Coherence Lab FELLOWSHIP

An Initiative of
Aspen Institute Education & Society Program
Education First

Addressing Fragmentation in Public Education: The Coherence Lab Fellowship

"A narrow focus on individual areas has resulted in strategies being developed and implemented in isolation...The result has been implementation efforts that have occurred independently and without recognition of the interdependencies among strategies. The result, when applied within a school or district, has often been a set of initiatives and policy changes that are disconnected in their design, even as they inevitably intersect at the student and classroom levels."

—Carnegie Integration Design Consortium Problem Statement

At Education First, we have experienced first-hand how disconnected and sometimes dueling reform initiatives cause inefficiency, confusion, alienation and lackluster results. We've seen it in our work as practitioners and policymakers, and we've watched it happen in our consulting practice advising our district, charter, state and federal clients.

The lack of integration, collaboration and coherence occurs within and across system levels. Leaders of reform at all levels rarely design, frame and implement reforms coherently. By the time reforms come down from the statehouse to the schoolhouse, many educators in schools do not understand (or have not heard) an inspiring vision and theory of action for how the major reforms will translate into concrete changes in practice, culture and process for schools and, ultimately, outcomes for students.

For example, we've worked directly in multiple school systems and state education agencies (SEAs) with academic, talent and accountability offices to design, implement and monitor the rollout of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and educator effectiveness systems. In urban districts, and in some charter management organizations (CMOs) as well, we've observed how the organizational charts – in which one division oversees schools, the human resources team manages educator hiring, evaluation and accountability, the academics division oversees standards and curriculum, and the accountability office manages assessment and data – become not just silos but hardened battle lines. Innovative schools (such as those with competency-based or project-based learning designs or interdisciplinary curricula) often aren't even considered in planning for implementation.

But leaving it to schools to connect the dots among initiatives begets additional fragmentation and confusion in schools. For example, in an ongoing national study of Common Core implementation led by Harvard University, about 90 percent of teachers report they experienced at least one observation as part of more robust teacher evaluation and development models. But fewer than half received any feedback tied to CCSS instructional expectations (Kane, Owens, Marinell, Thal, & Staiger, 2016).

Professional learning is an example of a critical function of schools and districts that falls through the cracks as a result of fragmentation. Typically, no one group in the central office "owns" educator growth and

> "If we were to listen to teachers and principals and hear them asking how everything fits together, the need for alignment would be clear. Teachers want to know how to better teach their kids, and whether the Common Core will help get them there (for example, teaching kids how to build evidence). They want to know what professional development (PD) they'll get to help them bring that into their classrooms. There's often uncertainty about whether that PD would come from the literacy office or the talent office, or where the evaluation rubric is housed."
>
> —**Irvin Scott,** Harvard University Professor of Practice

professional learning—and the multiple offices with responsibility for educator learning do not collaborate. Instead, professional development (PD) activities for schools are usually designed within each division, with no effective or ongoing mechanisms for joint planning, coordination and rollout, and with insufficient engagement of educators. As a result, principals and building instructional teams design their own professional learning often to fill the gaps between what the district requires and what the school really needs.

When policy designers and implementers fail to consider the implications of independently developed policies, programs and offices' directives to schools, many teachers and principals are unable to make sense of the reforms or connect the dots among multiple expectations and tools. Unable to see how the reforms are related, beneficial or feasible, many educators have begun to disengage, believing "this too shall pass." Once-promising initiatives fail to realize their potential.

The stakes remain high. With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states have been given even more autonomy to design and implement education policy at the local level. The focus now turns in many states to implementing other reforms, including new school accountability and intervention systems. We know from past efforts that no one intervention is strong enough to yield the change that ESSA aspires to. Rather, the order of magnitude will only be felt when reform initiatives are working synergistically to achieve the desired effects in the field.

The Carnegie Integration Design Consortium

The Integration Design Consortium was born from the Carnegie Corporation of New York's (CCNY) desire to bring greater focus, and develop targeted solutions to improve the fragmented nature of our education system. In 2016, CCNY sought out leading innovators in the field to design new approaches for how we can work in a more integrated, efficient, and impactful way. Eight organizations applied innovative, yet practical and testable approaches that identified barriers to cohesion, collaboration and communication, then proposed breakthrough approaches to overcoming those barriers.
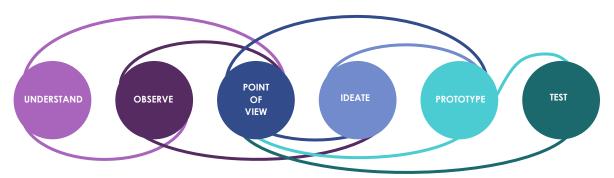
From this initial design challenge, CCNY identified a subset of these approaches to further develop, field test, and refine. In 2017, the Aspen Institute Education and Society Program and Education First continued development of its proposed approach: The Coherence Lab Fellowship (a detailed description of the approach and Fellowship follows). Throughout 2018, Education First will continue to participate in the Consortium, which now operates as a working group of five organizations that shares the progress of their field tests, provides and receives feedback, and deepens their understanding of the barriers and solutions to coherence.

Our Research, Ideation and Design Approach

Our project team's personal experiences as education practitioners informed our belief that the solution to the lack of integration would not just be a technical, infrastructure fix. It would also have to account for the human behaviors of people within the system. We quickly decided to use a human-centered approach to understand the problem of integration and to design a solution. Specifically, we were guided by Stanford's Hasso Plattner Institute of Design (d.School) Design Thinking Process (d.School, 2007). The d.School components of are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – d.School Design Thinking Process

We adapted the process and developed these guiding questions to the specifics of fragmentation in public education:

- **Understand:** How are we, as a team, making sense of the problem of fragmentation? Where does the problem manifest today in public education? Where are "positive deviant" examples of success to study? What does in-sector and out-of-sector research suggest about effective integration and collaboration?
- **Observe:** What can we observe from stakeholders in the field in context of specific reforms including CCSS/teacher and leader effectiveness (TLE) reforms?
- **Point of View:** In light of our research, how do we interpret the absence of integrated initiatives in public education writ large? The specific problem of integrating CCSS and TLE?
- **Ideate:** What are the essential design features of solutions that address our failure to integrate reform initiatives in public education? What actual solutions would meet these design criteria?
- **Prototype:** Which of our potential solutions has promise to address the larger issue of integration as we now understand it? What assumptions are we making in our design of the solutions and in particular the solution we ultimately select?
- **Test:** Which design features are effective and which could be improved? How might we test our assumptions in the design?

UNDERSTAND We conducted extensive research to understand how change happens in social sectors. This included a review of business and academic literature within and outside of education related to organizational/bureaucratic norms and behaviors; intra- and inter-organizational collaboration; organizational change management; adult behavior change and learning; and social network theory. Simultaneously, we broke into two sub-teams; one focused on disconnects among CCSS and TLE implementation, and the other considered the fragmentation of mathematics education, P-20, for both students and teachers. Each sub-team reviewed raw research and

synthesis from complex projects that Education First has conducted over the last five years involving more than 15 local education agencies (LEAs) and more than 20 states. We considered what teachers and principals shared as their barriers and successes, what national thought leaders had to say about multiple reforms, and what district and state leaders themselves reported as the barriers to collaboration and integration.

OBSERVE

We conducted more than 25 original interviews with parents, teachers, principals, LEA leaders and SEA leaders using both formal and informal qualitative interview techniques. For example, we used empathy-protocol interview techniques to understand what motivates teachers (in their own words) to respond to external reform initiatives and what motivates LEA and SEA leaders to collaborate. We asked stakeholders to recount specific moments when collaboration and integration were hindered or enabled and identify what context was of those choice encounters. Our purpose was to study the impact that fragmented design and rollout of CCSS and teacher evaluation has had on stakeholders and its causes.

POINT OF VIEW

In this stage, we confronted this primary question: On which stakeholders should we focus our proposed solution? We identified many distinct stakeholders who contribute to and experience the problems of fragmentation. We initially created a point-of-view statement focused on teachers and principals (that we shared with Carnegie in our midpoint memo), and we began to ideate and prototype a solution addressing this point-of-view.

IDEATE

The research phase culminated in a more formal, one-day team retreat designed to revisit our point-of-view and problem definition, identify evidence- and research-backed design criteria for a solution and surface multiple possible solutions. We used several design techniques and protocols to bring out our best innovative ideas and synthesize our research findings into as many solutions as possible. For example, each person brought multiple possible solutions to the retreat and we explored several throughout the day, free of judgment and constrained only by the point-of-view statement. We synthesized themes and prioritized solutions with significant promise.

PROTOTYPE

We had three strong ideas emerge from our team retreat. We decided to pursue a promising idea—to integrate instructional improvement, not just focus on new teacher/leader roles and talent, into the Carnegie-funded Opportunity Culture initiative—through our ongoing work to help several school systems implement Opportunity Culture in partnership with Public Impact. For the other two ideas, after the retreat, we again broke into sub-teams to build prototypes to share with the whole team. The two promising ideas merged into one: A collaborative learning cohort for teachers and principals who would learn how to integrate reforms in buildings. Then, as the d.School process visual above suggests, after significant work in both the ideation and prototyping phases on the teacher and principal learning cohort idea, we revisited our point-of-view and decided to develop another prototype.

TEST

We ultimately decided instead to focus on those stakeholders who should be most responsible for better integration: SEA and LEA leaders. A sub-team built out in detail the SEA and LEA prototype solution, and a second group tested it simultaneously through targeted interviews with eight state and local leaders in Colorado and New Jersey, two states that we think would benefit from and be interested in our proposed solution. Through these interviews, we learned (and will continue to learn through future testing) which aspects of the design are effective and which can be improved, and we made several modifications to our solution as a result.

"There's a good reason why change can be difficult: The world doesn't always want what you want. You want to change how others are acting, but they get a vote. You can cajole, influence, inspire, and motivate—but sometimes an employee would rather lose his job than move out of his comfortable routines."

—Chip and Dan Heath

Without intentional efforts to disrupt the status quo and a different approach to fostering integration across state and local education systems, reform initiatives will continue to be designed and implemented in isolation, disconnected from one another and the realities of practitioners in the field.

SEA and LEA leaders are often over-worked, overwhelmed, and insufficiently developed in how to lead change that will stick. While these leaders are passionate about changing the world and improving results for students, and they usually espouse a desire to collaborate and integrate their work, the reform efforts they design are disconnected—in both substance and implementation—from other reforms and from what educators need in order to change their behaviors. These disconnected reforms do not take into account the interactions among education's complex infrastructures and the human behaviors of the people that make the systems go.

The Challenge: Why Fragmentation Occurs

Our analysis—drawn from existing research with teachers, principals and district/state agency leaders, our experience and new interviews conducted for this project—pointed us to three root causes of public education's long-standing inability to address the interdependencies of reform initiatives.

FINDING **1**	SEA and LEA bureaucracies lack the organizational capabilities for effective cross-agency integration and collaboration—including routinized collaborative structures and processes, organizational and individual incentives, and individual staff capabilities.

Many of the troubling disconnects and fragmentation that school leaders and teachers experience are a byproduct of the disconnected structures within and across SEAs and LEAs. These structures and lack of individual capacity in turn cause the disconnected design and rollout of policy initiatives and programs. Building an integrated organization requires individuals to detect the barriers to collaboration in education, and then drive a new culture and organizational capabilities to overcome them. This includes shifts in behaviors, processes and organizational principles (Merchant, 2010).

Figure 2 – Shifts in Behaviors, Processes and Organizational Principles

Behaviors
- How people act
- Interactions

Process
- Learn the problem
- Create options
- Make choices
- Create accountability

Organizational principles
- Where decisions are made
- Rewards
- Common goals
- Learning system

Source: The New How – Creating Business Solutions through Collaborative Strategy by Nilofer Merchant

Our work with SEA and LEA leaders has shown, however, that most education agency leaders have never been taught how to detect these barriers, drive the new culture or put in place the right structures. We have learned that most agency staff are not specifically trained or developed professionally to serve as leaders within systems in which integration is an expectation. They typically are hired because of their education background and content expertise. Most programs that do prepare leaders (such as traditional superintendency programs or the Broad Residency) focus on leadership development and education theory and issues. They do not teach the particular body of knowledge and skill that enables leaders to drive and participate in integrated, collaborative policy and program design.

Evidence from the literature

Our research enhanced our understanding of why integration has become so difficult across public education systems. In the leadership book *Collaboration: How Leaders Avoid the Traps, Build Common Ground, and Reap Big Results*, Morten Hansen highlights common barriers to inter- and intra-organizational collaboration (Hansen, 2009). Most large organizations attempt to operate with some form of decentralization, driving responsibility down to the field level (in our case, schools), and holding those who work there (teachers and principals) accountable for results. Unfortunately, in this model, the whole organizational system (in our case, the interconnectivity of SEAs, LEAs and schools) produces siloed behavior rather than collaboration.

> "Disciplined collaboration requires that organizations be decentralized and yet coordinated."
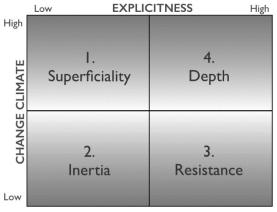> —**Morten Hansen**, University of California

When we look at the capacity of SEAs and LEAs, there exist few incentives or resources earmarked for collaboration—let alone structures to support it within or across these agencies, or with teachers and principals on the front lines. Structurally, these staunchly bureaucratic organizations are rigid, offering little flexibility or support for collaboration.

Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn in *Coherence* also posit that cultivating a collaborative culture is essential to building coherence. Yet they acknowledge collaboration is not the first step in achieving coherence. Effective collaborative efforts require leaders to first develop a focused, organizational direction. Leaders must establish and communicate a clear vision and set of goals while building the capacity of others to focus their efforts, which will in turn set the stage for collaborating towards a collective purpose (Fullan and Quinn, 2016).

This shared purpose can help organizations shift to a clear strategy. But how can overly bureaucratic organizations achieve this clarity in implementation? Fullan and Quinn argue that organizations need to go "beyond alignment on paper."

Figure 3 – Change Quality Quadrant

Source: Fullan and Quinn, 2016.

Figure 3 illustrates how with high degrees of explicitness and strong culture, organizations can reach a place of depth—developing a learning culture where teams deeply understand the strategy and share a willingness to collaboratively develop skills to implement it.

Evidence from educators

Our interviews with educators support our findings from out-of-sector research. They too pointed to the lack of organizational capabilities for effective collaboration in public education systems: effective structures, processes, incentives and individual staff capabilities for collaboration. They told us of dysfunction within SEAs and LEAs, including an inability to ensure that staff responsible for disparate initiatives are all planning together and a layering as opposed to a connecting of strategies.

- "It takes too much time to collaborate across offices and to agree on the framing and wording of our communications to schools."—Leader, New York City Department of Education

- "SEAs are not well-known for sharp, coordinated strategies on something of this size that will involve every single constituent in the eco-system."—Leader, Delaware Department of Education

- "We continue to layer policies and requests on top of each other and fail to cut and streamline against a clear set of priorities."—Leader, South Carolina Department of Education

- "When you look at the lack of continuity and the political nature of SEAs and LEAs, we need to focus more on systems. We keep creating the conditions for quick change, but not sustained conditions that are not susceptible to political winds. We have systems that get in the way of educators' focus on instructional content."—Leader, New Jersey Department of Education

- "We have had mega-transitions as we plan to get all of these reforms done and ensure the system can handle these changes. There are coherence issues because not all the same people are at the table, and they are not all aligned. We're trying to ramp up college- and career-ready instruction during assessment transitions plus school accountability plus teacher evaluation transitions. We haven't always had coherence in the timelines."—Rhode Island Department of Education

Summary

Public education will continue to operate as a decentralized system. Coordinating the work of schools and that of state and school district offices that support them is the essential work of SEA and LEA leaders. To produce a system of collaboration and integration in which there are incentives, resources and structures that inspire coordination, SEA leaders will need to develop skills and knowledge that they have not been taught or encouraged to develop. Tearing down the silos requires it.

FINDING **2**	**SEA and LEA leaders design and roll out multiple policies and programs without early and often engagement of educators or consideration for what actually motivates educators to embrace and implement changes and see their connectivity.**

By definition, "reform" asks some groups of stakeholders to do something different. Multiple reforms implemented at the same time—such as teaching to new standards, implementing new assessments, participating in new evaluation systems and designing new supports—requires teachers and principals to

develop new understandings, skills and mindsets, change many existing practices and make radical behavior changes in some cases.

Reform also must address inertia in schools. There is a culture within schools that promotes skepticism about reform, whether it come from the district, legislature or federal government. "We tried this 20 years ago," or "The district is too far removed from our work to really understand what our students need" are common refrains when new initiatives are rolled out.

Our experience as a lead technical assistance provider for Race to the Top states and in other teacher evaluation and CCSS implementation projects has shown us that SEAs and LEAs are not doing enough to overcome that inertia and foster the development of new skills, mindsets and behaviors. There has in fact been very little educator engagement in the design and rollout of recent reforms, many of which were developed in the rush to compete for Race to the Top grants, as state legislatures and state boards of education quickly developed policies without much engagement with the field (Ferrer, Rubalcaba, & Vranek, 2015).

One state that has proven the exception is Louisiana. We learned from Louisiana leaders that they began to integrate reforms only after the SEA asked educators for feedback, and learned how frustrated they were with the absence of integration. As we detail in the "Bright Spots" section below, Louisiana leaders responded comprehensively by developing a theory of action and practices focused on integration, both of which have at their core effective educator engagement and motivation strategies.

Evidence from the literature
The absence of sound educator engagement and motivation practices are foundational causes of our failure to integrate reforms. Out-of-sector research supports the notion that it is important to engage practitioners early and often in the actual design of policies, in understanding how the policies are working or not in practice, and in continually improving the policies based on feedback.

For example, in a study to assess the effect of stakeholder engagement on the design and implementation of public health policies, researchers discovered significant disconnects among policymakers and practitioners. The nature of disconnects ranged from power and status differences, differing appraisals of evidence, transparency of goals, evaluation and continuation strategies, and public accountability. Their findings suggest that creating awareness and making intentional efforts to connect policymaker and practitioners may result in improved implementation and outcomes of public health reforms (Jansen, Oers, Kok, & Vries, 2010). The same logic would apply in public education.

Another recent meta-analysis of multi-level stakeholder collaboration within public sectors cited this recommendation for improvement: "Use inclusive processes to develop inclusive structures, which, in turn, will sustain inclusive process." The meta-analysis emphasizes the importance of developing a shared understanding of the problem among the stakeholders most affected by the policy changes, as well as building a commitment to collective goals and actions and structures to support emergent planning. The researchers also identified the enabling condition of trust and the often acutely felt power differentials between policy designers and policy implementers (Bryson, Crosby, & Still, 2015). Engaging educators in inclusive processes in policy design, implementation and modification as these researchers suggest would override the power differential that educators often feel and that makes them suspicious of reforms. It also would build trust and foster commitments to shared goals.

Educators, like professionals in other fields, need to be motivated to make changes to their practice. Engagement helps. But it is not enough. Leaders must also tend to some of the basics of motivation for

change. Chip and Dan Heath's widely recognized book on change management, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*, codifies a substantial body of change management research into a single framework: Rider and elephant (Heath, 2011). The framework suggests that sustainable individual behavior change will occur only when two contrasting and competing systems—the *rational mind* ("the rider") and the *emotional mind* ("the elephant")—are addressed both individually and together.

"Trying to fight inertia and indifference with analytical arguments is like tossing a fire extinguisher to someone who's drowning. The solution doesn't match the problem."
   —**Chip** and **Dan Heath**

Teachers and principals are ruled by the elephant as much as the rider. Educators need to believe that the pay-off for change will be worth it. Educators' elephants have to be motivated to take the leap of faith to believe that they can effectively change themselves, and that all students can rise to the challenge of rigorous instruction and succeed. And they have to be motivated to do the hard work to change.

Yet education leaders usually design and implement reforms to address only the rider/the rational mind. They rationalize reforms based on the implicit (and sometimes explicit) assumption that change will happen as a result of some rational, external stimulus based on the carrots-and-sticks approach: e.g., increased accountability standards, the public reporting of assessment data or financial incentives. Or they communicate with data designed to appeal to the rider, rather than appealing to the emotions that motivate the elephant. But the giant elephant will crush the rider, every day and every time. When the design of reforms focuses only on the rider, and not also the elephant, the reforms will fail.

Engaging educators and broader stakeholders is only the first step to motivating and embracing implementation of new policies. Designing education reform also demands that we address causes of racial inequity. In equityXdesign, Caroline Hill, Michelle Molitor and Christine Ortiz emphasize the need for weighing historical context and acknowledging issues of power and bias when engaging in problem-solving. They also underscore the need for bringing together diverse stakeholders through radical inclusion. This goes beyond one-off stakeholder engagement, and addresses head on the barriers that exclude voices and invites everyone to bring their full selves to the innovation conversation.

Evidence from educators
There is no shortage of actionable research findings related to how adults learn, or how they can design programs that will enable other adults to make sustainable changes in their behavior. What we heard, however, is that very few SEA and LEA leaders have studied what makes change happen and last over time, or how to design programs that support sustainable behavior change by teachers and principals.

- "Policymakers assume that we will reflect and collaborate. This is flawed unless we build systems and create policy to support and incentivize that behavior."—Teacher, Chicago Public Schools

- "Lack of follow-through is a huge problem. We don't let anything stick long enough to see if it's working."—Teacher, New York City Department of Education

- "[Many states] do get teacher input [on policy design], but there is a lack of communication and transparency with teachers around how things were created, how teacher input was involved, and what was incorporated in the final decisions."—Teacher, New York City Department of Education

- "We are struggling with going to scale: Reaching every teacher in 50 schools with expectations about what's changing, and ensuring they really understand what implementation of the shifts looks like. Needs right now are helping guide teachers to the right tools and resources (we still have many

teachers doing a "Google search" because they don't know what's there internally)."—Leader, Madison Public Schools

- "When we got [to the Louisiana Department of Education], we talked to a lot of teachers. The feedback and guidance they gave really helped. They pushed us hard on the tools we would create, what teachers really need. We realized we had to systematize that feedback from teachers. We started with a cadre of 100 teacher leaders, who advise us on every decision we make. Then we created the teacher leader corps of 5,000 teachers, one for each school in the state. We are really deliberate with educator engagement because we feel like teachers give us a completely different view into the things we should do—especially when it comes to curriculum development and teacher evaluation."—Leader, Louisiana Department of Education

Summary
Very few states and districts are organized to engage practitioners authentically and with effective motivational strategies. Unless many states engage practitioners from the outset and design and design implement policies and practices that address both the elephant and the rider together, reforms will fail.

FINDING 3	LEAs and SEAs fail to understand how adults learn and how to tap the right professional and social networks to reach all teachers and principals.

Our experience has taught us that implementation of a single reform, let alone the integration of multiple reforms, cannot be successful unless SEAs and LEAs understand how adults learn and create or tap into professional and social networks that inspire learning.

Yet the implementation of reform efforts often flies in the face of adult learning research. This is true whether practitioners are implementing a single or multiple reforms. Too often SEAs and LEAs design professional learning, materials and related supports for teachers and principals that inadvertently create new layers of work, instead of taking advantage of existing networks that educators already know, trust and tap into regularly.

Evidence from the literature
Malcolm Knowles, considered the leading expert on andragogy, suggests four principles for effective adult learning (Knowles, 1984). Adults need:

1. Direct involvement in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Experience-based learning activities (including making mistakes).
3. Subject matter with immediate relevance and impact to their professional or personal life.
4. Problem-centered rather than content-oriented instruction.

Much has been made of how often adult learning is delivered in the opposite to these principles—instead, it's "sit-and-get" or "spray-and-pray"—and therefore has little effect. Teachers recently reported that their collaborative professional learning communities aren't making the grade: they lack teacher engagement, are a poor use of time and are poorly planned/executed. Teachers said "I feel like I'm being held hostage" and "Don't read PowerPoints to me" (Boston Consulting Group, 2014).

Academic research in public education and in other sectors also shows that social relationships and networks have significant influence on the direction, speed and depth of change. Research indicates, for example, that both formal and informal social structures among teachers provide opportunities for information transfer and development of new knowledge within and across schools.

Existing networks of teachers, such as grade-level teams, have been shown to yield positive outcomes in developing leadership, strengthening communities and influencing student achievement. An analysis of five elementary schools in an underperforming district enacting a system-wide literacy reform showed significant variation within and between schools regarding reform-related networks. The active, well-connected grade-level teams had more interactions focused on teaching and learning, conducted goalsetting, and shared decision-making. Most importantly, they adopted a learning orientation toward reform, rather than opposition to it. Teachers in these networks felt more confident about increasing student achievement (Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar, & Burke, 2009).

In *Scaling Up Excellence: Getting to More without Settling for Less*, authors Robert Sutton and Huggy Rao take the concept farther to describe how tapping into social networks can cascade excellence. By connecting diverse groups of people through organizational structures or teams, leaders are creating links between individuals that support information flow or change management (Sutton and Rao, 2014).

Evidence from educators
Our interviews with teachers and district leaders demonstrated that there is a need to rethink how SEAs and LEAs design adult learning experiences for principals and teachers. Their comments point to the need for more personalized forms of adult learning that professional and social networks can provide.

- "A lot of teachers feel like their PD is not a comprehensive program. It's standalone. Many teachers are frustrated, saying 'Why don't I have an individualized PD plan based on my evaluation results?' There don't seem to be tools/processes for improving that are embedded in my PD. That means I have to do that on my own." – Teacher, New York City Department of Education

- "Teachers are using Pinterest, Teachers Pay Teachers and Google [to find curricular materials aligned to Common Core]. Where is the SEA presence on those channels?" – Teacher, Woodstown-Pilesgrove, New Jersey

- "If teacher evaluation is driving professional development, mentoring, and is used in meaningful ways, then teachers are finding it to be valuable. That means everyone needs to have an awareness of which teachers are excelling in certain domains and creating opportunities to learn from each other." – Teacher, Minneapolis Public Schools

- "While [the state-led train-the-trainer sessions on CCSS and TLE] went well, they asked those teams to do too much and the turnkey back to classroom was nonexistent in many places. It broke down somewhere between Albany and districts. This led to districts making bad decisions, requiring teachers to use scripts from websites instead of having good solid professional development in their districts." –Leader, New York State United Teachers

- "There's often a disconnect between what the teacher is doing in the classroom and what the district prioritizes at a 30,000-foot view. We must have direct impact and attention focused on the instructional core, the standards, how that relates to the school focus." – Leader, Boston Public Schools

- "Much of the school-level needs (to implement new reforms) comes down to adaptive leadership: Are principals delegating effectively to the people in their building? Are they teaching their teachers? How are school leaders managing time to do this?" – Leader, KIPP Public Schools

Summary
SEA and LEA leaders need to do more to strengthen social and professional networks inside public education. Teachers don't want to learn from so-called experts; they want to learn from other expert teachers, so SEA and LEA initiatives should build around this. Formally creating opportunities and structures for these networks to flourish and generate appropriate and useful pedagogical knowledge is an important intrinsic element of the reform itself. But it's also an essential structure to create integration.

Bright Spots: States Working to Increase Integration

We've begun to see positive examples of progress in integrating leaders and systems. As part of our leadership of the U.S. Department of Education's Reform Support Network (RSN)—the technical assistance arm for Race to the Top—we collaborated with leaders from Colorado, Delaware, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts and New York to identify how SEAs could improve coherence of their own often-disconnected standards and education effectiveness initiatives. As a result, Education First produced the Reform Integration Framework and Resource Guide, aimed at school system and SEA leaders who want more integration and coherence. The guide includes a framework for identifying specific priority areas to integrate college- and career-ready standards, assessments and educator evaluation and support systems. The guide also includes more than 50 resources that can be adapted for local use and spotlights successful integration efforts in Colorado, Louisiana and Massachusetts.

Louisiana's approach to integrating reforms is a model for other states. When senior Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) leaders arrived in 2011, their first task was to ask teachers how implementation was going. They quickly learned that improvements in and integration of reforms were essential. In particular, teachers said LDE needed to do a better job of aligning tools and resources it created or collected to advance the implementation of the college-and career-ready standards and its new state evaluation system, COMPASS. As a result, LDE leaders developed a deliberate theory of action that empowers teachers, principals and other administrators to be involved at every aspect of initiative design and to ensure the full integration of standards, COMPASS, assessments, accountability and educator supports. Listening wasn't enough: LDE reorganized its agency to put teachers at the forefront.

To help integrate materials that support COMPASS and standards implementation, LDE enlisted over 4,000 educators—at least one from each school in the state—to serve on the Teacher Leader Cadre. An inner circle of 100 teacher leaders from the cadre help LDE create all policies and materials. Teacher leaders share standards-aligned instructional strategies and showcase best practices with school colleagues. They also create videos that show educators how to connect instruction with standards and COMPASS; for example, the videos demonstrate how teachers and their evaluators should conduct pre-and post-observations by including voiceover commentary about how standards and COMPASS connect.

> "Integration is difficult because it boils down to territorialism. I've experienced in large agencies how talented, well-meaning people are territorial. It's a huge issue in any bureaucracy. We have plenty of our own issues in our operating team, but there is an absolute expectation that our work won't be right if we don't collaborate. I know it won't work if it's not connected to what my colleagues are doing. In every policy decision or initiative we design, we ask ourselves: What is our ideal experience for a teacher? Day to day, what do teachers experience? How are each of our offices represented in that ideal vision?"
> —**Hannah Dietsch**, Louisiana Department of Education

LDE has also established internal governance and decision-making structures that enable integration. Since 2011, the department's chief of staff hosts a standing weekly meeting of all assistant superintendents and executive directors who are focused on instructional initiatives and work that affects teachers and principals. This Academic Strategy Group includes the assistant superintendents for talent, academic content and curriculum, high schools, student supports, network teams, special education, early childhood and school accountability.

Each member of the Academic Strategy Group commits to collaboration. They acknowledge that it takes a different approach to work, but they put in the effort to ensure that every initiative rolled out from any individual office has gone through extensive feedback from everyone else in that group, in some form or fashion. Integration is the expectation in Louisiana.

Building Coherence. Improving Performance. The Coherence Lab Fellowship.

The Coherence Lab Fellowship (CLF) is an experience, organized in rapid-cycle bursts of learning, practice and reflection that will focus on building integrated state reform strategies to improve support for educators and outcomes for students. Why focus on coherence? When applied to the work of systems in public education, we believe that coherence results when the parts of the system are logically connected and the people within the system share a unified focus and purpose. In order to achieve coherence by specifically addressing the drivers of fragmentation, system leaders must **build focus and coordination** within and across agencies, consistently **engage educators in design** to ensure a shared sense of purpose, and **change behaviors at scale** throughout all levels of the organization.

The Coherence Lab Fellowship is designed to support teams as they develop new skills, apply tools, and reflect on their work. Through the experience, fellows will build coherence within their own agencies and across their states and have the opportunity to build a network with other SEAs and LEAs that will help sustain continuous improvement efforts over time.

The fellowship will also emphasize the centrality of teachers' and administrators' expertise in change efforts and their vital role in any attempt at stronger integration. It is ultimately educators – not policy makers nor SEA and LEA leaders – who deliver on the promise of new reforms. SEA and LEA leaders can, we believe, develop the knowledge and skills to ensure that teachers and principals deliver on that promise.
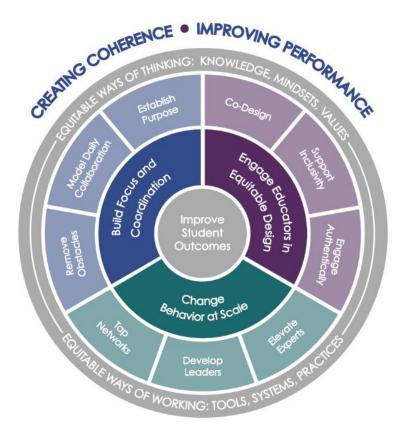
Fellowship Themes
The three guiding themes for the fellowship curriculum are directly connected to the key drivers of fragmentation. These themes will remain front and center for all fellows. They will learn together in these areas and then have opportunities to directly apply new knowledge and skills to their specific problems and context, consistently applying an equity lens as they work to address their problems of practice.
1. **Build focus and coordination**: A coherent system is focused and coordinated on implementing a few key priorities. The conditions (ways of thinking) and structures (ways of working) in place will either support or hinder coordination. Therefore, leaders at all levels of the system should create and encourage the conditions and structures that build a collaborative, integrated approach to reform within their own agencies and across sectors. They must also call attention to the assumptions, power structures, and institutionalized inequities that are built into the existing system.

2. **Engage educators in equitable design**: The degree of coherence within public education systems is manifested by educators in classrooms and schools. For this reason, system leaders must engage with and learn from teachers and principals to understand their needs, motivations and interests. This includes intentionally building empathy into the process, confronting issues of power and bias, and convening and collaborating across lines of difference. Understanding the end-user experience leads to solutions that matter to educators.

3. **Change behaviors at scale**: Coherent systems are adaptive systems. As fundamentally human enterprises, education organizations' power to adapt relies on the ability of people to learn and change. System leaders must be experts in the adult learning, social networking and change management to understand how to promote organizational learning and change that will shift behaviors and make improvements stick. Leading a culture of learning and change requires acknowledging historic and systemic forms of inequity to make dismantling systems of oppression an explicit goal and purpose of the work of change.

At times, we will explicitly focus on a single theme or multiple themes in conjunction. In other cases, one or more of the themes will be implicit in our activities and work with fellows. These focus areas are not discrete; they intersect and inform one another in multiple ways. We acknowledge that other content and themes will develop throughout the fellowship as a result of our work together and as an outgrowth of each state's problem of practice.
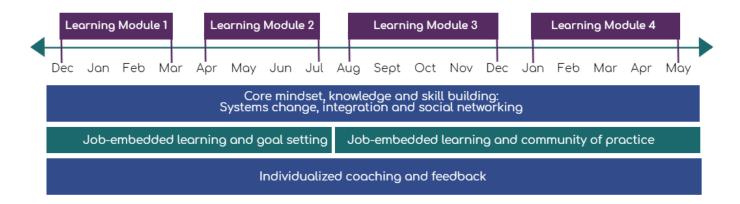
Additional Fellowship Details

The Coherence Lab Fellowship spans 18 months and involves in-person, virtual, collaborative and individual activities. Fellows will meet for multi-day learning retreats four times throughout the Fellowship.

Learning Module 1				Learning Module 2				Learning Module 3				Learning Module 4				
Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May

Core mindset, knowledge and skill building:
Systems change, integration and social networking

Job-embedded learning and goal setting | Job-embedded learning and community of practice

Individualized coaching and feedback

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