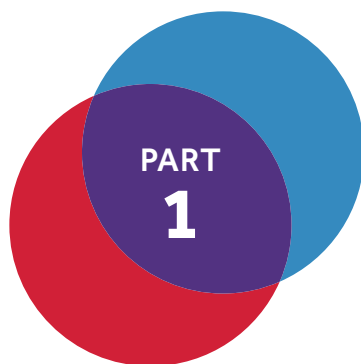
Within each part, start with the **EXPLORE** section. Then, for an optional deeper dive into the research, move to **EXTEND**. Conclude with recording takeaways and next steps using the prompts in **REFLECT**. Repeat this process with other parts of this guide.



For teams

Within each part, start with the **EXPLORE** section. For an optional deeper dive into the research, move to **EXTEND**. Then, use **ENGAGE** to reflect together on key issues in Explore. Conclude with a final group discussion about takeaways and next steps using the prompts in **REFLECT**. Repeat this process with other parts of this guide.





INTRODUCTION

DL2's research shows that school district central offices can be powerful engines of equitable teaching and learning. But doing so requires transformation—fundamental shifts in many of their their long-standing ways of working to center, elevate, and value the knowledge, cultures, and success of students identifying as Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and students of color.

What is central office transformation for equitable teaching and learning?

Part 1 addresses that question to help central office leaders and staff approach the findings about specific central office units with the right mindset:

- Using the findings likely requires fundamental departures from business-as-usual in their central offices—not because individuals are not trying to do the right work, but because they are stuck in systems that don't support it.
- Transformation is necessary and possible.



First, consider the extent to which your central office as a whole supports equitable teaching and learning by responding in writing to the following questions.

- 1** What are 2-3 specific ways, if any, your central office supports equitable teaching and learning?
- 2** What is an example that illustrates each of those ways of working?
- 3** How successful are those ways of working when it comes to advancing equitable teaching and learning? How do you know that those ways address equitable teaching and learning and do so successfully?

Key Findings

DL2's research shows that school district central offices of varying sizes that support equitable teaching and learning have been fundamentally shifting the underlying premises that drive work across the organization to reflect the following:

- The essential purpose of central offices must truly be to drive equitable teaching and learning districtwide
- Everyone matters to realizing equitable teaching and learning
- Transformation requires not a top-down or bottom-up approach but a partnership between the central office and school principals

Deepen your thinking about these premises by responding to the questions in Table 1.1.

TABLE 1.1 Research-based Premises that Drive Central Office Transformation for Equitable Teaching & Learning

When central offices advance equitable teaching and learning, their efforts reflect that...	What does this premise mean?	What is an example that illustrates what taking action on this premise involves?	How is this premise important to supporting equitable teaching and learning?
<p>The essential purpose of central offices must truly be to drive equitable teaching and learning districtwide</p>			
<p>Everyone matters to realizing equitable teaching and learning</p>			
<p>Transformation requires not a top-down or bottom-up approach but a partnership between the central office and school principals</p>			

Consider the extent to which these premises reflect how your central office currently operates using the prompts in Table 1.2. In the process, remember (or remind other participants) that if your central office mainly does not operate in ways consistent with these premises, you are in good company—central offices typically have had little guidance, support, or other resources for doing so. Celebrate that you are now creating the space to explore new ideas.

TABLE 1.2 The Research-based Premises and Your Central Office

To what extent do you agree that your central office works in ways consistent with these premises?	Check the box next to your rating and give your rationale for the rating				
<p>The essential purpose of central offices must truly be to drive equitable teaching and learning districtwide</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p> <p>Rationale for rating:</p>
<p>Everyone matters to realizing equitable teaching and learning</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p> <p>Rationale for rating:</p>
<p>Transformation requires not a top-down or bottom-up approach but a partnership between the central office and school principals</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p> <p>Rationale for rating:</p>



EXTEND

Recommended time



DL2's and other's research demonstrates that inequities are intrinsically woven into the institutional fabric of central offices. This is an inherent (and inherited) flaw arising from how central offices were established and evolved over a century.

If you want to take a deeper dive into the research-based rationale for those new premises, read the Introduction and Chapter 1 in *From tinkering to transformation: How school district central offices drive equitable teaching and learning* (Honig & Rainey, 2023, Harvard Education Press). As you do, reaffirm, add to, or revise your work in Tables 1.1 and 1.2. Otherwise, move to ENGAGE if you are working with others or REFLECT if working alone.



REFLECT

Recommended time



Individually, conclude your work in this part by considering the following questions in writing.

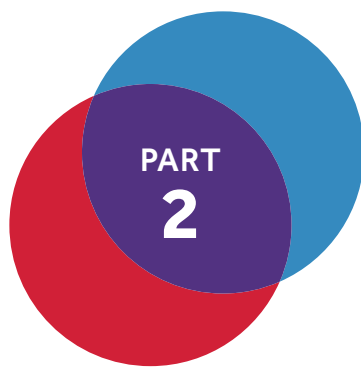
- 1 Based on your initial engagement with the research on central office transformation in this part, what are 4-5 learning goals you want to set for your own engagement with this self-study guide? Why those?
- 2 How will you use the rest of this guide to help you realize those goals? Set aside time on your calendar now?
- 3 If you are not yet working with a broader central office team on this self-study guide: Who would you want to collaborate with on next steps? Why them?

What will you do to engage them? Reach out to them now or plan to do so soon?

- 4 If you are already working with a broader central office team on this self-study guide: What are 4-5 learning goals you think the group should set for their collective engagement with this self-study guide? Why those?

Share participants' goals with the group and discuss: Which of our goals are similar? Different? Which 4-5 common goals should we use to anchor our collective engagement? Why those?

How will you all use the rest of this guide to help you realize those goals? Set aside time on your calendars now?



TEACHING & LEARNING

School district central office Teaching & Learning (T&L) units have long supported schools through teacher professional development, curriculum, standards, school improvement planning, and other strategies. But those units have not always addressed equitable teaching and learning specifically or realized significant or sustainable improvements in those or other areas. DL2's research shows how some T&L units have shifted their work to turn those results around with marked success.

How have T&L units typically supported equitable teaching and learning?

What pivots have some T&L units made that research associates with improved support for equitable teaching and learning districtwide? The activities in Part 2 help you work through those questions to enhance your T&L unit's use of research to improve their performance. In 2A, explore your current state. In 2B, engage with research on ways forward.

PART 2A
YOUR CURRENT STATE



EXPLORE

Recommended time



First, consider the current state in your T&L unit related to supporting equitable teaching and learning by responding to the following questions in writing.

- 1 What are 2-3 specific ways, if any, that the daily work of your T&L unit supports equitable teaching and learning?
- 2 What is an example that illustrates each of those ways of working?
- 3 How do you know those ways of working provide that support?

Key Findings

DL2's research shows that school district central office T&L units of varying sizes and contexts tend to reflect common limitations when it comes to supporting equitable teaching and learning, including:

- Services provided in silos
- Equity added onto, not integrated into, core teaching and learning
- Ineffective support for teacher learning

Deepen your thinking about these common limitations by responding to the questions in Table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1 Common Limitations with T&L Support for Equitable Teaching and Learning

Limitation	What is this limitation?	What is an example that illustrates how this limitation plays out in practice?	How does this limitation matter to how T&L units support equitable teaching and learning?
Services provided in silos			
Equity added onto, not integrated into, core teaching and learning			
Ineffective support for teacher learning			

Reflect on the extent to which you agree or disagree that how your district’s T&L unit currently operates reflects these common limitations using the prompts in Table 2.2.

In the process, remember (or remind other participants) that if these limitations are true of your T&L unit, you are in good company—T&L units typically have had little guidance or other resources for supporting equitable teaching and learning or improving their performance in other ways. Celebrate that you are now creating the space to explore new ideas.

TABLE 2.2 The Common Limitations and Your T&L Unit

To what extent do you agree that your district’s T&L unit works in ways that reflect these common limitations?	Check the box next to your rating and give your rationale for the rating				
<p>Services provided in silos</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p> <p>Rationale for rating:</p>
<p>Equity added onto, not integrated into, core teaching and learning</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p> <p>Rationale for rating:</p>
<p>Ineffective support for teacher learning</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p> <p>Rationale for rating:</p>

Return to your initial reflections in EXPLORE above and then consider:

- 1 What, if anything, about engaging with the common limitations:
Confirmed your thinking about the current state in your T&L unit?

Challenged your thinking?

Raised questions you may want to explore further? If so, when/how will you explore those questions?

- 2 Would a deeper dive into the research on these limitations help your self-assessment? If so, when will you engage in the EXTEND section below?
- 3 Who else should participate with you in examining the limitations in the EXPLORE or EXTEND sections? When and how will you engage them?



EXTEND


Recommended time



If you want to take a deeper dive into the research underlying those limitations, read the first part of Chapter 2 in *From tinkering to transformation: How school district central offices drive equitable teaching and learning* (Honig & Rainey, 2023, Harvard Education Press). As you do, reaffirm, add to, or revise your work in Tables 2.1 and 2.2. Otherwise, move to ENGAGE if you are working with others or REFLECT if working alone.



REFLECT

Recommended time  15 MINS

Individually, conclude your work in this part by considering the following questions in writing.

- 1 What are 1-2 ideas from your work in this part so far, if any, that:
Resonated with you or affirmed your thinking? Why those?

Stretched your thinking? Why those?

Did not resonate with you or that you disagree with? Why those?

- 2 What are 1-2 next steps you want to take, if any, to deepen your understanding of the common limitations and your T&L unit? Why those steps? Consider scheduling them now.



EXPLORE

Recommended time



Key Findings

DL2's research shows that school district central office T&L units that support equitable teaching and learning:

- Align and coordinate all their work to a common set of standards defining equitable teaching and learning with culturally responsive practices as integral parts
- Help teachers collaborate with colleagues to lead their own learning throughout their day toward the district's common teaching-and-learning standards
- Strategically broker and selectively develop services and materials
- Differentiate and deploy services based on strategic leverage points for adult learning in partnership with school leaders

Deepen your thinking about these premises by responding to the questions in Table 2.3.

TABLE 2.3 Research-based Premises for T&L Transformation

T&L units that advance equitable teaching and learning	What does this premise mean?	What is an example that illustrates what taking action on this premise involves?	How is this premise important to supporting equitable teaching and learning?
Align and coordinate all their work to a common set of standards defining equitable teaching and learning with culturally responsive practices as integral parts			
Help teachers collaborate with colleagues to lead their own learning throughout their day toward the district's common teaching-and-learning standards			
Strategically broker and selectively develop services and materials			
Differentiate and deploy services based on strategic leverage points for adult learning in partnership with school leaders			

Consider the extent to which you agree or disagree that how your district's T&L unit currently operates reflects these premises using the prompts in Table 2.4.

In the process, remember (or remind other participants) that if your T&L unit mainly does not operate in ways consistent with these premises, you are in good company—T&L leaders and staff typically have had little guidance, support, or other resources for doing so. Celebrate that you are now creating the space to explore new ideas.

TABLE 2.4 The Research-based Premises and Your T&L Unit

To what extent do you agree that your district's T&L unit works in ways consistent with these premises?	Check the box next to your rating and give your rationale for the rating				
Align and coordinate all their work to a common set of standards defining equitable teaching and learning with culturally responsive practices as integral parts	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
Help teachers collaborate with colleagues to lead their own learning throughout their day toward the district's common teaching-and-learning standards	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
Strategically broker and selectively develop services and materials	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
Differentiate and deploy services based on strategic leverage points for adult learning in partnership with school leaders	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>



EXTEND

Recommended time



If you want to take a deeper dive into the research underlying those premises, read the second half of Chapter 2 in *From tinkering to transformation: How school district central offices drive equitable teaching and learning* (Honig & Rainey, 2023, Harvard Education Press). As you do, reaffirm, add to, or revise your work in Tables 2.3 and 2.4. Otherwise, move to ENGAGE if you are working with others or REFLECT if working alone.



ENGAGE

Recommended time




If you are working with others, compile participants' work from either EXPLORE, EXTEND, or both in a space visible to all.

Compare those responses by discussing question such as the following:

- 1 What are our main points of agreement?
- 2 What are our main points of difference or disagreement?
- 3 What additional information might we want to collect and discuss to better understand each other's views of the premises and our central office?
- 4 Whose perspectives might add more evidence or examples that could challenge or support our analysis?
- 5 What are some concrete next steps we want to take? When and how will we take those steps and monitor our progress?



REFLECT

Recommended time 

Individually, conclude your work in this part by considering the following questions in writing.

- 1 How, if at all, did your work on this part:

Confirm your thinking about how Human Resources operates when it supports equitable teaching and learning?

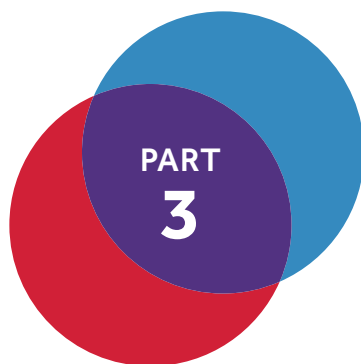
Challenge your thinking?

Raise questions for you?

- 2 Who else should participate with you in exploring these findings and next steps?
How will you engage them in this self-assessment?

Looking back at the goals and learning plans you set in the introduction:

- 1 In what ways, if any, has your work in this part helped you advance your goals? Be sure to record and celebrate that progress.
- 2 Did your engagement with this part suggest adjustments to your goals? If so, make those changes now.
- 3 Did your engagement with this part suggest additional or other steps to help you advance toward your original or revised goals? If so, make those changes now.



HUMAN RESOURCES

School district central office Human Resources (HR) units can help drive equitable teaching and learning, but, historically, have had little experience or support in doing so. Thanks to advances in HR practice, research is beginning to shine a light on the kinds of pivots in HR that contribute to those results.


How have HR units traditionally supported equitable teaching and learning?

What pivots have some HR units made that research associates with improved support for equitable teaching and learning districtwide? The activities in this part address those questions to inform your vision and next steps for HR in your district.

PART 3A
YOUR CURRENT STATE



EXPLORE

Recommended time 

First, consider the current state in your HR unit related to supporting equitable teaching and learning by responding to the following questions in writing.

- 1 What are 2-3 specific ways, if any, that the daily work of your HR unit supports equitable teaching and learning?
- 2 What is an example that illustrates each of those ways of working?
- 3 How do you know those ways of working provide that support?

Key Findings

DL2's research shows that school district central office HR units of varying sizes and contexts tend to reflect common limitations when it comes to supporting equitable teaching and learning, including:

- Riddled with red tape
- Driven by relationships, not reliability
- Focused on basic business process, not strategy
- Limited in their effectiveness with recruiting, hiring, and retaining teachers of color

Deepen your thinking about these common limitations by responding to the questions in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1 Common Limitations with HR Support for Equitable Teaching and Learning

Limitation	What is this limitation?	What is an example that illustrates how this limitation plays out in practice?	How does this limitation matter to how HR units support equitable teaching and learning?
Riddled with red tape			
Driven by relationships, not reliability			
Focused on basic business processes, not strategy			
Limited in their effectiveness with recruiting, hiring, and retaining teachers of color			

Reflect on the extent to which you agree or disagree that how your district’s HR unit currently operates reflects these common limitations using the prompts in Table 3.2.

In the process, remember (or remind other participants) that if your T&L unit mainly does not operate in ways consistent with these premises, you are in good company—T&L leaders and staff typically have had little guidance, support, or other resources for doing so. Celebrate that you are now creating the space to explore new ideas.

TABLE 3.2 The Common Limitations and Your HR Unit

To what extent do you agree that your district’s HR unit works in ways that reflect these common limitations	Check the box next to your rating and give your rationale for the rating				
<p>Riddled with red tape</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p>
Rationale for rating:					
<p>Driven by relationships, not reliability</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p>
Rationale for rating:					
<p>Focused on basic business processes, not strategy</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p>
Rationale for rating:					
<p>Limited in their effectiveness with recruiting, hiring, and retaining teachers of color</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p>
Rationale for rating:					

Return to your initial reflections in EXPLORE above and then consider:

- 1 What, if anything, about engaging with the common limitations:
Confirmed your thinking about the current state in your HR unit?

Challenged your thinking?

Raised questions you may want to explore further? If so, when/how will you explore those questions?

- 2 Would a deeper dive into the research on these limitations help your self-assessment? If so, when will you engage in the EXTEND section below?

- 3 Who else should participate with you in examining the limitations in the EXPLORE or EXTEND sections? When and how will you engage them?



EXTEND

Recommended time



If you want to take a deeper dive into the research underlying those limitations, read the first part of Chapter 3 in *From tinkering to transformation: How school district central offices drive equitable teaching and learning* (Honig & Rainey, 2023, Harvard Education Press). As you do, reaffirm, add to, or revise your work in Tables 3.1 and 3.2. Otherwise, move to ENGAGE if you are working with others or REFLECT if working alone.




If you are working with others, compile participants' work from either **EXPLORE**, **EXTEND**, or both in a space visible to all.

Compare those responses by discussing question such as the following:

- 1 What are our main points of agreement?
- 2 What are our main points of difference or disagreement?
- 3 What additional information might we want to collect and discuss to better understand each other's views of the common limitations and our central office?
- 4 Whose perspectives might add more evidence or examples that could challenge or support our analysis?
- 5 What are some concrete next steps we want to take? When and how will we take those steps and monitor our progress?



REFLECT

Recommended time 

Individually, conclude your work on this part by considering the following questions in writing.

- 1 What are 1-2 ideas from your work in this unit so far, if any, that:
Resonated with you or affirmed your thinking? Why those?

Challenged your thinking?

Did not resonate with you or that you disagree with? Why those?

- 2 What are 1-2 next steps you want to take, if any, to deepen your understanding of the common limitations and your HR unit? Why those steps? Consider scheduling them now.



EXPLORE

Recommended time



● Key Findings

DL2's research shows that school district central office HR units that support equitable teaching and learning:

- Eliminate, streamline, and redesign routine business processes continuously to free school and HR staff time to focus on strategic support for equitable teaching and learning
- Ensure that teacher recruitment and selection drive equitable teaching and learning
- Partner with principals to staff teacher teams strategically, with an explicit focus on supporting the retention and success of teachers of color

Deepen your thinking about these premises limitations by responding to the questions in Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3 Research-based Premises for HR Transformation

HR units that advance equitable teaching and learning...	What does this premise mean?	What is an example that illustrates what taking action on this premise involves?	How is this premise important to supporting equitable teaching and learning?
<p>Eliminate, streamline, and redesign routine business processes continuously to free school and HR staff time to focus on strategic support for equitable teaching and learning</p>			
<p>Ensure that teacher recruitment and selection drive equitable teaching and learning</p>			
<p>Partner with principals to staff teacher teams strategically with an explicit focus on supporting the retention and success of teachers of color</p>			

Consider the extent to which you agree or disagree that how your district’s HR unit currently operates reflects these premises using the prompts in Table 3.4.

In the process, remember (or remind other participants) that if your HR unit mainly does not operate in ways consistent with these premises, you are in good company—HR leaders and staff typically have had little guidance, support, or other resources for doing so. Celebrate that you are now creating the space to explore new ideas.

TABLE 3.4 The Research-based Premises and Your HR Unit

To what extent do you agree that your district’s HR unit works in ways consistent with these premises?	Check the box next to your rating and give your rationale for the rating				
<p>Eliminate, streamline, and redesign routine business processes continuously to free school and HR staff time to focus on strategic support for equitable teaching and learning</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p>
<p>Ensure that teacher recruitment and selection drive equitable teaching and learning</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p>
<p>Partner with principals to staff teacher teams strategically with an explicit focus on supporting the retention and success of teachers of color</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p>



EXTEND

Recommended time



If you want to take a deeper dive into the research underlying those premises, read the second half of Chapter 3 in *From tinkering to transformation: How school district central offices drive equitable teaching and learning* (Honig & Rainey, 2023, Harvard Education Press). As you do, reaffirm, add to, or revise your work in Tables 3.3 and 3.4. Otherwise, move to ENGAGE if you are working with others or REFLECT if working alone.



ENGAGE

Recommended time



If you are working with others, compile participants' work from either EXPLORE, EXTEND, or both in a space visible to all.

Compare those responses by discussing questions such as the following:

- 1 What are our main points of agreement?
- 2 What are our main points of difference or disagreement?
- 3 What additional information might we want to collect and discuss to better understand each other's views of the premises and our central office?
- 4 Whose perspectives might add more evidence or examples that could challenge or support our analysis?
- 5 What are some concrete next steps we want to take? When and how will we take those steps and monitor our progress?

Individually, conclude your work in this part by considering the following questions in writing.

- 1 How, if at all, did your work on this part:
Confirm your thinking about how HR operates when it supports equitable teaching and learning?

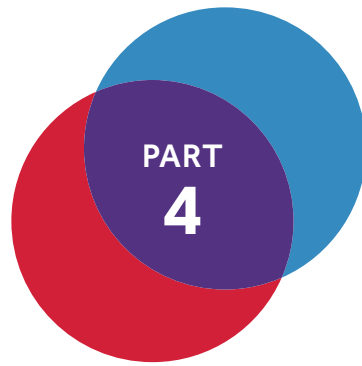
Challenge your thinking?

Raise questions for you?

- 2 Who else should participate with you in exploring these findings and next steps?
How will you engage them in this self-assessment?

Looking back at the goals and learning plans you set in the introduction:

- 1 In what ways, if any, has your work in this part helped you advance your goals? Be sure to record and celebrate that progress.
- 2 Did your engagement with this part suggest adjustments to your goals? If so, make those changes now.
- 3 Did your engagement with this part suggest additional or other steps to help you advance toward your original or revised goals? If so, make those changes now.



PRINCIPAL SUPERVISION

Principal supervision in school district central offices traditionally has emphasized work with principals on compliance, operations, and evaluation with little evidence of improved results in those or other areas closer to the classroom. DL2's research underscores the importance of principal supervisors shedding that long-standing work and partnering with principals on their growth as instructional leaders in service of equitable teaching and learning.


How have principal supervisors traditionally operated?

How have some districts transformed principal supervision to bolster principals' growth as instructional leaders in service of equitable teaching and learning? The activities in this part address those questions to inform your vision and next steps for principal supervision in your district.

PART 4A
YOUR CURRENT STATE



EXPLORE

Recommended time 

First, consider the current state of principal supervision in your district related to equitable teaching and learning by responding to the following questions in writing.

- 1 What are 2-3 specific ways, if any, that the daily work of principal supervisors in your district supports equitable teaching and learning?
- 2 What is an example that illustrates each of those ways of working?
- 3 How do you know those ways of working provide that support?

Key Findings

DL2's research shows that principal supervision in school district central offices of varying sizes and contexts tends to reflect common limitations when it comes to supporting equitable teaching and learning, including:

- Principals insufficiently focused on instructional leadership
- Weak support for principals' growth as instructional leaders
- Principal supervisors focused mainly on compliance, operations, and evaluation, not principals' instructional leadership

Deepen your thinking about these common limitations by responding to the questions in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1 Common Limitations with Principal Supervision for Equitable Teaching and Learning

Limitation	What is this limitation?	What is an example that illustrates how this limitation plays out in practice?	How does this limitation matter to how principal supervision supports equitable teaching and learning?
Principalship insufficiently focused on instructional leadership			
Weak support for principals' growth as instructional leaders			
Principal supervisors focused mainly on compliance, operations, and evaluation, not principals' instructional leadership			

Reflect on the extent to which you agree or disagree that the current work of principal supervision in your district reflects these common limitations using the prompts in Table 4.2.

In the process, remember (or remind other participants) that if these limitations are true of principal supervision in your district, you are in good company—Principal Supervision units typically have had little guidance or other resources for supporting equitable teaching and learning or improving their performance in other ways.

TABLE 4.2 The Common Limitations and Principal Supervision in Your District

To what extent do you agree that your district's principal supervisors work in ways that reflect these common limitations?	Check the box next to your rating and give your rationale for the rating				
<p>Principalship insufficiently focused on instructional leadership</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
<p>Weak support for principals' growth as instructional leaders</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
<p>Principal supervisors focused mainly on compliance, operations, and evaluation, not principals' instructional leadership</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>

Return to your initial reflections in EXPLORE above and then consider:

- 1 What, if anything, about engaging with the common limitations:
Confirmed your thinking about the current state of principal supervision in your district?

Challenged your thinking?

Raised questions you may want to explore further? If so, when/how will you explore those questions?

- 2 Would a deeper dive into the research on these limitations help your self-assessment? If so, when will you engage in the EXTEND section below?

- 3 Who else should participate with you in examining the limitations in the EXPLORE or EXTEND sections? When and how will you engage them?



EXTEND

Recommended time



If you want to take a deeper dive into the research underlying those limitations, read the first part of Chapter 4 in *From tinkering to transformation: How school district central offices drive equitable teaching and learning* (Honig & Rainey, 2023, Harvard Education Press). As you do, reaffirm, add to, or revise your work in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. Otherwise, move to ENGAGE if you are working with others or REFLECT if working alone.




If you are working with others, compile participants' work from either EXPLORE, EXTEND, or both in a space visible to all.

Compare those responses by discussing questions such as the following:

- 1 What are our main points of agreement?
- 2 What are our main points of difference or disagreement?
- 3 What additional information might we want to collect and discuss to better understand each other's views of the common limitations and our central office?
- 4 Whose perspectives might add more evidence or examples that could challenge or support our analysis?
- 5 What are some concrete next steps we want to take? When and how will we take those steps and monitor our progress?



REFLECT

Recommended time 

Individually, conclude your work in this part by considering the following questions in writing.

- 1 What are 1-2 ideas from your work in this unit so far, if any, that:
Resonated with you or affirmed your thinking? Why those?

Stretched your thinking? Why those?

Did not resonate with you or that you disagree with? Why those?

- 2 What are 1-2 next steps you want to take, if any, to deepen your understanding of the common limitations of principal supervision and your district? Why those steps? Consider scheduling them now.



EXPLORE

Recommended time



● Key Findings

DL2's research shows that when principal supervision supports equitable teaching and learning, principal supervisors:

- Operate with a clear conception of their role as a dedicated support for principals' growth as instructional leaders
- Support principals to lead their own learning as instructional leaders
- Supplement principals' leadership of their own learning with one-on-one coaching and facilitation of principal learning communities from a teaching-and-learning stance
- Receive support for their growth from their own supervisor from a teaching-and-learning stance

Deepen your thinking about these premises by responding to the questions in Table 4.3.

TABLE 4.3 Research-based Premises for the Transformation of Principal Supervision

Principal supervisors who advance equitable teaching and learning...	What does this premise mean?	What is an example that illustrates what taking action on this premise involves?	How is this premise important to supporting equitable teaching and learning?
Operate with a clear conception of their role as a dedicated support for principals' growth as instructional leaders			
Support principals to lead their own learning as instructional leaders			
Supplement principals' leadership of their own learning with one-on-one coaching and facilitation of principal learning communities from a teaching-and-learning stance			
Receive support for their growth from their own supervisor from a teaching-and-learning stance			

Consider the extent to which you agree or disagree that the current work of principal supervisors in your district reflects these premises using the prompts in Table 4.4.

In the process, remember (or remind other participants) that if principal supervision in your district mainly does not operate in ways consistent with these premises, you are in good company—principal supervisors have typically had little guidance, support, or other resources for doing so. Celebrate that you are now creating the space to explore new ideas.

TABLE 4.4 The Research-based Premises and Principal Supervision in Your District

To what extent do you agree that your district's principal supervisors work in ways consistent with these premises?	Check the box next to your rating and give your rationale for the rating				
Operate with a clear conception of their role as a dedicated support for principals' growth as instructional leaders	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
Support principals to lead their own learning as instructional leaders	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
Supplement principals' leadership of their own learning with one-on-one coaching and facilitation of principal learning communities from a teaching-and-learning stance	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
Receive support for their growth from their own supervisor from a teaching-and-learning stancer	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>



EXTEND

Recommended time



If you want to take a deeper dive into the research underlying those premises, read the second half of Chapter 4 in *From tinkering to transformation: How school district central offices drive equitable teaching and learning* (Honig & Rainey, 2023, Harvard Education Press). As you do, reaffirm, add to, or revise your work in Tables 4.3 and 4.4. Otherwise, move to ENGAGE if you are working with others or REFLECT if working alone.



ENGAGE

Recommended time




If you are working with others, compile participants' work from either EXPLORE, EXTEND, or both in a space visible to all.

Compare those responses by discussing questions such as the following:

- 1 What are our main points of agreement?
- 2 What are our main points of difference or disagreement?
- 3 What additional information might we want to collect and discuss to better understand each other's views of the premises and our central office?
- 4 Whose perspectives might add more evidence or examples that could challenge or support our analysis?
- 5 What are some concrete next steps we want to take? When and how will we take those steps and monitor our progress?



REFLECT

Recommended time 

Individually, conclude your work on this part by considering the following questions in writing.

- 1 How, if at all, did your work on this part:

Confirm your thinking about how principal supervision operates when it supports equitable teaching and learning?

Challenge your thinking?

Raise questions for you?

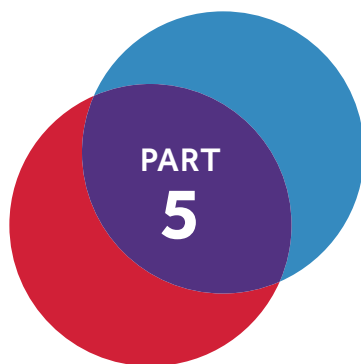
- 2 Who else should participate with you in exploring these findings and next steps? How will you engage them in this self-assessment?

Looking back at the goals and learning plans you set in the introduction:

- 1 In what ways, if any, has your work in this part helped you advance your goals? Be sure to record and celebrate that progress.

- 2 Did your engagement with this part suggest adjustments to your goals? If so, make those changes now.

- 3 Did your engagement with this part suggest additional or other steps to help you advance toward your original or revised goals? If so, make those changes now.




OPERATIONS

School district central office operational units such as facilities, transportation, and nutritional services have historically sat on what some leaders call the “operational side” of school districts with little connection to discussions about teaching and learning, let alone opportunities to engage in it. But the performance of those units matters to the time principals and teachers spend on instructional improvement, and operational staff themselves could work in direct service of equitable teaching and learning. DL2’s research shows how some district leaders have been transforming their operations units in service of equitable teaching and learning and realized significant improvements.

How have operational units typically supported equitable teaching and learning? What pivots have some operational units made that research associates with improved support for equitable teaching and learning districtwide? The activities in this part address those questions to inform your vision and next steps for operational units your district.

PART 5A
YOUR CURRENT STATE

 **EXPLORE**

Recommended time  45 MINS

First, consider the current state in your operational units related to supporting equitable teaching and learning by responding to the following questions in writing.

- 1 What are 2-3 specific ways, if any, that the daily work of your operational units support equitable teaching and learning?
- 2 What is an example that illustrates each of those ways of working?
- 3 How do you know those ways of working provide that support?

 **Key Findings**

DL2's research shows that school district central office operational units of varying sizes and contexts tend to reflect common limitations when it comes to supporting equitable teaching and learning, including that they are:

- Riddled with inefficiencies and inequitable workarounds
- Disconnected and distracting from equitable teaching and learning
- Staffed with people not hired or supported to advance equitable teaching and learning

Deepen your thinking about these common limitations by responding to the questions in Table 5.1.

TABLE 5.1 Common Limitations with Operational Support for Equitable Teaching and Learning

Limitation	What is this limitation?	What is an example that illustrates how this limitation plays out in practice?	How does this limitation matter to how operational units support equitable teaching and learning?
<p>Riddled with inefficiencies and inequitable workarounds</p>			
<p>Disconnected and distracting from equitable teaching and learning</p>			
<p>Staffed with people not hired or supported to advance equitable teaching and learning</p>			

Reflect on the extent to which you agree or disagree that how your district’s operational units currently operate reflects these common limitations using the prompts in Table 5.2.

In the process, remember (or remind other participants) that if these limitations are true of your operational units, you are in good company—operational units typically have had little guidance, support or other resources for supporting equitable teaching and learning or improving their performance in other ways. Celebrate that you are now creating the space to explore new ideas.

TABLE 5.2 The Common Limitations and Your Operational Units

To what extent do you agree that your district’s operational units work in ways that reflect these common limitations?	Check the box next to your rating and give your rationale for the rating				
<p>Riddled with inefficiencies and inequitable workarounds</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
<p>Disconnected and distracting from equitable teaching and learning</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
<p>Staffed with people not hired or supported to advance equitable teaching and learning</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>

Return to your initial reflections in EXPLORE above and then consider:

- 1** What, if anything, about engaging with the common limitations:
Confirmed your thinking about the current state of operations in your district?

Challenged your thinking?

Raised questions you may want to explore further? If so, when/how will you explore those questions?
- 2** Would a deeper dive into the research on these limitations help your self-assessment? If so, when will you engage in the EXTEND section below?
- 3** Who else should participate with you in examining the limitations in the EXPLORE or EXTEND sections? When and how will you engage them?



EXTEND

Recommended time



If you want to take a deeper dive into the research underlying those limitations, read the first part of Chapter 5 in *From tinkering to transformation: How school district central offices drive equitable teaching and learning* (Honig & Rainey, 2023, Harvard Education Press). As you do, reaffirm, add to, or revise your work in Tables 5.1 and 5.2. Otherwise, move to ENGAGE if you are working with others or REFLECT if working alone.



If you are working with others, compile participants' work from either EXPLORE, EXTEND, or both in a space visible to all.

Compare those responses by discussing questions such as the following:

- 1 What are our main points of agreement?
- 2 What are our main points of difference or disagreement?
- 3 What additional information might we want to collect and discuss to better understand each other's views of the common limitations and our central office?
- 4 Whose perspectives might add more evidence or examples that could challenge or support our analysis?
- 5 What are some concrete next steps we want to take? When and how will we take those steps and monitor our progress?

Individually, conclude your work on this part by considering the following questions in writing.

- 1 What are 1-2 ideas from your work in this part so far, if any, that:
Resonated with you or affirmed your thinking? Why those?

Stretched your thinking? Why those?

Did not resonate with you or that you disagree with? Why those?

- 2 What are 1-2 next steps you want to take, if any, to deepen your understanding of the common limitations and your operational units? Why those steps? Consider scheduling them now.



EXPLORE

Recommended time



● Key Findings

DL2's research shows that school district central office operational units that support equitable teaching and learning:

- Ensure routine services maximize school time and other resources for instruction
- Engage with school principals and others as a strategic instructional partner
- Invest in the leadership and growth of operational staff members to serve as strategic supports to schools

Deepen your thinking about these premises by responding to the questions in Table 5.3.

TABLE 5.3 Research-based Premises for Transformation of Operations

Operational units that advance equitable teaching and learning...	What does this premise mean?	What is an example that illustrates what taking action on this premise involves?	How is this premise important to supporting equitable teaching and learning?
<p>Ensure routine services maximize school time and other resources for instruction</p>			
<p>Engage with school principals and others as a strategic instructional partner</p>			
<p>Invest in the leadership and growth of operational staff members to serve as strategic supports to schools</p>			

Consider the extent to which you agree or disagree that the work of your district’s operational units reflects these premises using the prompts in Table 5.4.

In the process, remember (or remind other participants) that if your operational unit mainly does not operate in ways consistent with these premises, you are in good company—operational leaders and staff typically have had little guidance, support, or other resources for doing so. Celebrate that you are now creating the space to explore new ideas.

TABLE 5.4 The Research-based Premises and Your Operational Units

To what extent do you agree that your district’s operational units work in ways consistent with these premises?	Check the box next to your rating and give your rationale for the rating				
<p>Ensure routine services maximize school time and other resources for instruction</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p> <p>Rationale for rating:</p>
<p>Engage with school principals and others as a strategic instructional partner</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p> <p>Rationale for rating:</p>
<p>Invest in the leadership and growth of operational staff members to serve as strategic supports to schools</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p> <p>Rationale for rating:</p>



EXTEND

Recommended time



If you want to take a deeper dive into the research underlying those premises, read the second half of Chapter 5 in *From tinkering to transformation: How school district central offices drive equitable teaching and learning* (Honig & Rainey, 2023, Harvard Education Press). As you do, reaffirm, add to, or revise your work in Tables 5.3 and 5.4. Otherwise, move to ENGAGE if you are working with others or REFLECT if working alone.



ENGAGE

Recommended time



If you are working with others, compile participants' work from either EXPLORE, EXTEND, or both in a space visible to all.

Compare those responses by discussing questions such as the following:

- 1 What are our main points of agreement?
- 2 What are our main points of difference or disagreement?
- 3 What additional information might we want to collect and discuss to better understand each other's views of the premises and our central office?
- 4 Whose perspectives might add more evidence or examples that could challenge or support our analysis?
- 5 What are some concrete next steps we want to take? When and how will we take those steps and monitor our progress?

Individually, conclude your work on this part by considering the following questions in writing.

- 1 How, if at all, did your work on this part:
Confirm your thinking about how operational units operate when they support equitable teaching and learning?

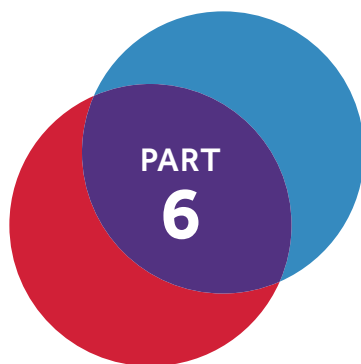
Challenge your thinking?

Raise questions for you?

- 2 Who else should participate with you in exploring these findings and next steps? How will you engage them in this self-assessment?

Looking back at the goals and learning plans you set in the introduction:

- 1 In what ways, if any, has your work in this part helped you advance your goals?
Be sure to record and celebrate that progress.
- 2 Did your engagement with this part suggest adjustments to your goals?
If so, make those changes now.
- 3 Did your engagement with this part suggest additional or other steps to help you advance toward your original or revised goals? If so, make those changes now.



CABINET

Realizing central office transformation for equitable teaching and learning requires new forms of leadership by the superintendent's executive team or cabinet. But cabinets have tended not to engage in individual or collective leadership practices that drive those results. DL2's research shows how some cabinets have transformed their own leadership in service of equitable teaching and learning with marked success.


How have cabinets typically supported equitable teaching and learning?

What pivots have some cabinets made that research associates with improved support for equitable teaching and learning districtwide? The activities in this part address those questions to inform your vision and next steps for cabinet leadership in your district.

PART6A
YOUR CURRENT STATE



EXPLORE

Recommended time 

First, consider the current state of your district's cabinet related to supporting equitable teaching and learning by responding to the following questions in writing.

- 1 What are 2-3 specific ways, if any, that the daily work of your cabinet supports equitable teaching and learning?
- 2 What is an example that illustrates each of those ways of working?
- 3 How do you know those ways of working provide that support?

Key Findings

DL2's research shows that the operation of cabinets tend to reflect common limitations when it comes to supporting equitable teaching and learning, including:

- Staff throughout the central office typically have little connection to senior leaders' vision or another unifying direction around equitable teaching and learning
- Staff expertise and experience go largely underutilized and underdeveloped
- Cabinet meetings and cabinet members' time get consumed with nonstrategic work

Deepen your thinking about these common limitations by responding to the questions in Table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1 Common Limitations with Cabinet Support for Equitable Teaching and Learning

Limitation	What is this limitation?	What is an example that illustrates how this limitation plays out in practice?	How does this limitation matter to how cabinets support equitable teaching and learning?
<p>Staff throughout the central office typically have little connection to senior leaders' vision or another unifying direction around equitable teaching and learning</p>			
<p>Staff expertise and experience go largely underutilized and underdeveloped</p>			
<p>Cabinet meetings and cabinet members' time get consumed with nonstrategic work</p>			

Reflect on the extent to which you agree or disagree that how the current operation of your cabinet reflects these common limitations using the prompts in Table 6.2.

In the process, remember (or remind other participants) that if these limitations are true of your cabinet, you are in good company—cabinets typically have had little guidance, support or other resources for supporting equitable teaching and learning or improving their performance in other ways. Celebrate that you are now creating the space to explore new ideas.

TABLE 6.2 The Common Limitations and Your Cabinet

To what extent do you agree that your cabinet works in ways that reflect these common limitations?	Check the box next to your rating and give your rationale for the rating				
<p>Staff throughout the central office typically have little connection to senior leaders' vision or another unifying direction around equitable teaching and learning</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p> <p>Rationale for rating:</p>
<p>Staff expertise and experience go largely underutilized and underdeveloped</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p> <p>Rationale for rating:</p>
<p>Cabinet meetings and cabinet members' time get consumed with nonstrategic work</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i></p> <p>Rationale for rating:</p>

Return to your initial reflections in EXPLORE above and then consider:

- 1 What, if anything, about engaging with the common limitations:
Confirmed your thinking about the current state of your cabinet?

Challenged your thinking?

Raised questions you may want to explore further? If so, when/how will you explore those questions?

- 2 Would a deeper dive into the research on these limitations help your self-assessment? If so, when will you engage in the EXTEND section below?

- 3 Who else should participate with you in examining the limitations in the EXPLORE or EXTEND sections? When and how will you engage them?



EXTEND

Recommended time



If you want to take a deeper dive into the research underlying those limitations, read the first part of Chapter 6 in *From tinkering to transformation: How school district central offices drive equitable teaching and learning* (Honig & Rainey, 2023, Harvard Education Press). As you do, reaffirm, add to, or revise your work in Tables 6.1 and 6.2. Otherwise, move to ENGAGE if you are working with others or REFLECT if working alone.




If you are working with others, compile participants' work from either **EXPLORE**, **EXTEND**, or both in a space visible to all.

Compare those responses by discussing questions such as the following:

- 1 What are our main points of agreement?
- 2 What are our main points of difference or disagreement?
- 3 What additional information might we want to collect and discuss to better understand each other's views of the common limitations and our central office?
- 4 Whose perspectives might add more evidence or examples that could challenge or support our analysis?
- 5 What are some concrete next steps we want to take? When and how will we take those steps and monitor our progress?



REFLECT

Recommended time 

Individually, conclude your work on this part by considering the following questions in writing.

- 1 What are 1-2 ideas from your work in this part so far, if any, that:
Resonated with you or affirmed your thinking? Why those?


Stretched your thinking? Why those?

Did not resonate with you or that you disagree with? Why those?

- 2 What are 1-2 next steps you want to take, if any, to deepen your understanding of the common limitations and your cabinet? Why those steps? Consider scheduling them now.



EXPLORE

Recommended time 

Key Findings

DL2's research shows that cabinets that support equitable teaching and learning:

- Lead the ongoing development and use of a theory of action
- Foster staff leadership and learning
- Focus cabinet meeting time on strategy and learning
- Bridge strategically to external and internal resources and buffer against distractions

Deepen your thinking about these premises by responding to the questions in Table 6.3.

TABLE 6.3 Researched-based Premises for Transformation of Cabinet Leadership

Cabinets that advance equitable teaching and learning...	What does this premise mean?	What is an example that illustrates what taking action on this premise involves?	How is this premise important to supporting equitable teaching and learning?
Lead the ongoing development and use of a theory of action			
Foster staff leadership and learning			
Focus cabinet meeting time on strategy and learning			
Bridge strategically to external and internal resources and buffer against distractions			

Consider the extent to which you agree or disagree that how your cabinet currently operates reflects these premises using the prompts in Table 6.4.

In the process, remember (or remind other participants) that if your cabinet mainly does not operate in ways consistent with these premises, you are in good company—cabinet leaders and staff typically have had little guidance, support, or other resources for doing so. Celebrate that you are now creating the space to explore new ideas.

TABLE 6.4 The Research-based Premises and Your Cabinet

To what extent do you agree that your cabinet works in ways consistent with these premises?	Check the box next to your rating and give your rationale for the rating				
Lead the ongoing development and use of a theory of action	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
Rationale for rating:					
Foster staff leadership and learning	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
Rationale for rating:					
Focus cabinet meeting time on strategy and learning	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
Rationale for rating:					
Bridge strategically to external and internal resources and buffer against distractions	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 <i>Disagree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 <i>Agree Somewhat</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 <i>Agree</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 <i>Strongly Agree</i>
Rationale for rating:					



EXTEND

Recommended time



If you want to take a deeper dive into the research underlying those premises, read the second half of Chapter 6 in *From tinkering to transformation: How school district central offices drive equitable teaching and learning* (Honig & Rainey, 2023, Harvard Education Press). As you do, reaffirm, add to, or revise your work in Tables 6.3 and 6.4. Otherwise, move to ENGAGE if you are working with others or REFLECT if working alone.



ENGAGE

Recommended time



If you are working with others, compile participants' work from either EXPLORE, EXTEND, or both in a space visible to all.

Compare those responses by discussing questions such as the following:

- 1 What are our main points of agreement?
- 2 What are our main points of difference or disagreement?
- 3 What additional information might we want to collect and discuss to better understand each other's views of the premises and our central office?
- 4 Whose perspectives might add more evidence or examples that could challenge or support our analysis?
- 5 What are some concrete next steps we want to take? When and how will we take those steps and monitor our progress?

Individually, conclude your work on this part by considering the following questions in writing.

- 1 How, if at all, did your work on this part:
Confirm your thinking about how cabinet operates when it supports equitable teaching and learning?

Challenge your thinking?

Raise questions for you?

- 2 Who else should participate with you in exploring these findings and next steps?

Looking back at the goals and learning plans you set in the introduction:

- 1 In what ways, if any, has your work in this part helped you advance your goals?
Be sure to record and celebrate that progress.
- 2 Did your engagement with this part suggest adjustments to your goals? If so, make those changes now.
- 3 Did your engagement with this part suggest additional or other steps to help you advance toward your original or revised goals? If so, make those changes now.



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