



CHAPTER 10 TRY THIS: BE THE LEADER WHO CHANGES THE SYSTEM



Throughout this book, we've explored how improvement science can transform leadership, culture, and outcomes for students. We've examined the barriers that impede well-intentioned reforms and how ownership, vulnerability, and a culture of inquiry are key ingredients for authentic, continuous improvement.

This is your moment to reflect on what kind of leader you will be. Will you lead from compliance or curiosity? Will you create mandates or momentum? Will you chase quick wins or build lasting change?

It starts with YOU! Use this activity to close your own vision-implementation gap and be the leader who changes the system.

1. Vision: Define Your Leadership Legacy

Imagine it's five years from now. You are about to receive an award for transformational leadership in education. The room is filled with your staff, students, families, and community members. As they introduce you, they reflect on the impact you've had.

What do you want them to say?

- How did your leadership change the way continuous improvement is embedded in your school or district?
- What did staff say about the culture you built?
- How did students' experiences improve because of the work you led?
- How did your leadership advance equity?

Write your leadership legacy statement:

We are honored to give this award for leading in a way that ...



2. Shift Your Mindset

Identify the mindset shift you need to make to bring that vision to reality.

- What do I need to unlearn, rethink, or let go of to lead in this way?
- What leadership habit must I strengthen?

My leadership mindset shift:

3. Take Action

Commit to an audacious action. Vision without action is just a wish. Choose one bold step you will take this week to begin embedding principles of improvement into your leadership practice. Examples of bold leadership actions:

- Empower your team—Identify a key decision or improvement effort and shift ownership to staff. (Remember to build capacity and support the shift!)
- Make vulnerability safe—Publicly share a challenge you've faced, and what you learned from it.
- Center equity—Analyze a problem of practice. Press in until you get to the root of the equity gap and improve the system that contributes to it.
- Change a structure—Revise an ongoing leadership meeting format, data process, or collaboration routine to better reflect an improvement culture.

My bold leadership action:

Use your legacy, mindset shift, and bold action to close the gap between your vision and implementation. Equity-focused leadership comes to life through integrity—alignment between what we believe, say, and do.