

Clarifying Purpose

What It Is

- ▶ Clarify the overarching purpose of improving all learner outcomes to create a focus toward which everyone works on a day-to-day basis.
- ▶ Develop a deep understanding of the overarching purpose from which to focus specific actions.
- ▶ Link actions to the central purpose of the work.
- ▶ Co-construct the process of clarifying purpose.
- ▶ Ensure a relentless focus on learners by being “keepers of the purpose.”

Why It Matters

- ▶ An explicit shared clear purpose provides direction and avoids dissipating the limited time and energy available in schools.
- ▶ An overarching purpose, driven by a social justice motivation, keeps the work going when things get tough.
- ▶ A narrow and deep approach that is explicitly designed for transfer to other areas is more effective than doing many things at once.
- ▶ Schools are busy places, and educators can need encouragement and permission to focus on a few key things.

How I Do It

- ▶ Work closely with leaders and teachers to co-construct and clarify a shared purpose.
- ▶ Be keepers of the purpose. Point out drift from the focus to those who may be too close to the work to

see it. Name the purpose to remind leaders at key times.

- ▶ Relate and deliberately link all actions back to the purpose and current focus.
- ▶ Check in with others about purpose and ask these questions: How does this fit with what we are doing? Why are we doing this? What will be the impact on learners?

Key Challenges for Me

- ▶ Making sure that purpose is co-constructed in genuine ways by those tasked with making the changes
- ▶ Getting a shared and deep understanding of equity necessary for improving all learner outcomes through changing educator practices
- ▶ Remembering to regularly and explicitly return to the purpose
- ▶ Staying strong as the keeper of the purpose even when there is disagreement

What I Should Notice

- ▶ How clearly can people articulate the purpose and the reasons for the activities being undertaken?
- ▶ Is the school or district channeling its energy and time into work that is part of the agreed purpose, or are there many distractions?
- ▶ Is the main focus becoming part of “how we do things” rather than an add-on or optional extra?
- ▶ Is there a relentless focus on improving learner outcomes?