

ROOT #6

Bringing a Systemic Focus

What It Is

- ▶ See any improvement effort as part of a number of larger contexts, which will affect how proposed changes are taken up (e.g., classroom, department, school, district, family, community).
- ▶ Help other people see all the “moving parts” that are involved in making improvements.
- ▶ Value and prioritize coherence within and across different parts of the organization.
- ▶ Be a coordinator and a link between levels and contexts.
- ▶ Explicitly develop shared understandings across levels and contexts.
- ▶ Focus efforts and resources on common goals.

Why It Matters

- ▶ Students, classrooms, and schools sit inside wider systems that shape what can be done.
- ▶ Isolated pockets of improvement will not lead to sustained improvement for learners, but coherence across systems can.
- ▶ Deliberately working across multiple levels triggers quicker and more lasting impacts.
- ▶ Engaging people across the system leads to better decisions and more sustainable improvement.
- ▶ Understanding how different layers influence what happens makes problem solving more effective.

How I Do It

- ▶ Build relationships with key players across the system, and gain their commitment.
- ▶ Keep the big picture in mind, and help others to do this too.

- ▶ Understand improvement in its context, seeing what surrounds the chosen focus and why things are as they are.
- ▶ Manage complexity, and understand how things are interconnected.
- ▶ Work in and across multilevel teams.
- ▶ Co-construct a shared vision or purpose, and keep actions across contexts and levels directed toward this.
- ▶ Implement specific actions as part of a wider context and broader plan.

Key Challenges for Me

- ▶ Preventing overload, fragmentation, and “initiativitis”
- ▶ Keeping the big picture in mind while also attending to details at a local level
- ▶ Creating coherence across systems when there are many people involved with different perceptions, commitments, and beliefs
- ▶ Gaining access to all levels of a context

What I Should Notice

- ▶ Who are the key players I need to engage with?
- ▶ Who is missing, and how am I including them?
- ▶ Where is there connection or disconnection with me?
- ▶ How am I making others aware of the importance of a systemic approach?
- ▶ How am I taking account of systemic factors in my understanding of a context or issue?
- ▶ Am I thinking widely when asking why things are as they are?