



# Guidelines to Implement in Local Contexts

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Modifications and Virtual Adaptations: These guidelines are intended to be modified and adapted as it makes most sense in the context of design. They are a starting point and should be expanded upon by the team.

## Activity Rationale and Aims

### Aims

- 01. Build and sustain trusted teams and relationships
- 02. Consider local contexts and implications for implementation

### Activity Summary

These are guiding principles that are not comprehensive, nor intended as a “step by step” but rather a starting place for reflection. When collaborators are considering implementing a research design in a new context, it is important to engage anew in the process of building trusted teams and identifying and understanding. It is also important to revisit goals and practices of assessment and evaluation.

### Rationale

Implementing research in new contexts presents great opportunities to share learning across contexts. However, research and design work is socially and contextually bound, and thus when teams are considering implementing work in a new context, it is important to learn about and adapt to localized knowledge systems (Zavala, 2013). This resource provides a few guiding principles to help teams begin to ask questions and engage in activities that can support the research to be adapted to local contexts in meaningful and culturally appropriate ways.



# Guidelines

- 01.** Consider the nature of the collaboration and the power dynamics. Questions should be asked about:
- Who initiated the collaboration?
  - What need is it addressing?
  - How have those needs been assessed?
- 02.** Engage anew in activities of building trusted teams and identifying and understanding the context.
- 03.** Make the theory of change visible (see [“Make Infrastructure Visible”](#) and [“Principled Improvisation”](#)).
- 04.** Identify the values and visions of the audience of implementation. Work within the new context to adapt activities to align with the local values and visions.
- The team can draw on the idea of mutual appropriation where the design outcomes are negotiated amongst collaborators over time, as articulated by Jurow and Freeman (2020, p. 725): “As designers working toward equity, we must hold lightly onto our designs, be willing to let go of features that no longer serve our goals and develop new approaches that can help us achieve them.” This involves holding central community perspectives and adapting to align the design work with the community’s desires, perspectives, and values.

## Example from the field

The [Fifth Dimension program](#) is an example of a designed program and research study that has developed into a network of afterschool programs that connect school children to undergraduates from local colleges and universities (Cole & The Distributed Literacy Consortium, 2006). The shared activity emphasizes learning, play, and peer interaction. Researchers and educators have implemented the Fifth Dimension model nationwide, connecting undergraduates and school-aged children and emphasizing learning, play, and interaction. These guiding principles have then been adapted in response to local contexts.

Jurow and Freeman (2020) write about an example of a local adaptation of a Fifth Dimension club, EPIC. The design narrative presented in Jurow and Freeman (2020) showcases the importance of adapting programs time and again not only in response to the local context, but in response to political climates and local and national events. Jurow and Freeman (2020) detail the process of how they “systematically and concretely adapted the design of EPIC for children and pre-service teachers to respond to the increasingly explicit racism in US political discourse that fueled Trump’s election and coinciding forms of evading race” (p. 711). This article provides an example of how sustaining research and designed programs involves a continual cycle of renewing the design.



## Commitments to Equity

When bringing research and design processes to new contexts, it is imperative to bring humility and openness to the process. There is a risk that processes, programs, and tools designed in other contexts may not fit or may need to be dramatically revised to meet the needs of local cultures and geographies. Engaging in activities previously conducted in the original setting, such as understanding the context, exploring values,

and building trust, will be extremely important so as to mitigate the risk of undermining local knowledge systems and value structures.

Supporting communities to thrive necessitates an understanding of the practices, values, and visions of local communities and then adapting research practices to extend existing practices, align with values, and work towards the communities' visions. Doing this centers care and reciprocity.



# Additional Reading

Bell, P. (2004). On the theoretical breadth of design-based research in education. *Educational Psychologist*, 39(4), 243–253.

Downing-Wilson, D., Lecusay, R., & Cole, M. (2011). Design experimentation and mutual appropriation: Two strategies for university/collaborative after-school interventions. *Theory & Psychology*, 21(5), 656–680.

Gutiérrez, K. D., Morales, P. Z. & Martinez, D.C. (2009). Re-mediating literacy: culture, difference, and learning for students from nondominant communities. *Review of Research in Education*, 33(1), 212–245.

Lather, P. (1986). Issues of validity in openly ideological research: Between a rock and a soft place. *Interchange*, 17(4), 63–84.

Tuck, E. & McKenzie, M. (2015). Relational validity and the “where” of inquiry: Place and land in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(7), 633–638.

# Works Cited

Cole, M. and The Distributed Literacy Consortium (2006). *The Fifth Dimension: An after-school program built on diversity*. Russell Sage.

Jurow, A. S. & Freeman, Q. (2020). Re-mediating designs for equity: Making commitments concrete. *Information and Learning Science*, 121(9/10), 711–728.

Zavala, M. (2013). What do we mean by decolonizing research strategies? Lessons from decolonizing, Indigenous research projects in New Zealand and Latin America. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 2(1), 55–71.

