

Supporting School Administrators Leading Toward Racially Just and Ambitious Mathematics Instruction



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Background and Context

Our research and partnership investigates the relationships between leadership, improvements in teachers' racially just ambitious instructional practices, and students' learning experiences.

RACIALLY JUST AMBITIOUS MATHEMATICS INSTRUCTION challenges traditional ideas about who is capable and what it means to do mathematics



> **Ambitious mathematics instruction** is conceptually-focused, inquiry-oriented instruction that uses cognitively demanding tasks, supports students to understand mathematical relationships, emphasizes students' sense-making and mathematical reasoning, and encourages students to engage with each other's ideas.

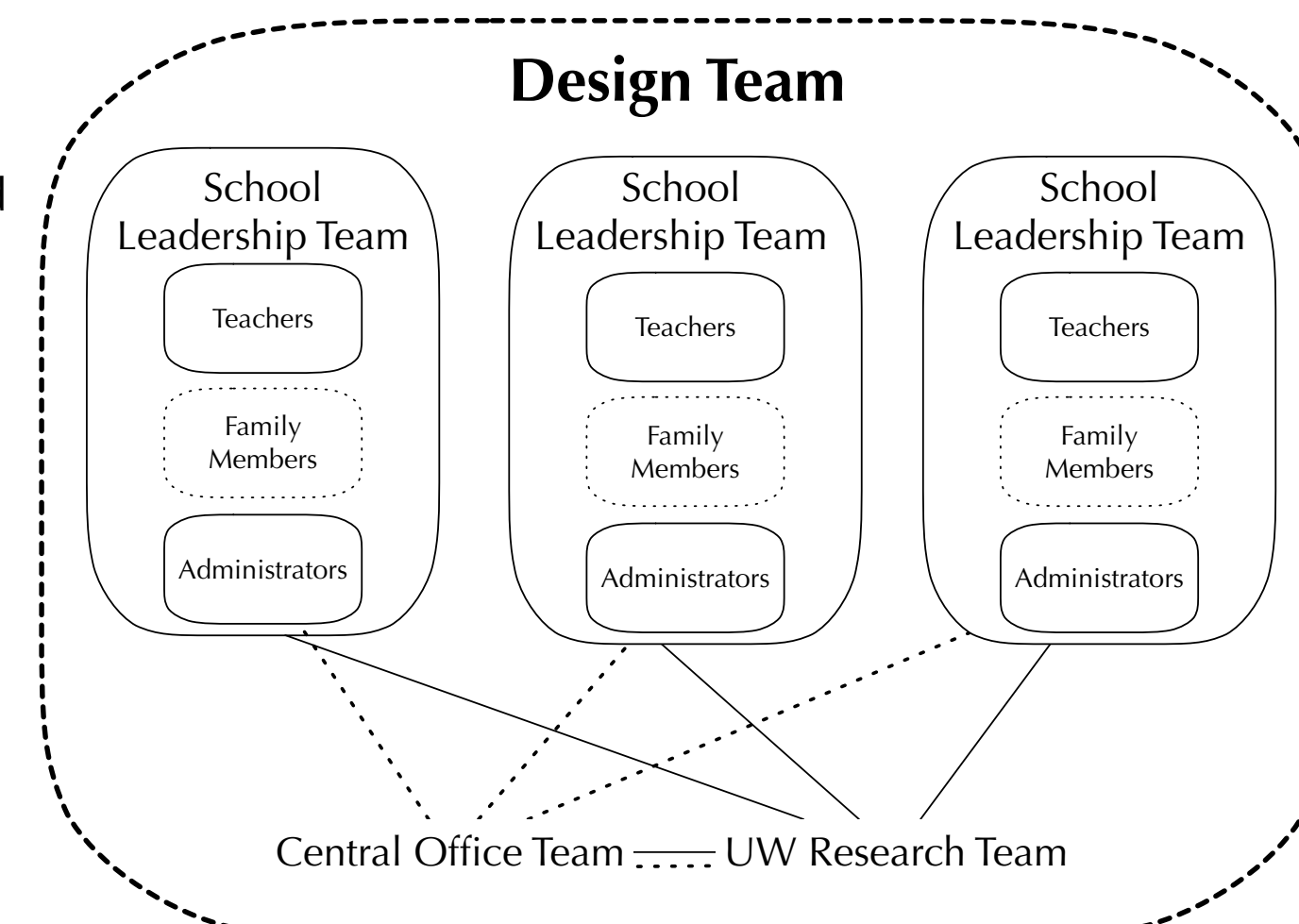
> **Racially just ambitious mathematics instruction** incorporates the core features of ambitious mathematics and acts upon social conditions that marginalize students based on race. Racially just mathematics promotes students' access to learning opportunities and achievement and transforms their experiences around identity and power.

Research Questions

- 1) What are the leadership practices that develop knowledge and create systems in support of racially just teaching and learning in elementary mathematics?
- 2) How do leaders learn and develop these new practices?
- 3) How do changes in leadership practices relate to changes in teachers' racially just instructional practices?
- 4) How do leadership practices for racially just teaching and learning influence students' mathematics learning experiences?

> Our research is embedded within a **Research-Practice Partnership (RPP)** with school and district leaders in one racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse mid-sized district located in the south end of the Seattle metropolitan area.

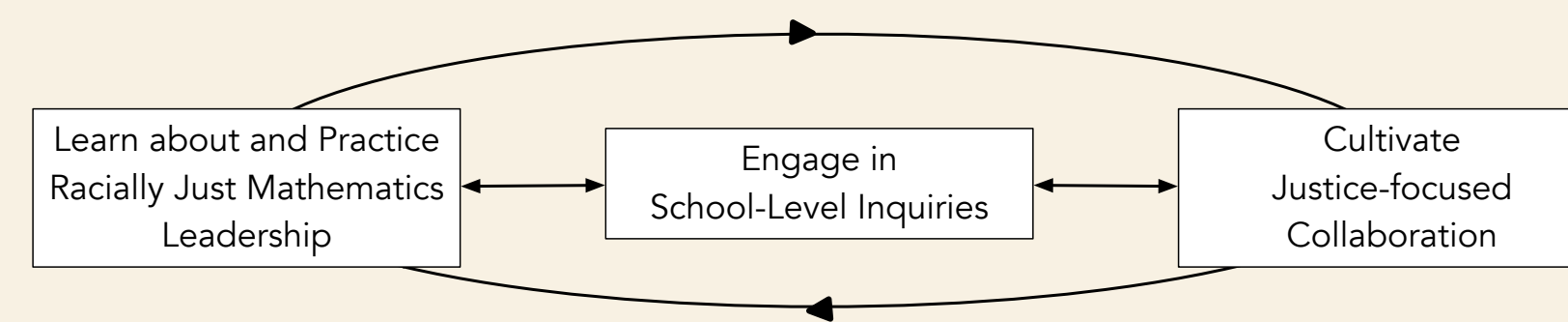
> The RPP design team's role is to facilitate learning across the system and to uncover tensions and use them as generative moments through which we can recognize and disrupt White supremacy.



Emerging Understandings

Leaders needed opportunities to learn about both what counts as racially just ambitious mathematics teaching and learning and how to lead for it.

- > Leaders' learning was productive when we got "into the weeds" of mathematics content and examined the racial contexts of math learning in each classroom.
- > After examining student interview data and connecting with families at after-school events, leaders realized that they needed authentic ways to learn about families' and students' experiences with and ideas about mathematics. They also understood that teachers needed opportunities to shift their relationships with families away from informing toward building two-way partnerships.



Navigating Ongoing Tensions

- > Parents and teachers of Color have expertise in both race/racism and how they use mathematics in everyday ways. Currently, there are no parents or teachers who are formal members of our partnership. This is a challenge for our project, and there are also systemic constraints that prevent them from participating.
- > University partners hoped to disrupt current practices around curriculum use, assessment, data use, and intervention that we perceived as misaligned with our racial justice aims. District and school partners felt compelled to follow current policies.
- > Our design team and leadership teams are composed largely of White women. Teams struggled with how to broaden participation and representation without putting extra burdens on colleagues of Color.
- > Members of leadership teams agreed with project goals in principle, but we struggled to carve out time for meaningful discussions and actions. Leaders worried about placing additional learning demands on teachers given the ongoing COVID context and a new ELA curriculum adoption.



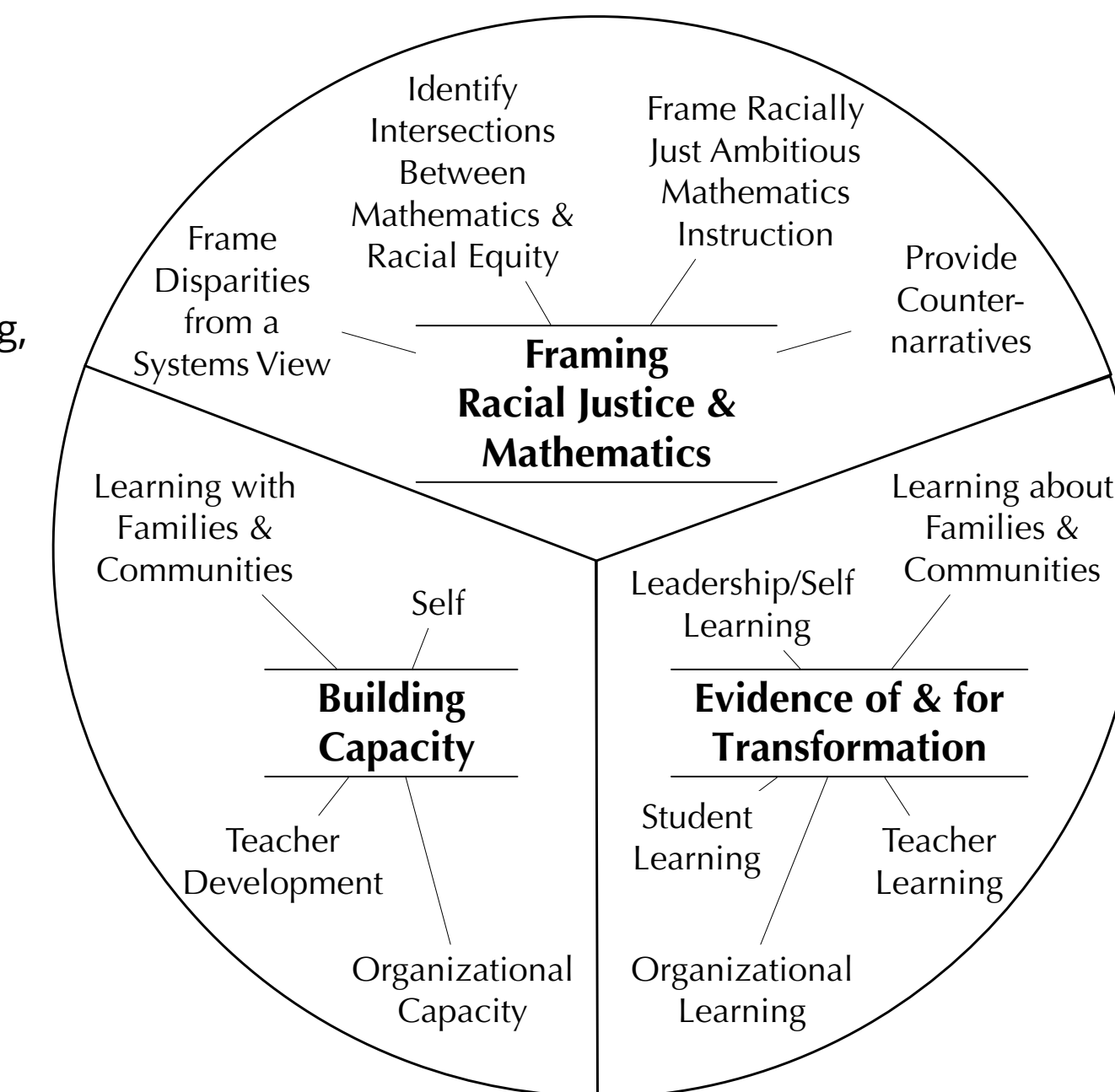
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Focus on Leadership

School leadership influences students' experiences and outcomes through teachers' instruction, and by building school climate, facilitating productive collaboration and professional learning, and managing resources. We aim to harness the power of leadership to transform racially just instructional practices and students' learning experiences.

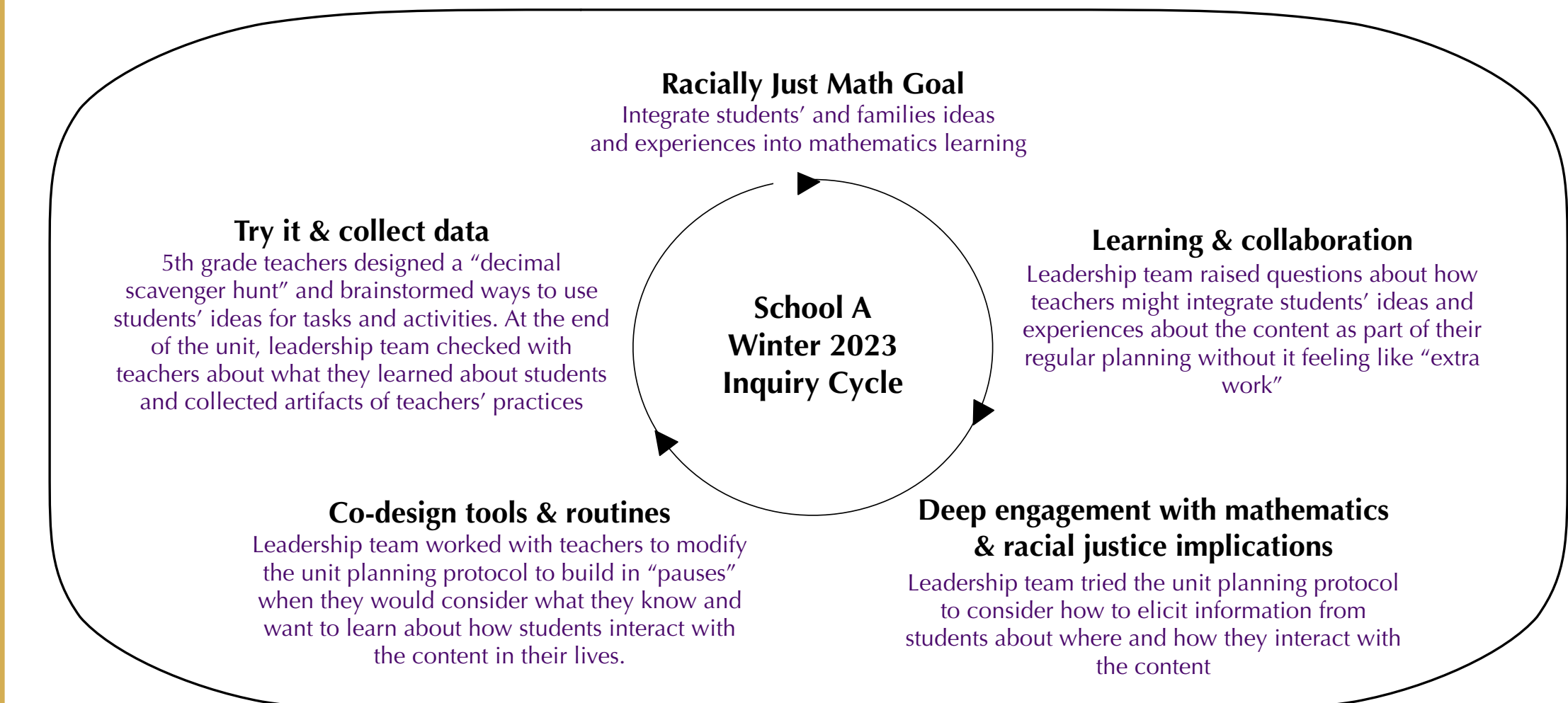
> We developed the [Leadership Practices for Racially Just Ambitious Mathematics Teaching and Learning Framework](#) by synthesizing research about racially just leadership and racially just ambitious mathematics teaching and learning and drawing on knowledge from our partnership activities.

> This framework strives to be precise without being prescriptive, to provide sufficient details so that leaders can envision and enact effective practices and researchers can identify these practices, while acknowledging that leadership is context-dependent and situated.



Collaborative Inquiry

Leadership teams from each elementary school collaborate with researchers and central office leaders in **inquiry cycles** to try on new ways to support racially just mathematics teaching and learning within their unique contexts.



> Each school leadership team explores new ideas and approaches, designs learning opportunities for themselves and others, collects and analyzes data, monitors progress, and adapts to changing conditions.