

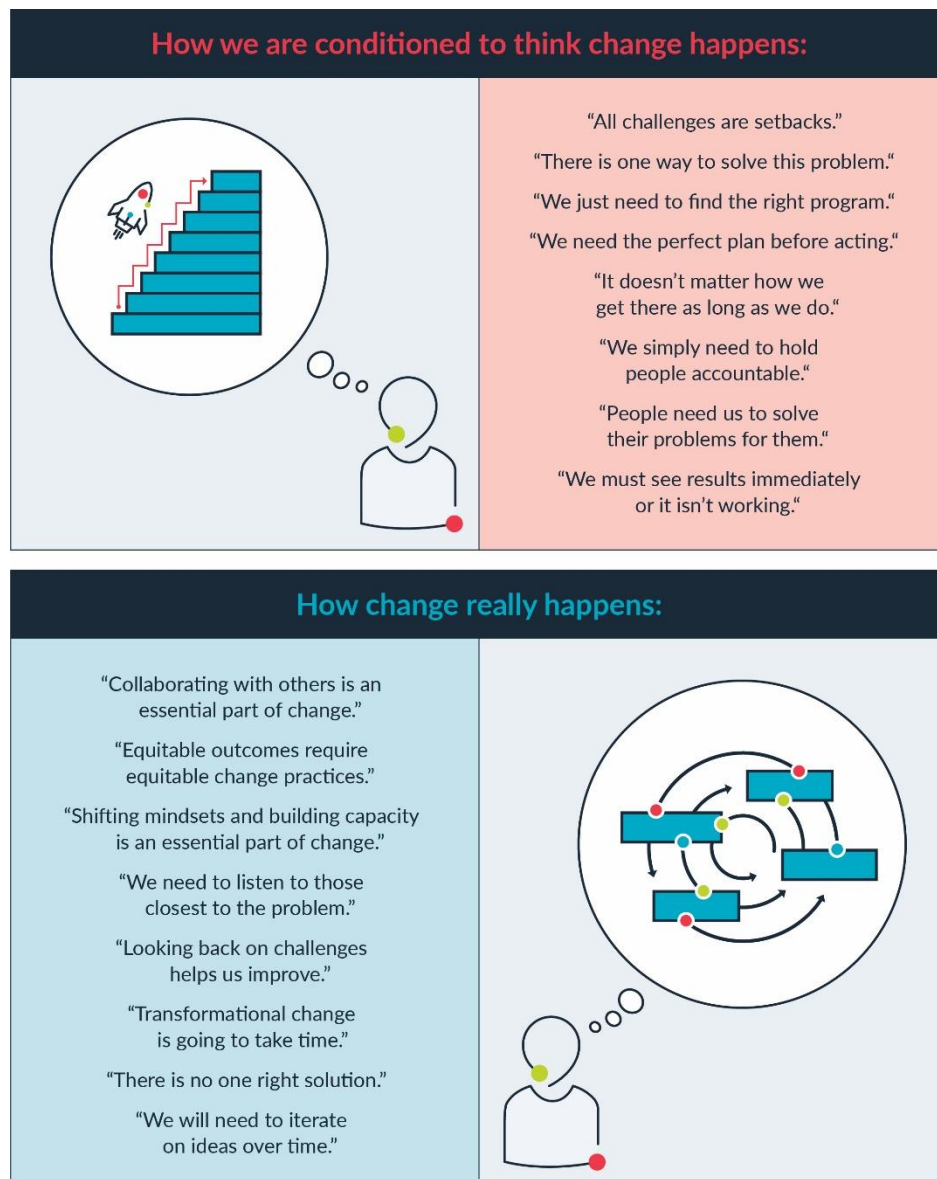
How Change Happens

Using Shared Leadership and Ownership to Recondition Mindsets about Change

The work of aligning with a **whole-child purpose** provides district and school leaders with a distinct opportunity to use improvement science as a tool for advancing equity in education. When leaders engage in effective shared leadership and ownership practices, they utilize the best of what we know from continuous improvement science while simultaneously acknowledging and disrupting patterns of oppression that often manifest in traditional, top-down change leadership and management practices.

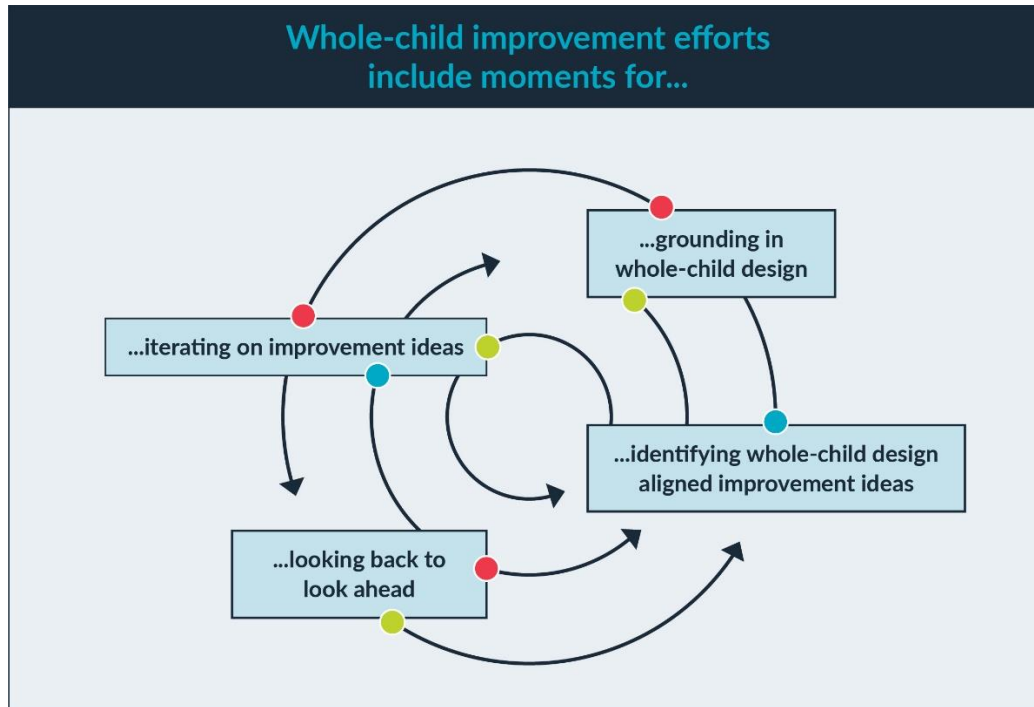
For example, research shows change is best facilitated through inclusive, iterative cycles of learning and improvement as opposed to rigid, linear implementation plans (Valdez et al., 2020; Park et al., 2013). For many leaders, this aspect of continuous improvement is different from the ways we were conditioned to think change happens or often encouraged to behave.

Without an explicit commitment to equitable, inclusive processes for change, continuous improvement efforts are not inherently equitable (Valdez et al., 2020; Park et al., 2013) and can reproduce or perpetuate inequitable outcomes for students, families, communities, and teachers.



Elements of Whole-Child Aligned Continuous Improvement Efforts

While every whole-child aligned continuous improvement effort will depend on the unique context of the school community and no effort will follow perfect, linear steps, leaders engaging in this work can expect to spend time grounding in a shared understanding of whole-child design, identifying aligned improvement ideas, iterating on those improvement ideas, and looking back at successes and challenges to inform action in the future.



In addition, as leaders take bite-sized action toward whole-child aligned change, they can engage in the following shared leadership and ownership practices to fortify their continuous improvement efforts:

1. Take frequent, repeated equity pauses
2. Include others in meaningful, authentic, ongoing ways
3. Intentionally build capacity for whole-child design over time
4. Center staff relationships and collaboration

To get started, teams can surface their current understandings of what “continuous improvement” means and their existing mindsets about how change happens. They can identify what qualities of a continuous improvement effort could be used to promote or advance educational equity vs. reproduce or perpetuate inequitable outcomes for students, families, communities, and teachers. Finally, they can discuss commitments they can make in their own change initiatives to ensure that their continuous improvement efforts result in equitable outcomes.

References:

- Park, S., Hironaka, S., Carver, P., & Nordstrum, L. (2013). *Continuous improvement in education* (p. 48). Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Valdez, A., Takahashi, S., Krausen, K., Bowman, A., & Gurrola, E. (2020). *Getting better at getting more equitable: Opportunities and barriers for using continuous improvement to advance educational equity*. WestEd.