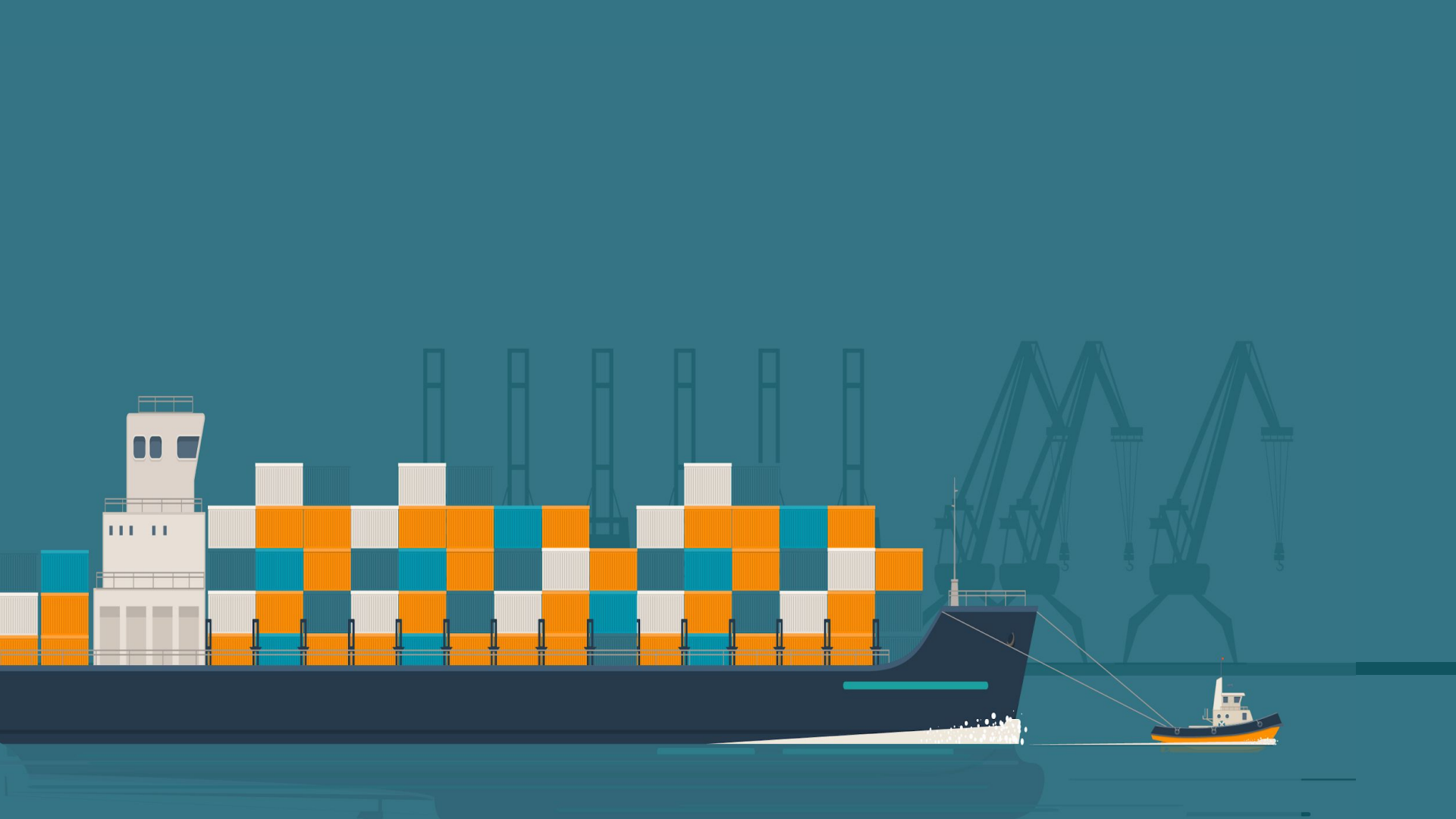
EXPLO ELEVATE
INNOVATIVE SCHOOLS COOPERATIVE

@EXPLOelevate

Pilot Programs

Now More Than Ever...Make Some Small Bets



Two key thoughts...

1

Pilot programs (inclusive of pilot courses) provide a way of flipping the coin on strategic execution from the leadership side over to the faculty and student side. It is all the same coin but each side has a different role to play and a different moment to play it.

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Two key thoughts...

2

What is coming next will be differently challenging, but no less challenging than what has happened since March 2020. Schools have responded in a number of admirable ways since early March.

In short, however, schools will have to demonstrate and sustain an ability to reinvent substantial aspects of their work if they are to remain relevant and necessary.

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This feels existential because it is. BUT...

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Metaphor Killing Alert #1

Turning a school doesn't have to be like turning the Titanic.

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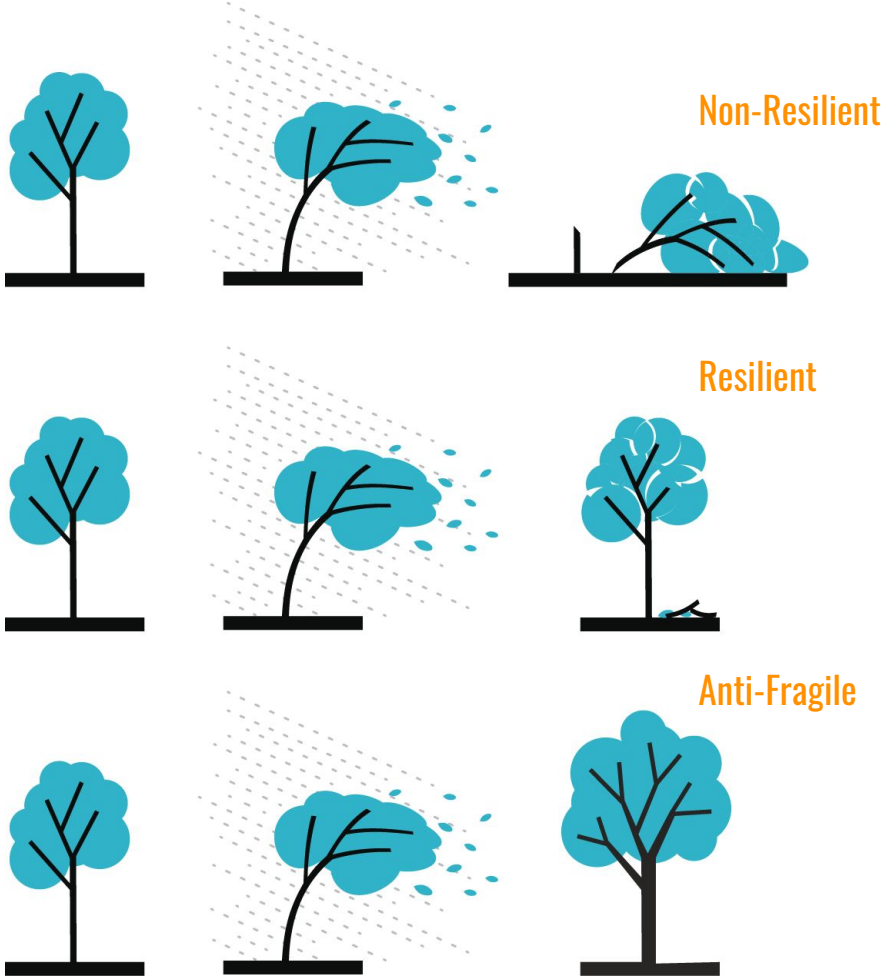
Anti-Fragility and Resilience

Anti-fragility: something that becomes stronger or more successful because of a force acting against it, versus something that is built just to withstand a force acting against it (resilience).



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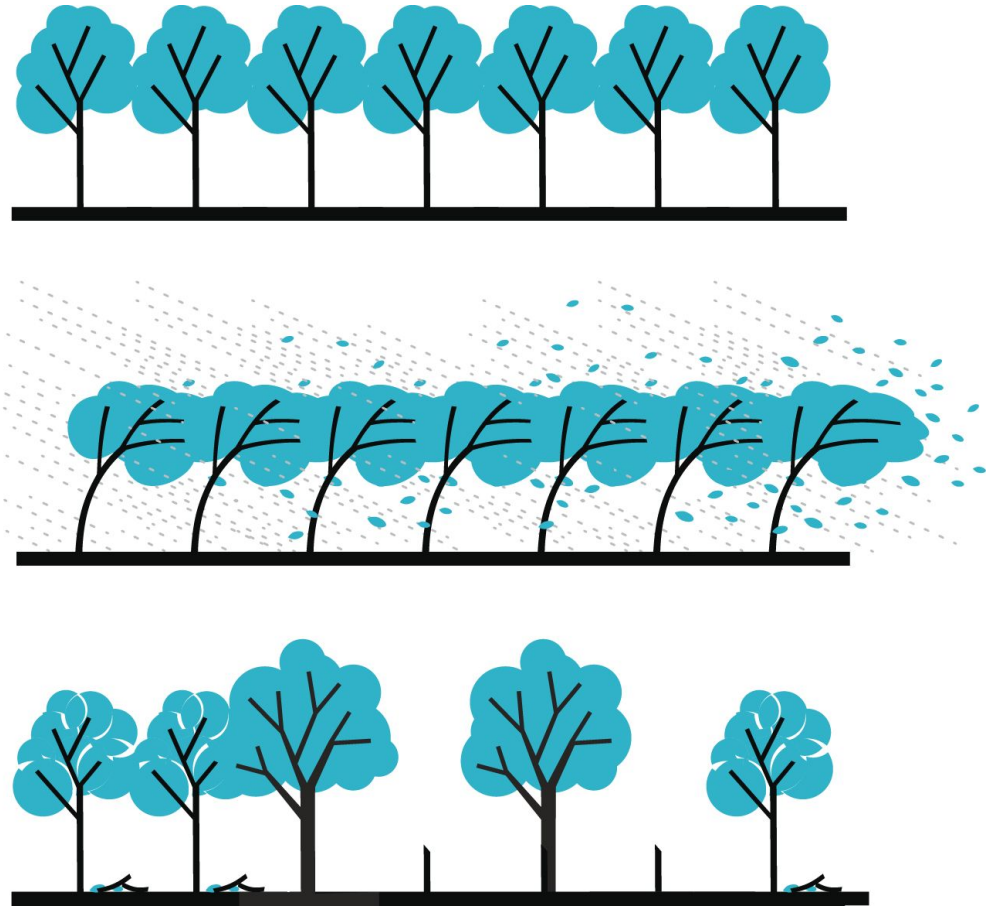
Anti-Fragility and Resilience



Pilots are:

- A way to frame strategic directions
- Attention grabbers
- Seed beds
- Manageable low cost high potential ROI
- Playful yet represent strategic priorities

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Progress Cultures need seed beds.

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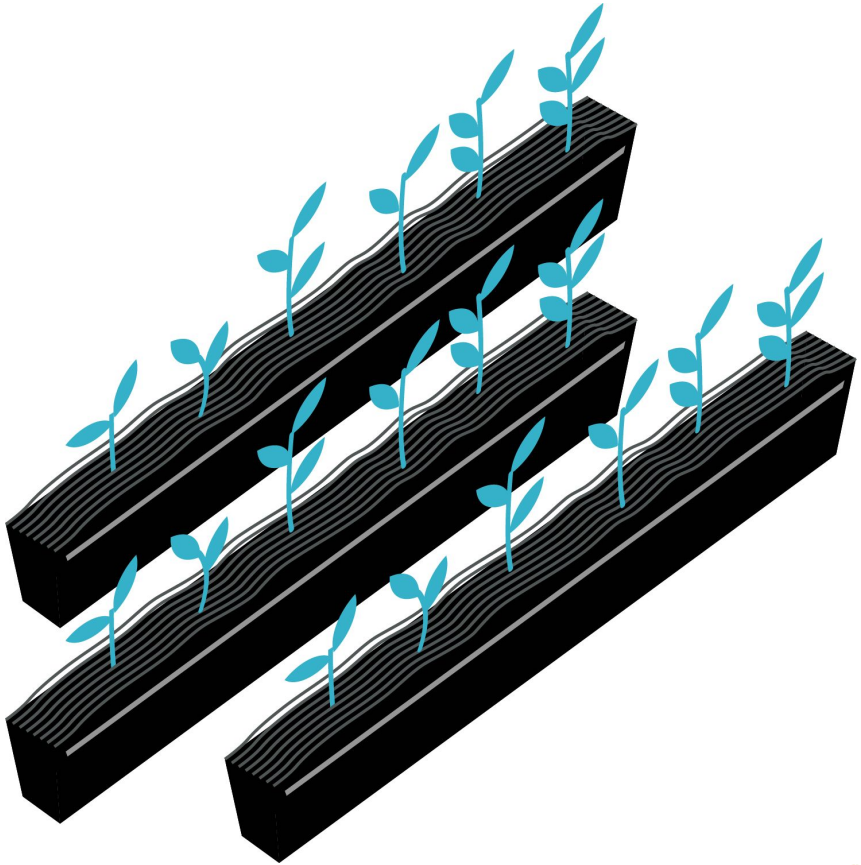
Leadership creates boundaries for the overall space (think: the TWO and think other PERMISSIONS), thus allowing individual seedbeds the space to grow.



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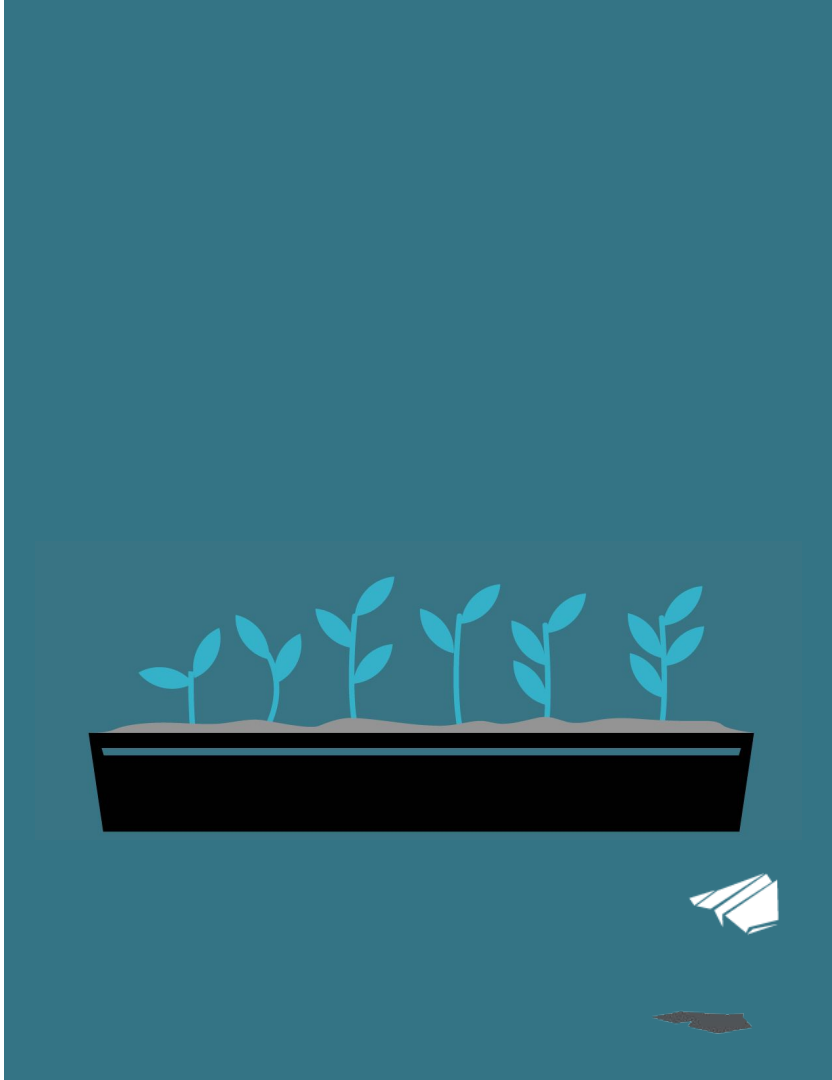
Supporting pilots does 5 vital things

Points toward the progress we want to see in the school.	Creates opportunities to extend what is already good in the school culture or curriculum.	Encourages experimentation and mitigates the damage that may occur when a new idea falls short.
Creates opportunities for the school community to see the efficacy of the school's direction.	Offers individual members the school community the opportunity to lead and to drive forward key progress in the school.	

1. Supporting pilots points toward the progress we want to see in the school.



Piloting an idea foreshadows the direction you are trying to go as a school. Accepting the idea of a pilot course or program is far easier than making a change that purports from the start to be permanent. Pilots allow a school to support but not overcommit to ambitious ideas (seeds).

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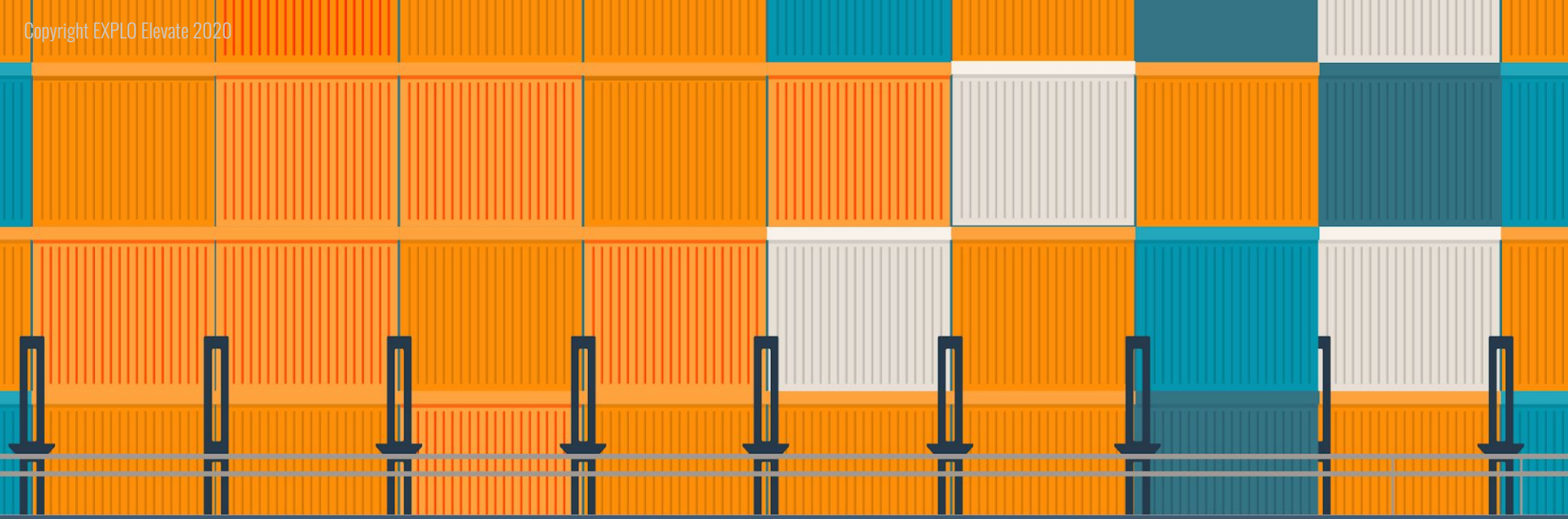

Metaphor Killing Alert #2

Leading change in a school is like needing to be the best airplane mechanic in the world because you can only fix the plane when it is in the air.

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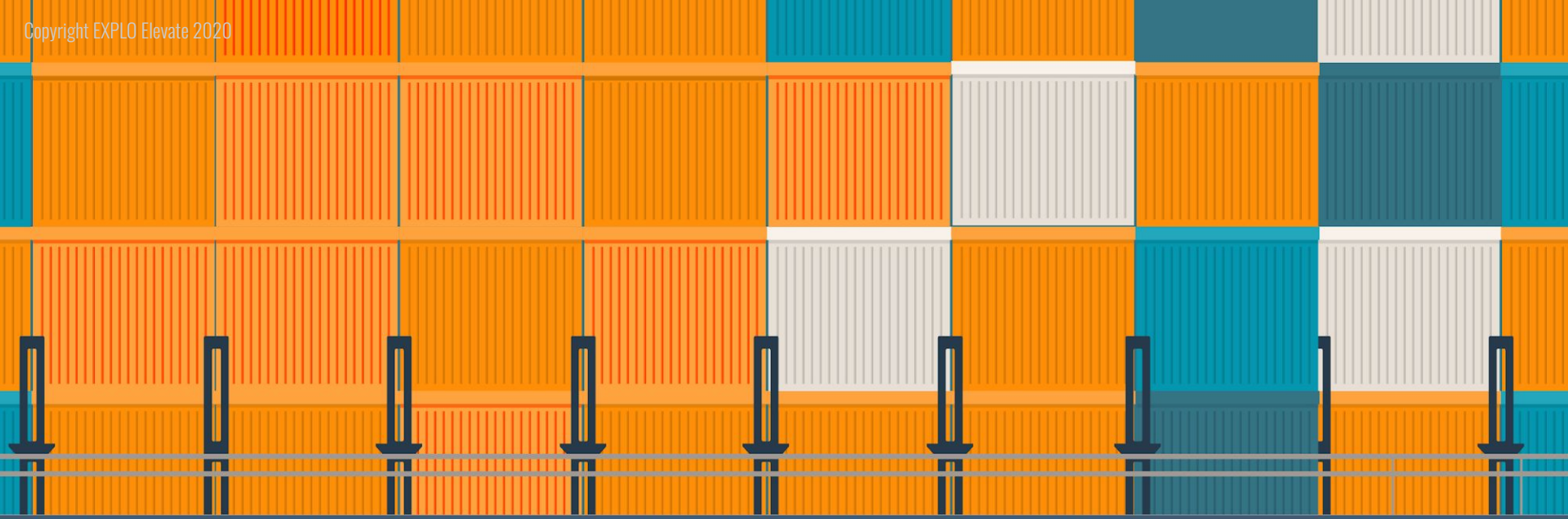
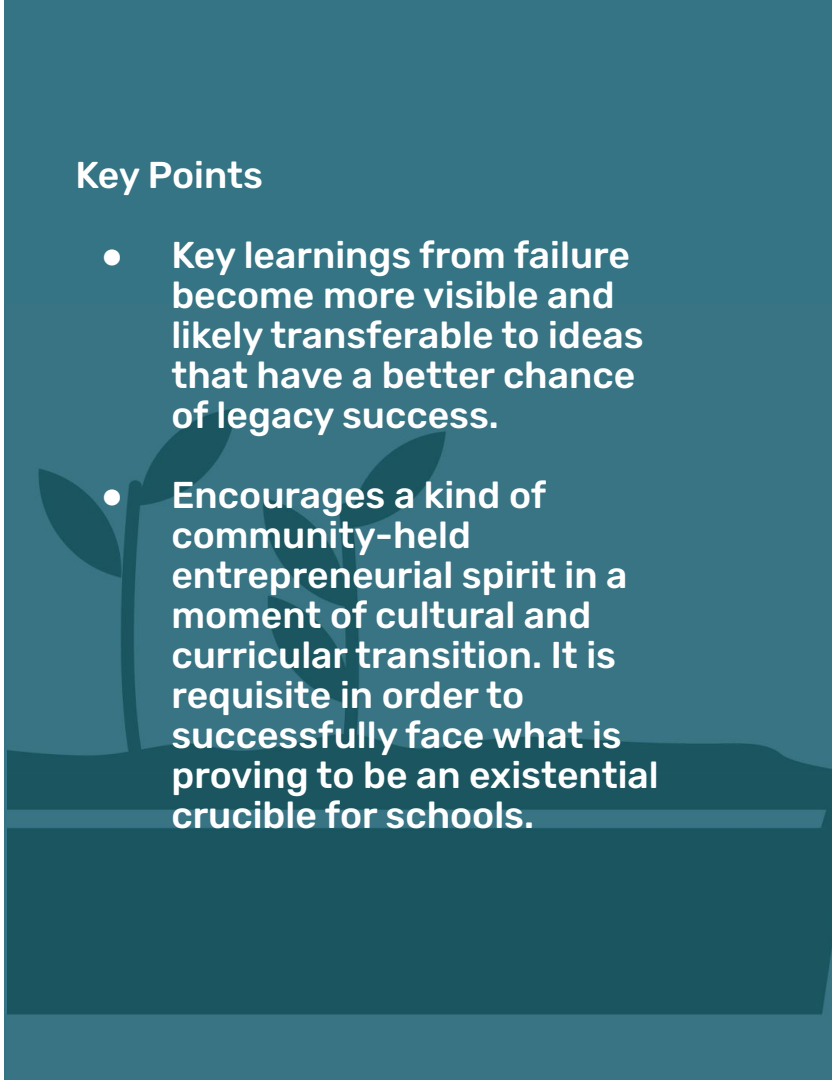


Creating pilots helps us avoid tentativeness, and it provides one way to avoid having to be perfect at something before there is ever a chance to practice and refine. Additionally, when a pilot is successful, it provides an ARTIFACT in support of the direction of the school that will help provide momentum for what is next.

2. Supporting pilots creates opportunities to extend what is already good in the school culture or curriculum.

The lion’s share of progress should allow additional space for the most strategically aligned parts of the existing culture and curriculum to flourish as unconstrained by other factors as possible. A tool to make an already existent niche program extend its reach.

3. Supporting pilots encourages experimentation and mitigates the damage that may occur when a new idea falls short.



Key Points

- Key learnings from failure become more visible and likely transferable to ideas that have a better chance of legacy success.
- Encourages a kind of community-held entrepreneurial spirit in a moment of cultural and curricular transition. It is requisite in order to successfully face what is proving to be an existential crucible for schools.

If you are trying to push the boundaries of what you can make happen in a school, you are likely to take a bridge too far from time to time. A pilot course or program creates a safer space for trying something new.

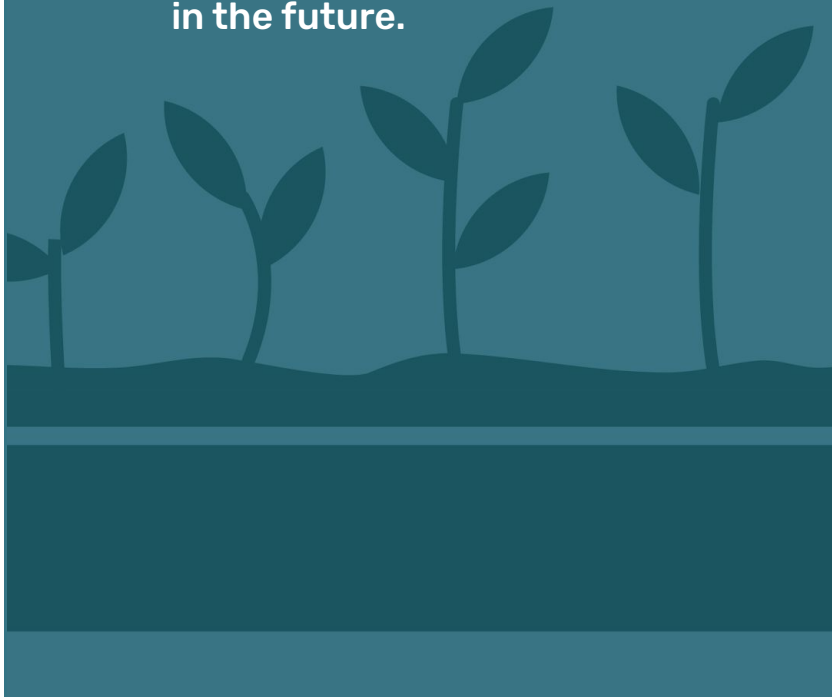
Key Points

- **Key learnings from failure become more visible and likely transferable to ideas that have a better chance of legacy success.**
- **Encourages a kind of community-held entrepreneurial spirit in a moment of cultural and curricular transition. It is requisite in order to successfully face what is proving to be an existential crucible for schools.**

4. Supporting pilots creates opportunities for the school community to see the efficacy of the school's direction.

Key Point

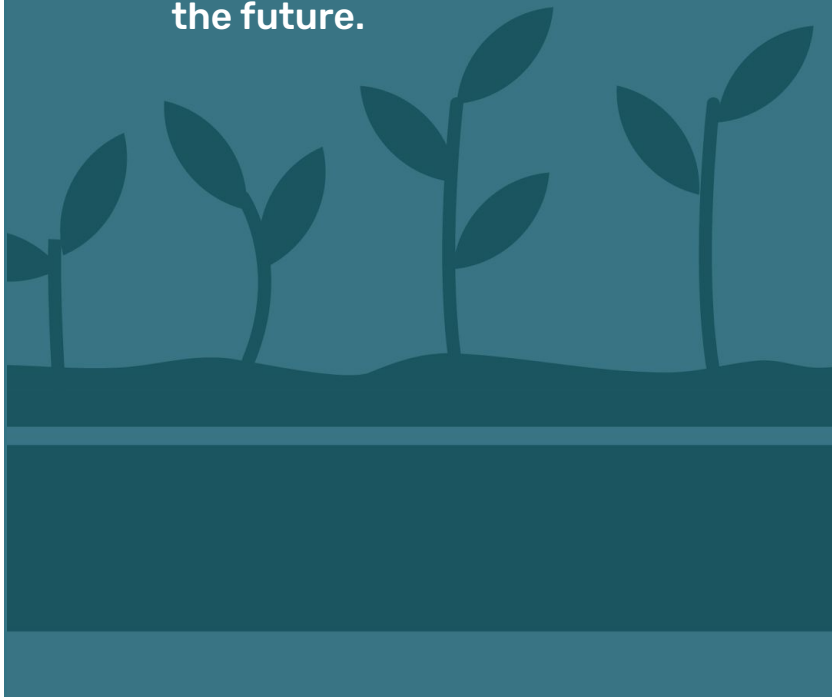
- Working with pilots will create a sort of archive of ideas that may gain traction in the future.



We need chances to demonstrate success in the specific context of our school. Just having examples from other schools is not enough. Just speaking in the abstract has an even shorter lifespan. You need your own stories to tell.

Key Point

- **Working with pilots will create a sort of archive of ideas that may gain traction in the future.**



5. Supporting pilots offers individual members of the school community the opportunity to drive forward key progress in the school.

When change is driven up from faculty members and students, it has a far greater chance of success than if it is simply driven down from Board and Head leadership. Shared ownership has never been more important or more difficult to achieve than right now.

Metaphor Killing Alert #3

Culture doesn't have to eat strategy for breakfast. It can instead be the best tool in the toolbox to accomplish strategy.

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What ideas to support?

Think: 2-5-10

Transferability potential (scalability)

No cost or low cost

A potential that exists now that didn't exist before

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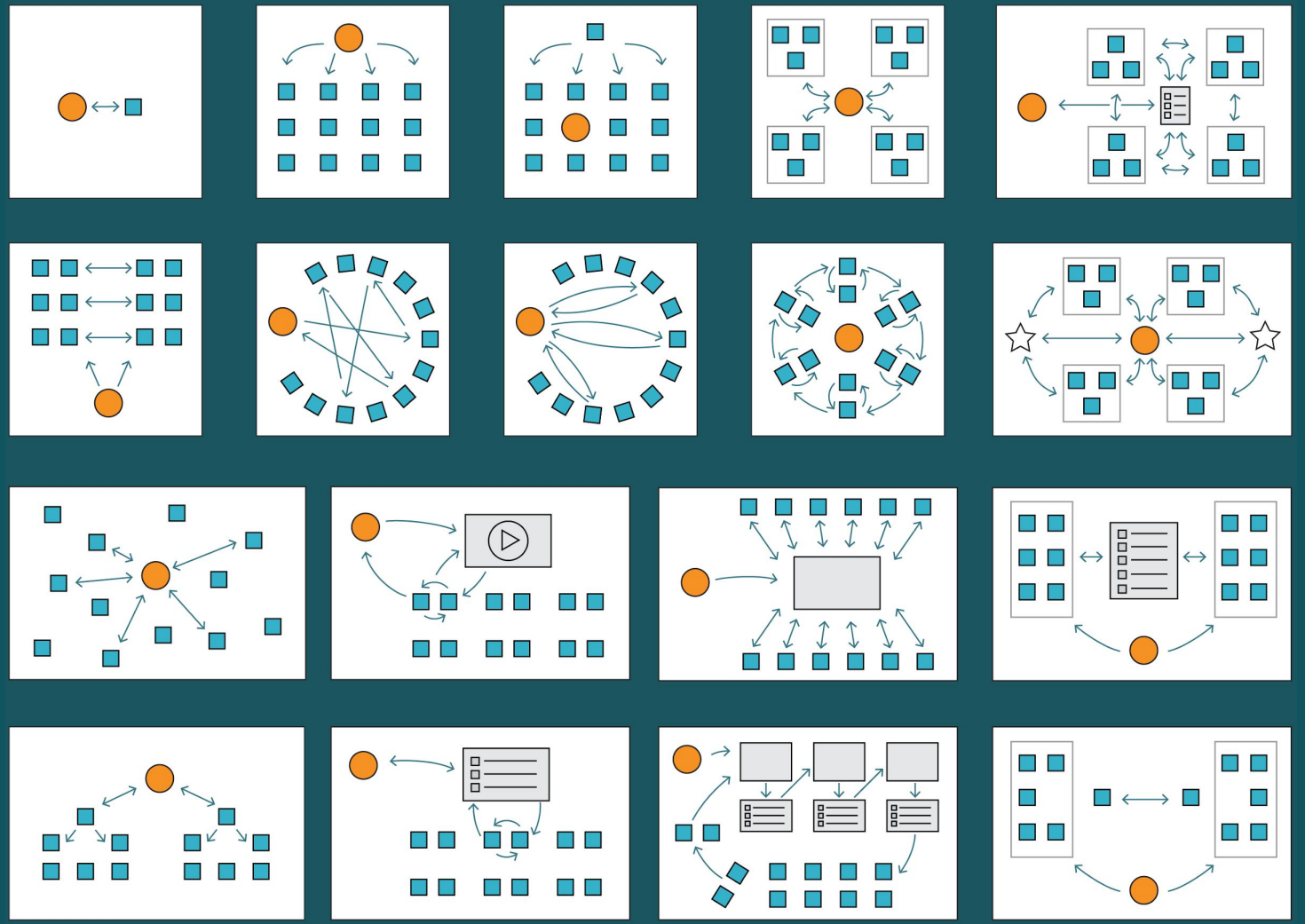
Examples

- **SMALL SCALE**
  No/Low cost, involves very limited number of people
  - Course redesign - Elastic Proximity (next slide)
- **MID-SCALE**
  Low investment for potential higher gain
  - Grade level - 2nd grade parent programming reinvention
- **LARGER-SCALE**
  Represents larger but manageable investment of resources, has more significant potential benefit
  - (Example Follows: “Achor School slides”)

Small Scale Example

Elastic Proximity Grouping Strategies



Mid Scale Example

Grade Level - 2nd Grade Parent Programming Reinvention

Large Scale Example

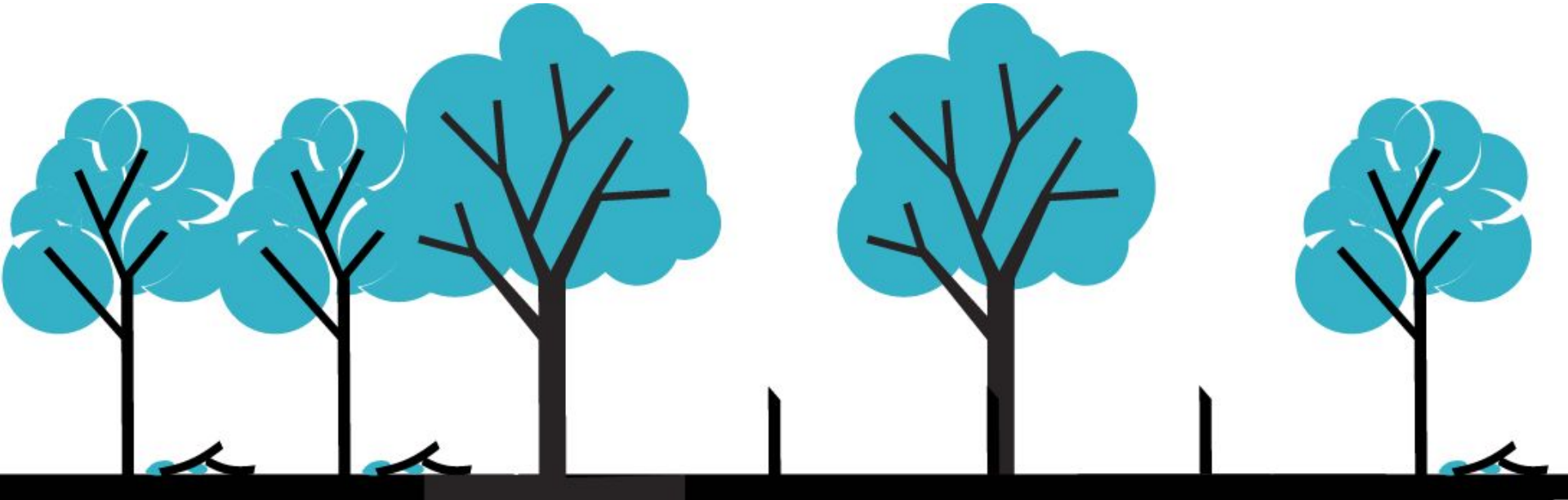
bringing school back to the neighborhood

Without growing the support for the direction of the school within the community that will live closest to the results, that direction is unlikely to succeed or, not much better, doomed to settle in mediocrity.

Pilot programs and courses can be a catalyst for enfranchising the widest possible swath of a school community in the direction of the school. It sets the stage for ANTI-FRAGILITY.

Strategic Schools tend to be antifragile. They have the ability to come through stronger than before.

Pilot Programs are a powerful tool to build those antifragile muscles.



What we are working on:

Riverbank Colleague--Sounding Board/Good Counsel for Leaders	Designs in 90 Seconds	Leadership Proximity
Agile Course Design (Elastic Proximity)	Virtuous Leadership Course	