

The Need for Transformation

Providing engaging experiences for students requires a commitment to continuous innovation and the constant creation of new ways of doing things—in the classroom and the principal's office, as well as in the central office and the boardroom. This means that schools and the districts in which schools are embedded must be transformed from bureaucratic institutions into learning organizations.

Transforming schools and districts is not the same as reforming them. Indeed, to some, the word *transformation* is used to represent ideas related to punishments, rewards, or changes in governance structures.

In *Leading for Learning*, Phillip Schlechty explains, “Schools must be transformed from platforms for instruction to platforms for learning, from bureaucracies bent on control to learning organizations aimed at encouraging disciplined inquiry and creativity.”

Phillip Schlechty, *Leading for Learning*, 2009

This requires strong leaders who have a deep understanding of why transformation is needed and who have the capacity to mobilize the energy of others to make the changes that must be made. It calls on all who work in and around schools to change their mental models regarding the organization and its structures, and—based on these changes—to learn to do things they have never done before.

In response to the need for school leaders to develop these understandings, the Schlechty Center has created a series of interactive learning experiences designed to be facilitated either on-site in schools or districts, in a conference setting, or at our corporate office in Louisville, Kentucky.

Learning Experiences

Saving Public Education

Collaborative School Investigation (CSI)

Transformation 2.0

Taking Stock

Saving Public Education—A Path to Transformation



Saving Public Education is an interactive learning experience which draws on elements of a traditional board game. Its purpose is to provide players with greater understandings of Schlechty Center frameworks and major concepts and to help players envision new possibilities for public education. Audiences could include school system staff, board members, students, parents, community partners and leaders.

Key concepts include the following:

- Transformation vs. reform
- Learning organization vs. bureaucracy
- Core business
- Directional System
- Superordinate goal

Participants will leave this learning experience with an understanding of what is required of leaders to transform public education and a sense of urgency for leading such a transformation. Participants will summarize their understanding of transformation and the urgency to save public education in a series of “talking points” to use with other leaders in their districts.

Why would a district want to bring Saving Public Education to the district?

- To offer in-depth learning experiences for Design Teams throughout the district
- To address the need for leaders to learn how to apply key concepts in the district: becoming a learning organization, leading transformation, creating a clear direction, and imagining new possibilities for schools and districts
- To develop among the school board and key leaders throughout the community a common understanding of the need for change and the challenges facing public education
- To provide a yearlong leadership opportunity for current and aspiring leaders

If I’m interested in having educators in my district experience Saving Public Education, what do I do?

There are several different ways to participate in Saving Public Education:

- Send participants to a Schlechty Center regional conference which offers a two-day version of Saving Public Education.
- Invite Schlechty Center senior associates to facilitate Saving Public Education in your district for groups of 25–100 participants.
- Come to the Schlechty Center’s office in Louisville for a special two-and-a-half-day experience intended to familiarize superintendents or other district leaders with the interactive learning experience before a district purchases a license.
- Send district leaders who will facilitate Saving Public Education back in your district to a special four-day experience in Louisville.

How is Saving Public Education different from other Schlechty Center experiences?

Saving Public Education has several unique features, including the following:

- Combines elements of a board game, a simulation, team-based learning, and web-based resources using major ideas from Phil Schlechty's book—*Leading for Learning*
- May be facilitated by Schlechty Center staff or by Schlechty Center-trained facilitators from districts who purchase a license
- Requires at least a two-and-a-half-day experience but could be customized and used over five to eight sessions spread out over several months

Who would be prime candidates to participate in Saving Public Education?

Saving Public Education is designed to give leaders of various role groups experiences in using major Schlechty Center concepts and frameworks to analyze a school district seeking transformation and to create a new model for public education.

Some groups of leaders who might benefit from this experience include the following:

- School boards with superintendents
- Principals
- Design Teams from across a school district
- Central office leaders
- Teacher leaders, including coaches with C4DII training
- Aspiring leaders

Why did the Schlechty Center create this learning experience at this time?

Given the widespread national discussion of educational transformation and the many versions of what *transformation* is and what it requires, the Schlechty Center created this experience to help leaders understand the kind of thinking required for system transformation and the urgency for leaders to hone their own thinking and to stimulate their imaginations.

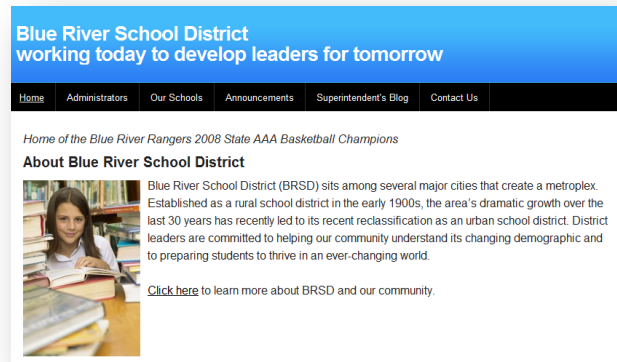
Collaborative School Investigation (CSI)

Participants practice analyzing web-based artifacts of life in a school and a district using the Schlechty Center's Six Critical Systems and other tools to understand why initiatives succeed or fail. Audiences could include either individuals or teams from schools or districts or both.

Key concepts include the following:

- Social systems
- Six Critical Systems
- Disciplined investigation

By the end of this experience, participants will have created a work plan for using the critical systems to assess their own school and district and for beginning to redesign their school and district in order to make engagement and learning central.



What are the major elements of Collaborative School Investigation?

This interactive learning experience requires two full days of work. Teams will leave with plans for using their new learning in their own schools or districts.

- Participants act as “investigators” and learn about a fictional school and a fictional school district through extended study of their websites.
- CSI focuses on the differences between learning organizations and bureaucracies, the nature and function of social systems, and the Schlechty Center's Six Critical Systems.
- CSI teams' investigations seek out how each of the Six Critical Systems is functioning.
- Based on their investigations, teams make recommendations for high-leverage development work.

How is CSI unlike typical workshops?

- CSI requires teams of participants to investigate and use the Six Critical Systems in order to develop a deep understanding of each.
- Participants work in teams to create a specific product.
- Participants use technology as a means to investigate a school and a district.

Why would a district want to bring CSI to a school or the district?

- A school or a district might want to use the experience of CSI to provide staff with the “big picture” of what it means to work on changing social systems in order to become a learning organization.
- A school or district might want to provide a special interactive learning experience for Design Teams from across the district.
- A school or district might want to provide teacher leaders, principals, and others with a deepened appreciation of the importance of the Directional, Knowledge Development and Transmission, and Recruitment and Induction Systems.

If I’m interested in having educators in my district experience CSI, what do I do?

There are at least two different ways to do this:

- Send participants to a Schlechty Center regional conference which offers a two-day version of CSI.
- Invite Schlechty Center senior associates to facilitate CSI in your district for groups of 25–100 participants.

Why did the Schlechty Center create this learning experience at this time?

Given the conceptual complexity of social systems, the Schlechty Center created this experience to encourage leaders to think about experiences in schools in terms of social systems, rather than in terms of personnel failure. This compelling, interactive experience provides participants a disciplined way to investigate a “messy” school situation and reach conclusions on which educators might act. This experience was created to model a learning experience which relies on a “pull” rather than a “push” environment.

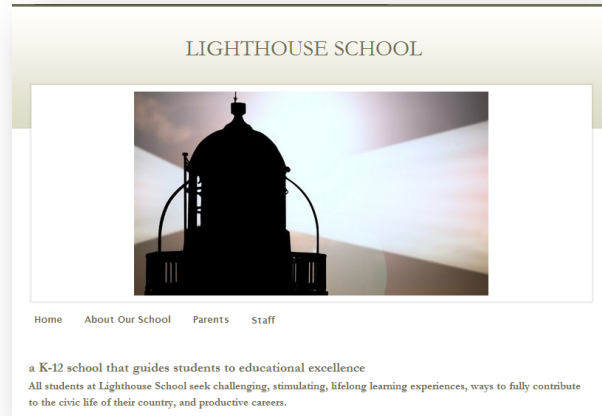
Transformation 2.0

In this experience, attendees assess a school's capacity, not its present performance, gathering evidence from web-based artifacts and face-to-face interviews to draw conclusions about the potential of the school to support school transformation. Audiences could include individuals or teams from schools or districts or both.

Key concepts include the following:

- Capacity
- Transformation
- System Capacity Standards
- Frameworks as lenses

By the end of this experience, participants will have produced a work plan outlining how they might assess the capacity of their own schools and districts to support desired innovations.



What are the major components of Transformation 2.0?

This interactive learning experience requires two full days of work. Teams will leave with plans for using their new learning in their own schools or districts.

- Participants learn about a fictional school through print material and a school website.
- Participants post their notes on a Transformation 2.0 website which gives participants access to one another's learning as it develops throughout the workshop.
- Transformation 2.0 focuses on the differences between school reform and transformation, the meaning of *capacity*, and a comprehensive tool for assessing capacity using the Schlechty Center's System Capacity Standards.

How is Transformation 2.0 unlike typical workshops?

- Transformation 2.0 requires teams of participants to use what they learn about capacity and the Schlechty Center's System Capacity Standards to actually assess a hypothetical school, determine its capacity, and make specific recommendations to the school.
- Participants work in teams to create a specific product.
- Participants use technology as a means to assess the school and to capture their learning throughout the conference.

Why would a district want to bring Transformation 2.0 to a school or the district?

- A school or a district might want to use the experience of Transformation 2.0 to cause staff—teachers, principals, district office leaders—to gain a deep understanding of what the Schlechty Center means by *capacity*.
- A school or a district might want to prepare staff to conduct a self-assessment of a single school or the entire district or both.

If I'm interested in having educators in my district experience Transformation 2.0, what do I do?

There are several different ways to do this:

- Send participants to a Schlechty Center regional conference which offers a two-day version of Transformation 2.0.
- Invite Schlechty Center senior associates to facilitate Transformation 2.0 in a district for groups of 25–100 participants.

Why did the Schlechty Center create this learning experience at this time?

This experience is offered to develop in district and school leaders a deep understanding of capacity and to encourage leaders to use assessment of capacity as part of their continual strategy to transform schools. Transformation 2.0 is designed to provide “practice” assessing capacity in a non-threatening situation with colleagues and to model a learning experience which relies on a “pull” rather than a “push” environment.

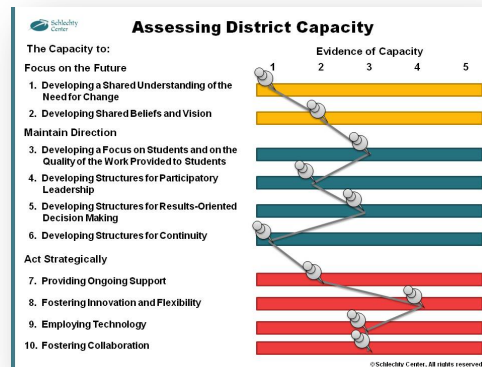
Taking Stock

Taking Stock is a two-day activity designed for key leaders across role groups to explore and assess the capacity of their school or district to support and sustain change. Using Schlechty Center System Capacity Standards and other tools, participants will create an audit which will provide guidance in deciding on high-leverage actions ensuring the following:

- Clarity of purpose and values
- Sense of direction
- Leadership commitment
- Infrastructure for taking action
- Resource allocation flexibility
- Assessment mechanisms

Key concepts include the following:

- Transformation vs. reform
- Images of School
- Capacity
- Critical social systems
- Strategic action



As a result of “Taking Stock,” participants will report their assessment of school or district capacity on a customized chart for ongoing use in designing and planning development work.

Why would a school or district want to participate in Taking Stock?

It is not enough to know where you are going; you have to know where you are. As a result of participating in Taking Stock, school and district leaders, as well as Design Teams and other important groups, will have a sense of what strategic actions are needed. The audit will make clear what is high-leverage and worthy of pursuing. Often a result of the audit is the purposeful abandonment of activities that do not contribute to direction and that overwhelm staff or deplete energy.

How is Taking Stock different from typical evaluation processes?

Most organizational evaluation processes are about how the organization performs. Taking Stock is about the capacity of the organization to perform. It is also about engagement as opposed to compliance, providing insights into what needs to be done to create a focus on students at all levels of the school or district.

Who would be prime candidates to participate in Taking Stock?

The most frequently-heard positive comment from participants of Taking Stock is, “I learned so much from listening to the perspective of others.” It is for this reason that audience diversity is desirable. This includes different role groups and often includes students, parents, and other key community leaders. People are seated in cross-role groups at tables of six to eight participants. Group norms are established to create a safe learning environment and encourage rich and engaging conversations.