**GatesFoundation\_DanielleKnox\_KrystalSullivan\_FINAL**

Colleagues Danielle Knox and Krystal Sullivan talk about their approaches to education and what has helped them get through the COVID-19 pandemic. Danielle and Krystal are part of the Texas Network for School Improvement which aims to increase the percentage of Black, Latino/a, and students experiencing poverty who are on track to college and career success by the end of 8th grade, using math as the entry point.

**Krystal:** How has the continuous improvement model changed the way that you work?

**Danielle:** It has made me more intentional driven. It has allowed new ideas to come forth in areas that students need improvement, but also to see where teachers can actually enhance their instruction. To see the response of the students at the end of the process when teachers tell them that they've been part of the action research and what they've been intentionally doing, which is help them to pay attention more to their academic work. And so that's been very rewarding.

**Krystal:** I think one of my biggest aha moments has been that this isn't a brand new concept. This is something that teachers do kind of informally, so we're just trying to formalize the process of, “Hey, I think something's going to work. Let me try it, let me collect some data, and let me make a decision after that.” And that kind of goes with the next question, which is, “What is the most challenging part of continuous improvement?” And for me, it's been getting teachers to see that.

**Danielle:** Yeah.

**Krystal:** Because they see it as something brand new or something extra.

**Danielle**: That mindset is like, “Hey, we've always done this. This isn’t anything new to you. It’s just a different approach or take on it so that you have to be intentional about what it is exactly you're tracking and what do you want to see improvement in? And it's not being overwhelming or bothering you with something new. This is something you see. We're just now magnifying it and making it our focal point.”

**Krystal**: And the collaborating with each other piece — like that is about formalizing. I feel like they've done it in pockets or theydo it themselves or they do it informally, but that formalizing here at this school, this is the one thing we're going to try to change and collect data on.

**Danielle:** How has teaching evolved over the years we've experienced it?

**Krystal:** I think the two important pieces of teaching are consistent. You need to care about your students. You need to have those relationships with your students. With COVID, so much more is put on our teachers now — just the staff shortages that is just so difficult to overcome. The students being out of school for two years. The behavior issues that students are bringing to the table. So I think that stuff that our teachers are having to deal with now that maybe you and I didn't have to when we were in the classroom.

**Danielle:** Yeah, I would say that we were improving every single year, and then COVID has taken away our progress. It really is like a reset because you get to start with now, “What do we do right?” And that's where everyone needs to get together in leadership and determine that for our students right now and the ones that are coming because they're coming.