

# DESIGNING FOR EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT THAT SCALES: PROCESSES OF INQUIRY IN PRACTICE

## SUMMARY

In this chapter I propose a set of design principles for scalable educational improvement. These principles have been derived from my own experiences as well as those of other researchers and professional developers as we have worked in various parts of the United States with a variety of reform efforts. The design principles are an attempt to capture and reflect the convergence in the lessons learned across these improvement efforts. Ten principles deal with change at three levels in a multi-tiered system: four deal with the change process itself, three with organizational change, and three with individual change. The change process at all levels requires new thinking about learning, social contexts of learning, collaboration among individuals and groups that have traditionally been isolated from one another, and engagement in ongoing inquiry and reflection processes targeted at the multiple levels of the educational system ranging from student learning to federal policies. Critical to furthering our understanding of educational change and scale up is the commitment to documenting and analyzing specific cases of educational improvement efforts so that we can build a systematic knowledge base that will inform future change efforts.

To exemplify the kinds of experiences and lessons learned from contemporary educational improvement efforts, the second part of the chapter describes a specific case of educational change that I participated in over an almost ten year period of time. Over the course of that time the program experienced a variety of changes, some stimulated by within-program forces and others by forces external to the program. These lessons point to issues of goal alignment and coherence in implementation within and across the

innovation, the educational system, and the multiple stakeholders. The case is not offered as “proof” of the utility of the design principles. To the contrary, the design principles serve as a set of hypotheses about what’s needed for educational improvement to be both sustainable and capable of scalable.

The concluding section of the chapter raises some general issues for consideration in efforts to create and scale up educational improvement. One issue is the need for participants in educational improvement to examine assumptions about the meaning of concepts central to the process, including the definition of improvement itself, so that differences are clear and part of the conversation around the innovation. A second is that flexibility and adaptability are critical to successful educational improvement models and their “adoption” by others.