Leading with Values:
Actions for Inclusive Innovation in Education

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Insights from the 2022 Inclusive Innovation convening and emerging findings from Digital Promise Inclusive Innovation pilots with school districts and communities.

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Leading with Values:
Actions for Inclusive Innovation in Education

● Beyond "Student Voice": Let Students Lead

"We often elevate student voice for our own benefit." Student voice must move beyond feedback and input. Make way for students to lead, trust them, and act on what they say they need.

● Amplify the Context Expertise of Families and Communities

Honoring the context expertise of students and families engages them in co-leadership roles that disrupt power and amplifies their wisdom.

● Recognize and Respect the Legacy Within Communities

Historically and systematically excluded communities have a rich and enduring history of collective action in education. We must not only learn from this legacy, but actively support the work a community is already doing.

● Build Capacity Among a Broad Coalition

Engage more collaborators across the ecosystem—and focus on the skills building and mindset shifts needed for equity-centered R&D to pave the way for broader coalitions that can impact policy and more.

● Sustaining the People Will Sustain the Work

We must resource, plan for, and support both the capacity and wellbeing of those educators and community members who will implement R&D solutions, and maintain foundational relationships with them.

Beyond "Student Voice": Let Students Lead

"We often elevate student voice for our own benefit." Student voice must move beyond feedback and input. Make way for students to lead, trust them, and act on what they say they need.

ACTIONS

Position students to lead in ways that ensure "do no harm."

Create opportunities to engage and understand student perspectives at scale.

Seek out and work with students who are not always selected to be at the table—students who have been excluded.

Follow through—when students speak, listen and act.

Compensate, honor, and resource students for their expertise, work, and contributions.

> *We're so focused on the 'work' that we're not connecting and supporting the youth [whom] 'the work' is intended to serve."*

Amplify the Context Expertise of Families and Communities

Honoring the context expertise of students and families engages them in co-leadership roles that disrupt power and amplifies their wisdom.

ACTIONS

Families and communities are underrepresented and "under-honored" in education R&D efforts. **Invite their assets and wisdom**: "Students and families often do not realize they are experts of their experiences. That discovery can be both a journey and a light bulb."

Support sustainability, capacity-building, and goals that matter to them: "Superintendents leave, principals leave, teachers leave… families stay."

Interrogate and address the conditions that prevent parent engagement.

Resource and compensate context expertise.

Ensure their leadership informs "actual decision making."

" *Recognize the urgency of the work for community members. It's not just research. It's people's lives.*"

Recognize and Respect the Legacy Within Communities

Historically and systematically excluded communities have a rich and enduring history of collective action in education. We must not only learn from this legacy, but actively support the work a community is already doing.

ACTIONS

Learn from and resource community-based movement builders and organizers who have sustained their education advocacy and "collective design" to address injustice.

Recognize and support "R&D" in its most authentic forms. Communities know how to problem-solve and design.

Create opportunities and resources for communities to access and participate in equity-centered education R&D.

Advocate. Educational equity through new R&D models should not be separated from the advocacy that has brought change in the past and is deeply needed now.

How can we honor and learn from those who have been doing this work for decades?"

Build Capacity Among a Broad Coalition

Engage more stakeholders across the ecosystem—and focus on the skills building and mindset shifts needed for equity-centered R&D to pave the way for broader coalitions that can impact policy and more.

ACTIONS

Engage state education agencies, higher education, community organizations, and policymakers.

Avoid jargon. Create common language and definitions.

Check traditional power dynamics. Connect to people's values and motivations in the work.

Shape a local and a national policy agenda.

People who are impacted most should be in **positions of power**. Students and families must be co-creators with senior leaders.

Relationships are the foundation for impact.

" No one person or group has all the answers. How do we scale the underpinnings of collaboration, namely, curiosity and humility, to grow together?"

Sustaining the People Will Sustain the Work

We must resource, plan for, and support both the capacity and wellbeing of those educators and community members who will implement R&D solutions, and maintain foundational relationships.

ACTIONS

Support educator wellbeing; address teacher and administrator burnout, especially among educators of color.

Make the work matter: "Be true to words like equity, innovation, and inclusion. Otherwise, they can become hollow."

Prioritize building connective tissue that engages families and community members long-term, not just for a one-off project.

Celebrate, reward, and compensate people.

Measure what matters with ways that "reinvent what progress looks like."

"**Create conditions** for partnerships to reimagine some of the 'red tape' processes" to help students.
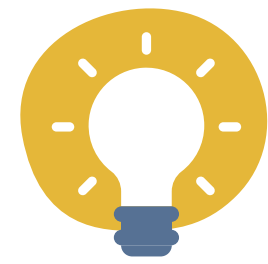
" How do we maintain and sustain our hard-fought victories?"

" Adult wellbeing has a lot of downstream effects in education."

What informed these actions?

These actions primarily reflect themes from written insights and more than 130 survey responses from #InclusiveInnovation22 convening attendees. Priorities came from their insights on:

Bright spots, pain points, goals, and questions around the Tenets of Inclusive Innovation

Emerging Findings from research studies on the Center for Inclusive Innovation pilots

Notes, observations, and assets from #InclusiveInnovation22 sessions

Interviews with district leaders, students, and community members

Special thanks to Cricket Fuller for her leadership with the Center for Inclusive Innovation and for compiling the insights in this report.

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