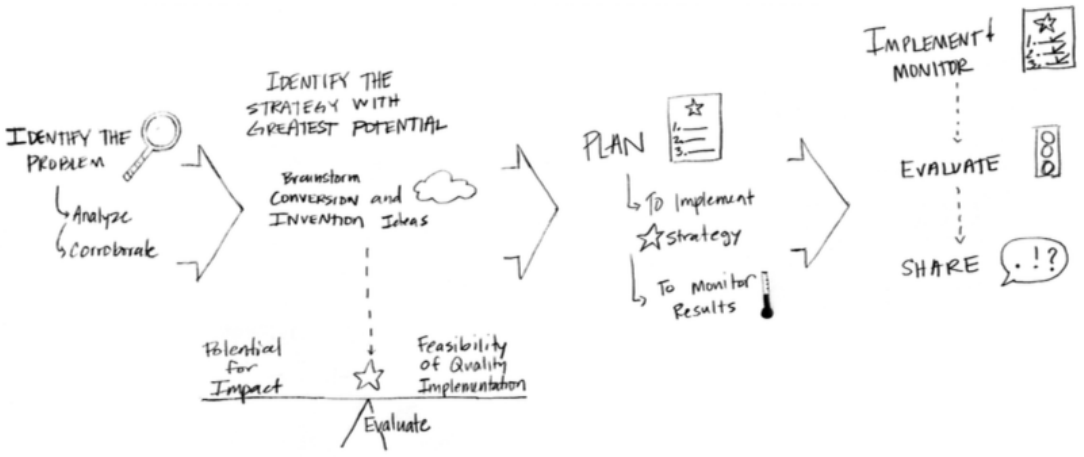
Figure 3.1 Innovation Process for Educators



This diagram provides an overview of a responsible innovation process. In the book, *Innovative Educators*, I provide rationale for the use of such a process in terms of why teacher and school level innovation is essential to preparing students for independent successful young adult life in the 21st century.

As a pre-read for our time together at the CBOL Flipped Conference, I am just going to provide a quick written description of the process of responsible innovation.

Innovating is not the same as having a disposition that favors trying new things. Innovating is about solving problems. So intentional innovation begins by identifying the problem. It would be a waste of time to try to design math instruction interventions for a group of students who are failing algebra, if the reason they are failing algebra is that they have algebra first period and are habitually tardy to school. Finding the problem means digging deep enough to find out what the underlying causes may be.

Since we are all surrounded by experts and have years of research at our fingertips, if we think we are finding the underlying cause of our problem, why not pause a moment to corroborate our thinking. Do others agree with our analysis? Have they seen similar things underlying complex problems of their own? Is there research on this topic that offers some kind of affirmation?

Once we know what the problem is, we need to start generating possible strategies, and then evaluating these strategies to determine what to try first. Strategy generation is another time to rely on the expertise of others, either by asking them for specific strategy ideas based on their experience – or by engaging colleagues in design thinking to generate a wide range of new ideas. Once ideas are generated, it is time to evaluate

both the possible power and the feasibility of each strategy. If the most powerful idea for getting failing algebra students to school on time is that staff will each pick one up each day, it is important to stop and think about how feasible that is as a long-term or large-scale solution.

Once a strategy has been identified, it is time to plan. We are all familiar with planning. What may make this approach to planning somewhat different is that it asks not just that action plans and tools are built to implement the strategy – it also asks that educators identify how they will know if the strategy is working. What will you be able to see in student work, what will students say or do in the next few weeks if the strategy is working? This is a key component of being responsible innovators. We need to know very quickly if our strategy is working so we can either refine the strategy or learn from failure to identify an even better strategy.

With complete implementation and monitoring plans in place, it is time to implement. Try, follow-through, and observe. Is it working? How do you know? At the end of the pre-determined period for initial implementation, stop and review monitoring information. Then decide what to do next.

- If it worked, think about how to share that learning and scale the strategy where it makes sense in your school or district.
- If it sort of worked, analyze monitoring information and revisit other strategies to see if you can find a meaningful and high potential way to revise the strategy and try again.
- If it didn't work, then try to identify why and share that learning where it makes sense to improve the systemic understanding of the problem.