Appendix A.1 • Understanding Your System

Developing a deeper, evidence-based understanding of your system, its learners, and the capabilities and conditions that enable valued outcomes

Dimension	Substantially off Track	Getting Started	Looking Promising	Well on Track	Geared for Success
Establishing clarity around the real causes of underachievement	There's a widespread lack of clarity around the conditions that are fostering and hindering deeper learning, respectively. This often leads to a misplaced emphasis on perceptions of learners' abilities and backgrounds, as opposed to the system's inability to meet learners' needs.	Learning partners are beginning to understand that their own capabilities and the conditions they create have a lot to do with learners' capacity for success. What those conditions are and how they're linked to the needs of individual learners remain unclear.	Learning partners are developing a clear picture of their learners and their needs. There's a widespread shift in thinking, from "What's wrong with these learners?" to "What can we do to better meet their needs?" and "What can the school and wider school system do to help us meet those needs together?"	Most learning partners are clear about which learners are struggling the most and what conditions are limiting their potential. Partners are beginning to make links among learners' needs, their own capabilities, and the conditions at the school and wider school-system levels.	Learning partners know who their learners are, which ones are struggling the most, and what they and their learners need to be successful. They've established school- or system-wide clarity around the capabilities and conditions at play, and they look in all cases to self- and collective improvement in supporting all learners to learn deeply and succeed.
Developing a systemic professional learning strategy that addresses the real causes of underachievement	There's no clear emphasis on forming direct links between professional learning and student learning, resulting in a clear disconnect between what learners actually need and the professional learning opportunities offered by the school or wider system.	Professional learning opportunities are beginning to reflect an understanding of why learners are struggling and how those needs might be addressed. Learning partners are working to connect those opportunities with the causes they're intended to address and the outcomes they're intended to develop.	The professional learning strategy is intentionally designed to fill the gaps in capability at all levels of the system that are directly linked to the underlying causes of underachievement. Its impact is felt in pockets, but measured outcomes continue to expose a system whose strategy doesn't fully account for identified needs.	The professional learning strategy reflects widespread understanding of the system, its learners, and how the combined effects of learning partners' actions and decisions at all levels of the system impact learners' outcomes. Partners understand both what learners need and how those needs can be addressed systemically.	All professional learning is determined by current measures of learning outcomes and their enablers, and it reflects a clear understanding of root causes and how to address them. The effectiveness of specific opportunities is fully evidenced and directly linked to its impact on learning outcomes, and their success is both felt and measured school- or system-wide.

(Continued)

Dimension	Substantially off Track	Getting Started	Looking Promising	Well on Track	Geared for Success
Understanding what works best, for whom, and why	Programs, initiatives, and approaches are implemented loosely, without an understanding of which learners will be impacted, how, and why. The focus is on what worked and what didn't, as opposed to whether this approach is working, why, and how it can be improved in real time to further develop learners' outcomes.	Learners' needs and learning styles are considered in light of approaches that have or haven't worked in the past, what is or isn't working now, and what needs to change. There's a lack of clarity around why certain approaches work for certain learners and how to gather the evidence required to inform that understanding in real time.	Learning partners are beginning to take a more active role in relation to school or wider system implementation efforts. This involves deliberate attention to and measurement of approaches' effects on individuals' outcomes, and reflection on what changes can be made mid-implementation to improve them.	There's a school- or system-wide understanding of the importance of linking initiatives and approaches to individuals' outcomes, and of the assessment evidence required in making those connections a reality. All implementation efforts in the school or wider system answer for, and adapt in light of, their measured impact.	Learning partners are gathering focused assessment evidence that provides not just a general understanding of which approaches are working but also a complete picture of whom they're working for and why. "What works" is known, understood, shared, added to, and continuously deepened throughout the school or wider system.
Gathering meaningful, collective evidence in the system and in the community	Learning partners' understanding of their system and its learners isn't rooted in the necessary evidence. Collected evidence fails to get at the heart of what really matters for learners, and learning partners aren't supported to provide or gather meaningful and authentic evidence of learning.	There's an emerging understanding of the importance of collecting assessment evidence to inform measurement and, in turn, change. Additional support is needed to create, monitor, and measure performance on assessments that demonstrate whether specific approaches, learning experiences, and professional learning opportunities effectively develop intended outcomes.	Learning partners are beginning to adopt a structured and consistent approach to assessment design and implementation that ensures healthy and informed measurement practice. Common challenges involve gathering the range of necessary evidence, synthesizing it, and engaging learners, parents, and others as active partners throughout the assessment process.	Learning partners at all levels of the school or school system inform their measurement, actions, and decisions with assessment evidence gathered throughout the system and in the wider community. Evidenced learning is fed back into improvement efforts, and learning partners play a prominent role in informing and enacting changes that improve learners' outcomes.	All actions and decisions in the school or wider school system reflect an evidence-based culture that puts learners and their outcomes first. Learning partners recognize that evidence is everywhere, and, therefore, assessment is natural and continuous. The evidence they gather collectively informs measurement *and* deepens outcomes.

Source: The Learner First, 2018

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