

Breakout: Leading Change in Early Childhood Education as a Systems Thinker

Jot down a response to this question and be ready to share with our small table group:

What is resonating in your head and heart from this morning's plenary?

Tracy Benson Ed.D.

President

Waters Foundation

Systems Thinking Group

www.watersfoundation.org





Introduce yourself with Name, State and Leadership Role
Share your response:

What is resonating in your head and heart from this
morning's Plenary?



AVALANCHE

Goal: As a team working together, your goal is to lower the pole to the floor.

Rules:

You can only support the pole with the top of one finger per person.

You absolutely must not lose contact with the pole at anytime.

If you lose contact with the pole, raise your free hand and your group must start over.



What happened during this exercise?

What contributed to your team's success?

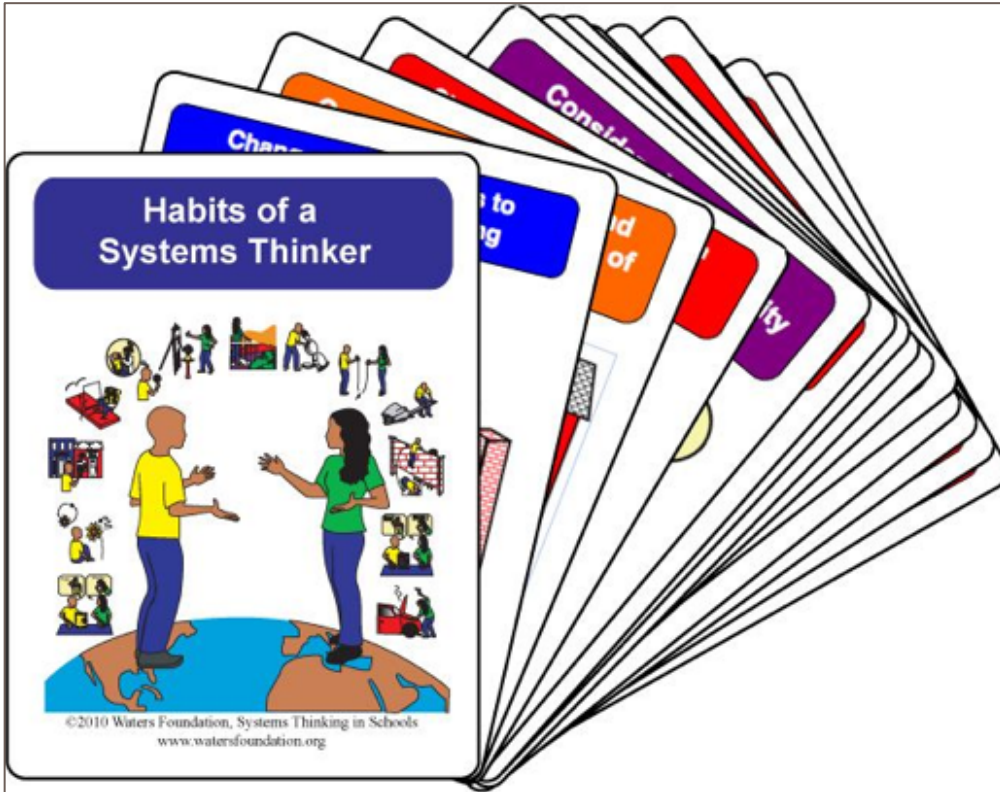
What got in your way?

Where have you seen examples of this sort of behavior in your own team or organization?

What connections can you make between this exercise and your state-level work?

Key Avalanche Takeaway:

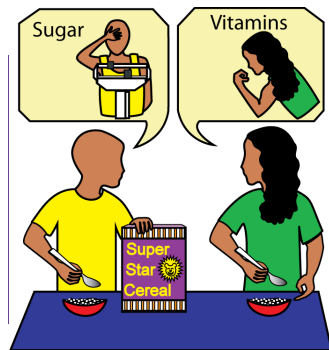
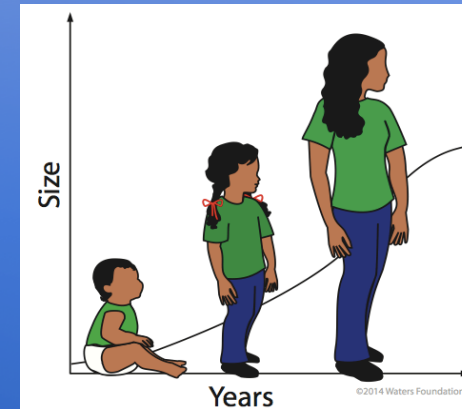
Be aware of the counterintuitive nature of complex systems.
When a system has many interconnections, it becomes difficult to anticipate the consequences of a decision or an event.



Which Habits of a Systems Thinker do you see as most important for leading change In complex systems?

Recognizing Patterns and Trends

What patterns and trends do you need to be aware of as you pursue state-level early childhood work?



Graphs help tell the story.
They also help surface and test assumptions.



Think about what you know about your ESSA provision plan for early childhood education.

Identify some of the key system elements that change over time.

Graphs Tell the Story of What is Important in Systems

Some helpful hints for naming key elements

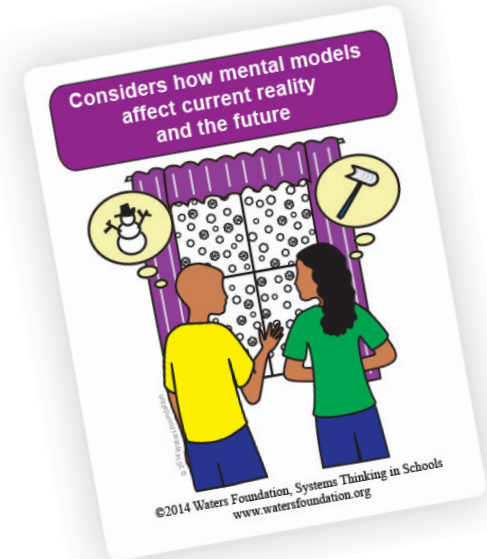
- Amount of....
- Level of
- Number of
- % of
- Quality of...

Possible examples of trends to graph

- Hard data:
 - # of Leaders with EC credentials
 - # of children in certified preschools
 - % of high quality preschools
 - 3rd grade state standardized achievement measures
 - % of African American 4 yr old children in high quality preschools
 - % of certified early childhood teachers and providers
 - # of children suspended or expelled in preschool settings

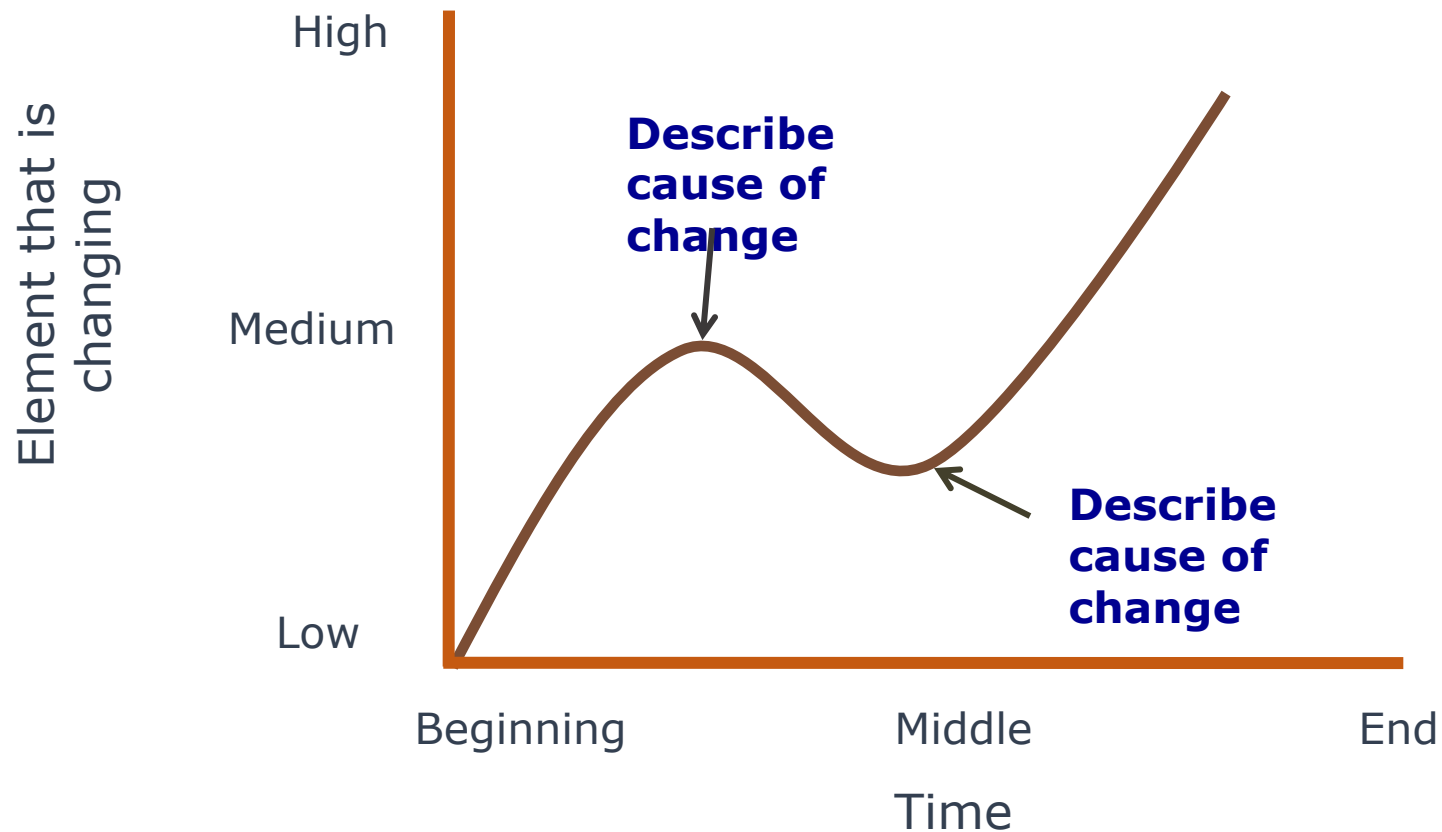
Other “perceptual” examples:

- Quality of implementation of ESSA provisions
- Level of Legislative support for ESSA EC provision plan
- Level of K-3 commitment to DAP
- Quality of early childhood professional development available
- Quality of cross-sector communication
- Level of EC teacher participation in professional learning opportunities
- Amount of attention to equity and the opportunity gap
- Size of opportunity gap
- Level of awareness and skill related to DAP
- Amount of willingness to try new things
- Level of readiness for change
- Level of commitment to underserved children
- Amount of buy-in to new initiatives



Behavior Over Time Graph (BOTG) Basics:

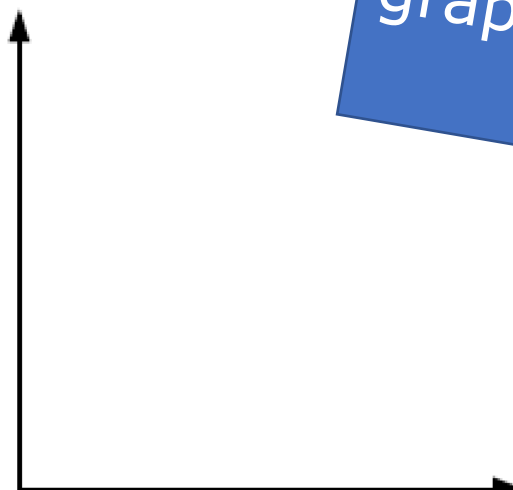
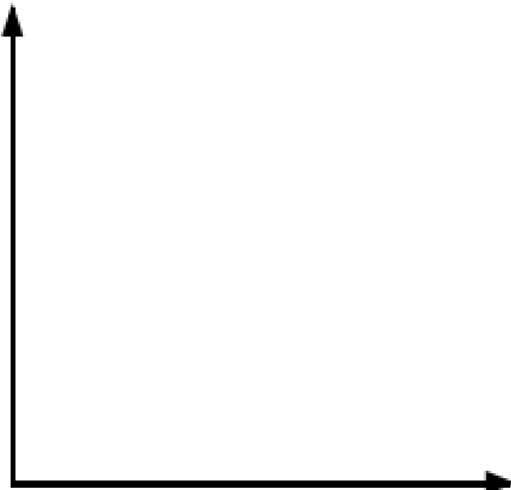
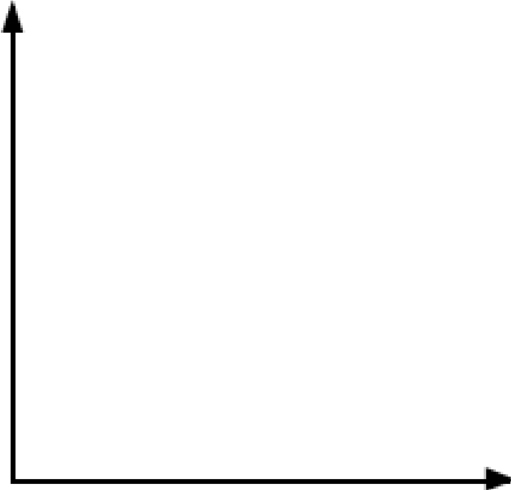
1. Quickly sketch the graph focused on the shape of the change
2. Tell the story of the graph



Behavior-Over-Time Graphs:

What is changing over time?

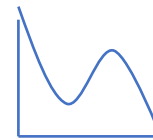
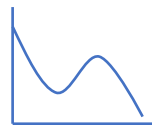
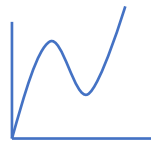
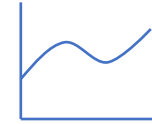
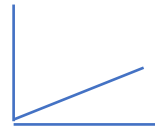
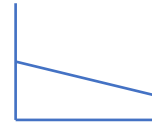
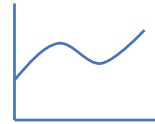
How are the essential elements changing?



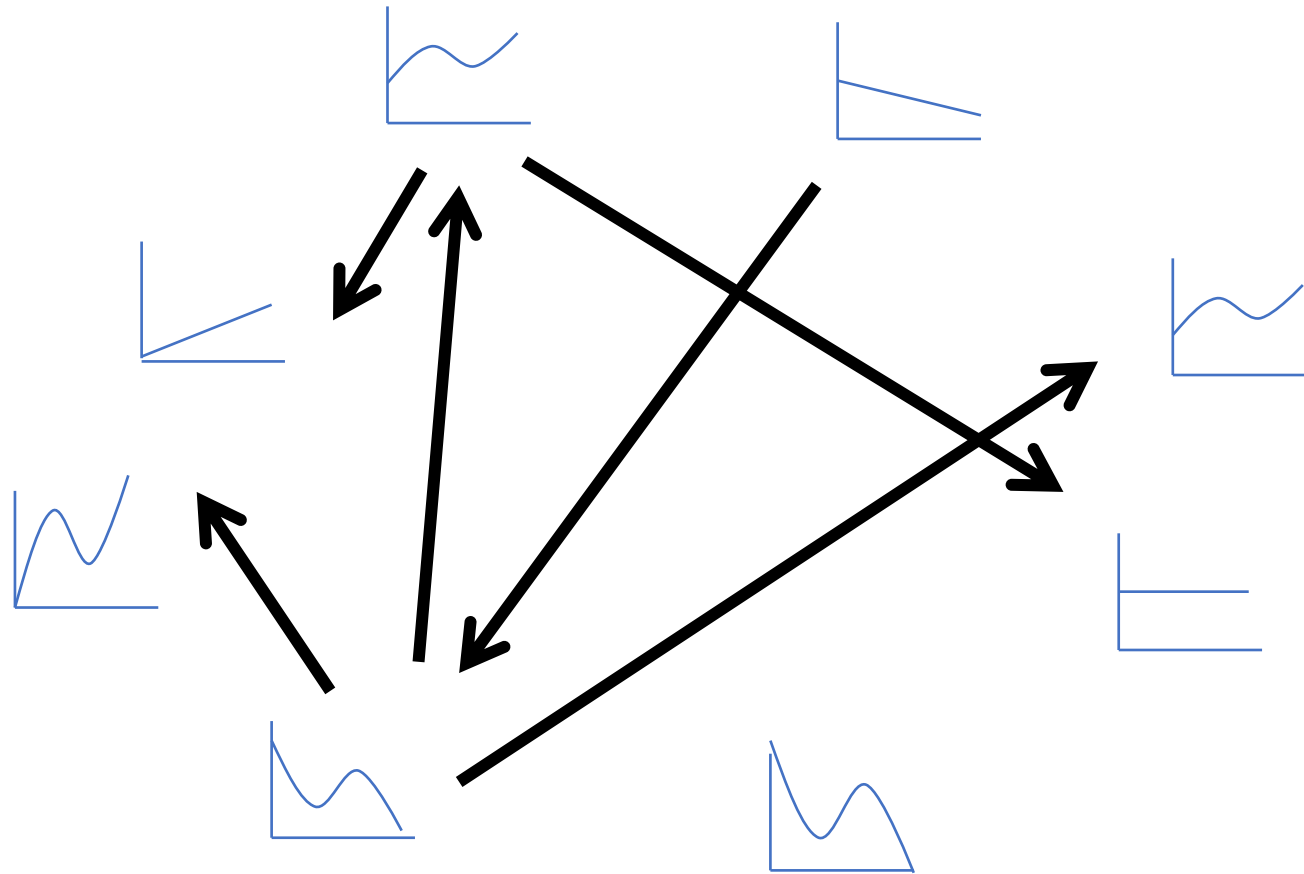
Let's Practice

1. Quickly sketch the graph.
2. Focus on the shape of the change.
3. Tell the story of your graph.

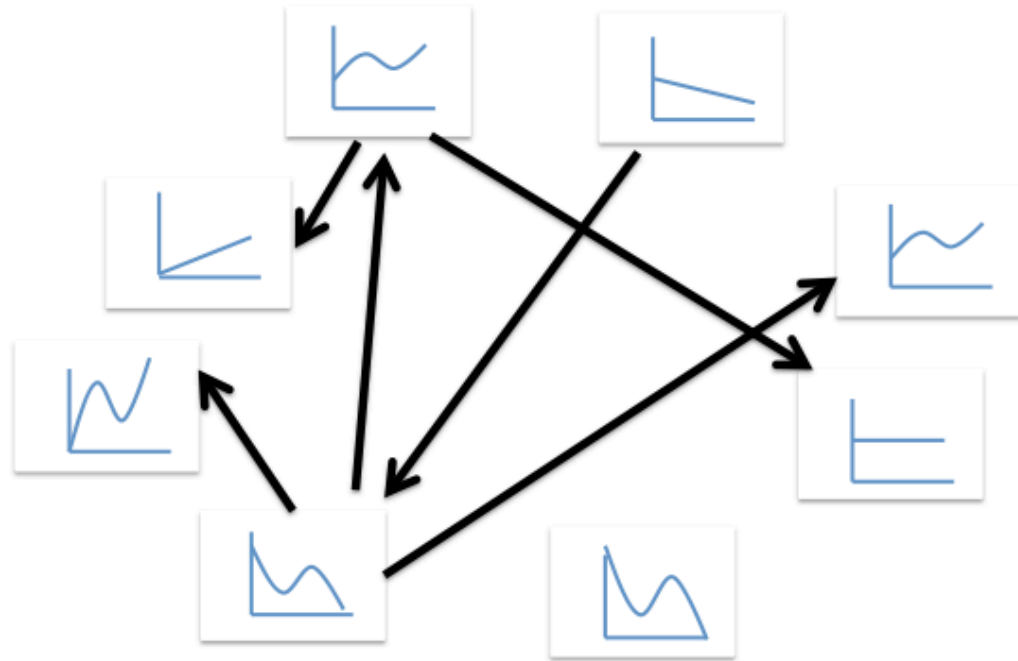
Add a few more BOTGs and draw them in a circle



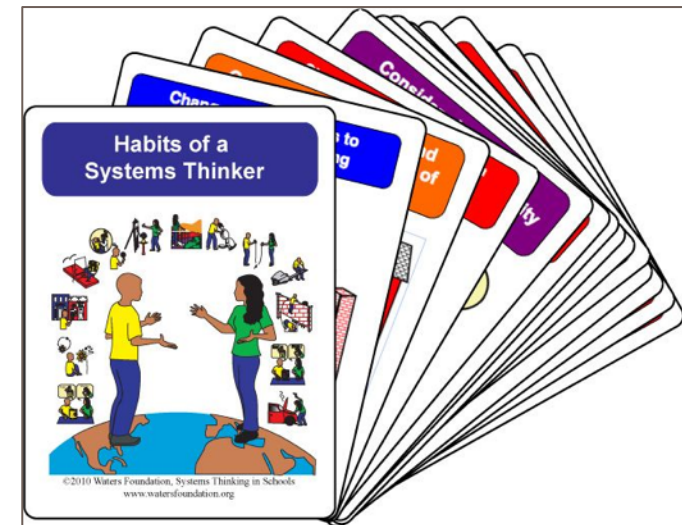
Use the arrows to connect pairs of BOTGs that have cause and effect relationships:
Draw an arrow when one element causes a change in another element



When you are finished, share your connection circle with another person. In your connection circle, which elements seem to have the most arrow tails and thus, could be considered possible leverage areas?



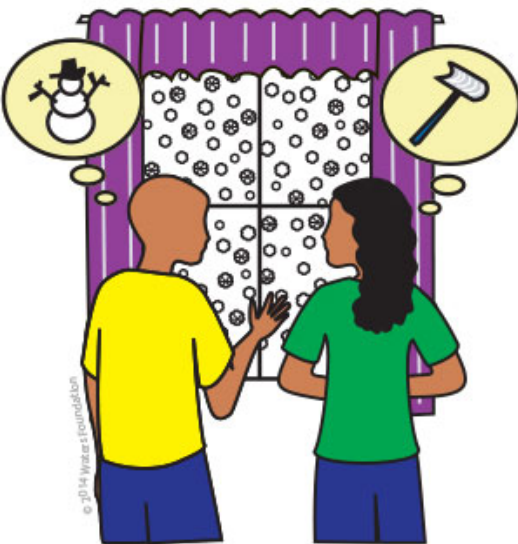
Which habits did we practice when making this systems map?



The variables in your connection circles are typically grounded in a diverse array of mental models.

Mental Models are oftentimes the drivers and/or barriers to achieving success.

Considers how mental models affect current reality and the future

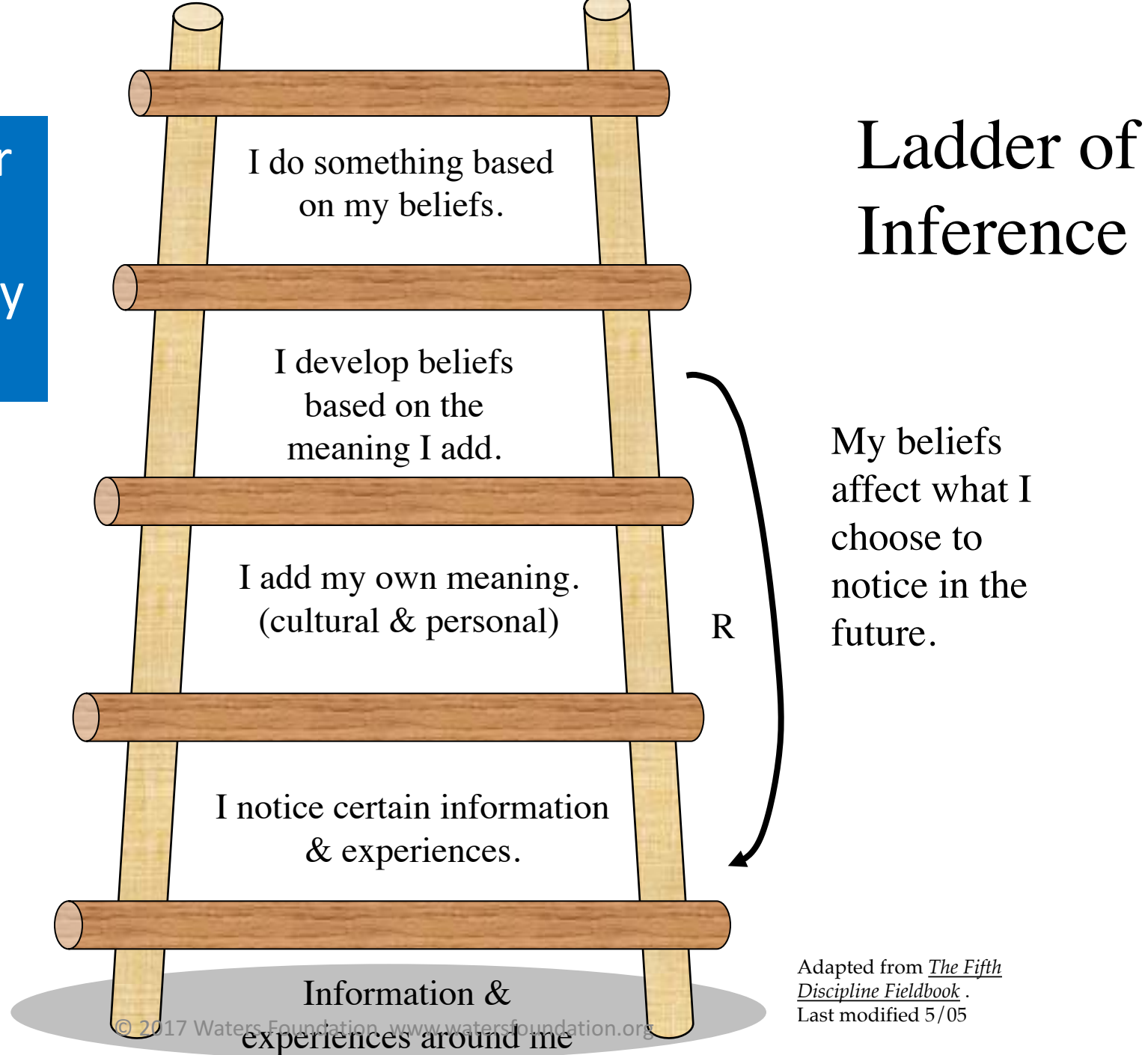


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Mental models are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action.

Peter Senge, MIT

Become aware of your own **Mental Models** and **how** and **why** they developed over time.



Managing your Ladder of Inference

- **Reflection**

- Try to suspend judgment
- Become more aware of your own thinking and broaden your observations



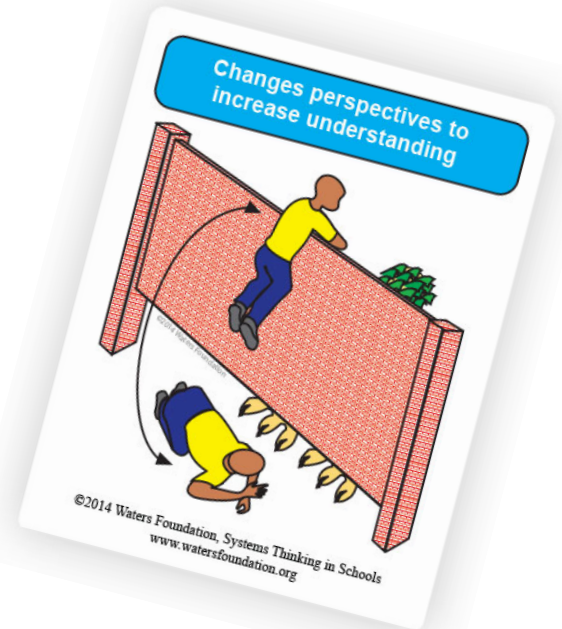
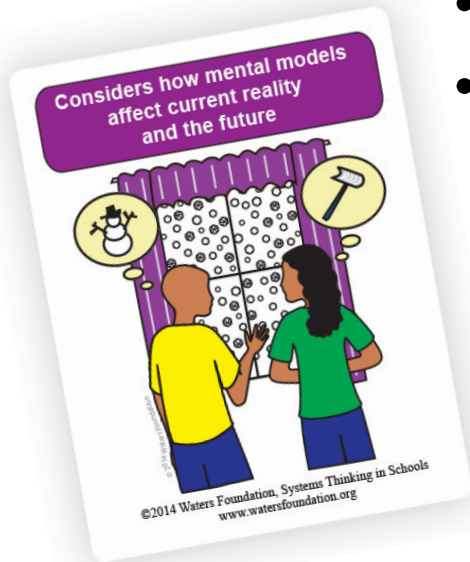
Using the Ladder of Inference

- **Reflection**

- Try to suspend judgment
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- **Inquiry**

- Inquire into other's thinking and reasoning
- Ask open-ended questions that seek clarification



Using the Ladder of Inference

- **Reflection**

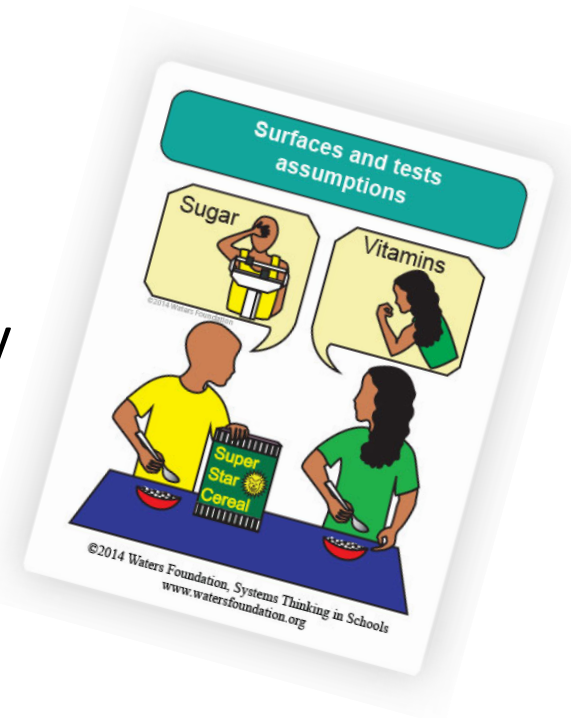
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- **Advocacy**

- Make your thinking and reasoning visible to others by describing what influenced your thinking and your actions



Mindful Listening Exercise

NORMS FOR SPEAKING & LISTENING

- Speak only when it is your turn
- While speaking, avoid generalizations and try to respond to questions with specifics
- Listen without judgement
- Refrain from commenting
- Follow confidentiality if that is an agreed-upon expectation

Mindful Listening Protocol

PROCEDURE:

1. Each participant will have 1 minute to respond to the question posed. There is no discussion, comment, or questioning. Each person will be timed.
2. At the end of each answer posed (4 min) – the entire group will take two deep breaths.

INHALE

EXHALE

INHALE

EXHALE

Questions

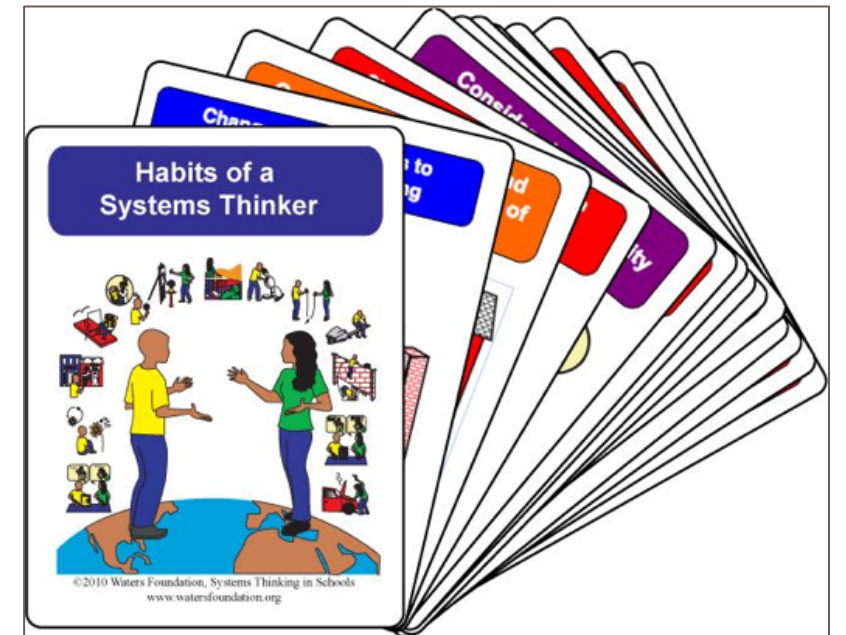
1. What ways am I influencing the implementation of our state ESSA provisions plan?
2. What am I doing to minimize and overcome current state challenges?
3. What are expectations I have for myself and others as we lead this work?
4. How is the past a barrier to the future?

Debrief:

What struck you as a listener? As a speaker?

What did you learn about?

Which Habits did we practice?

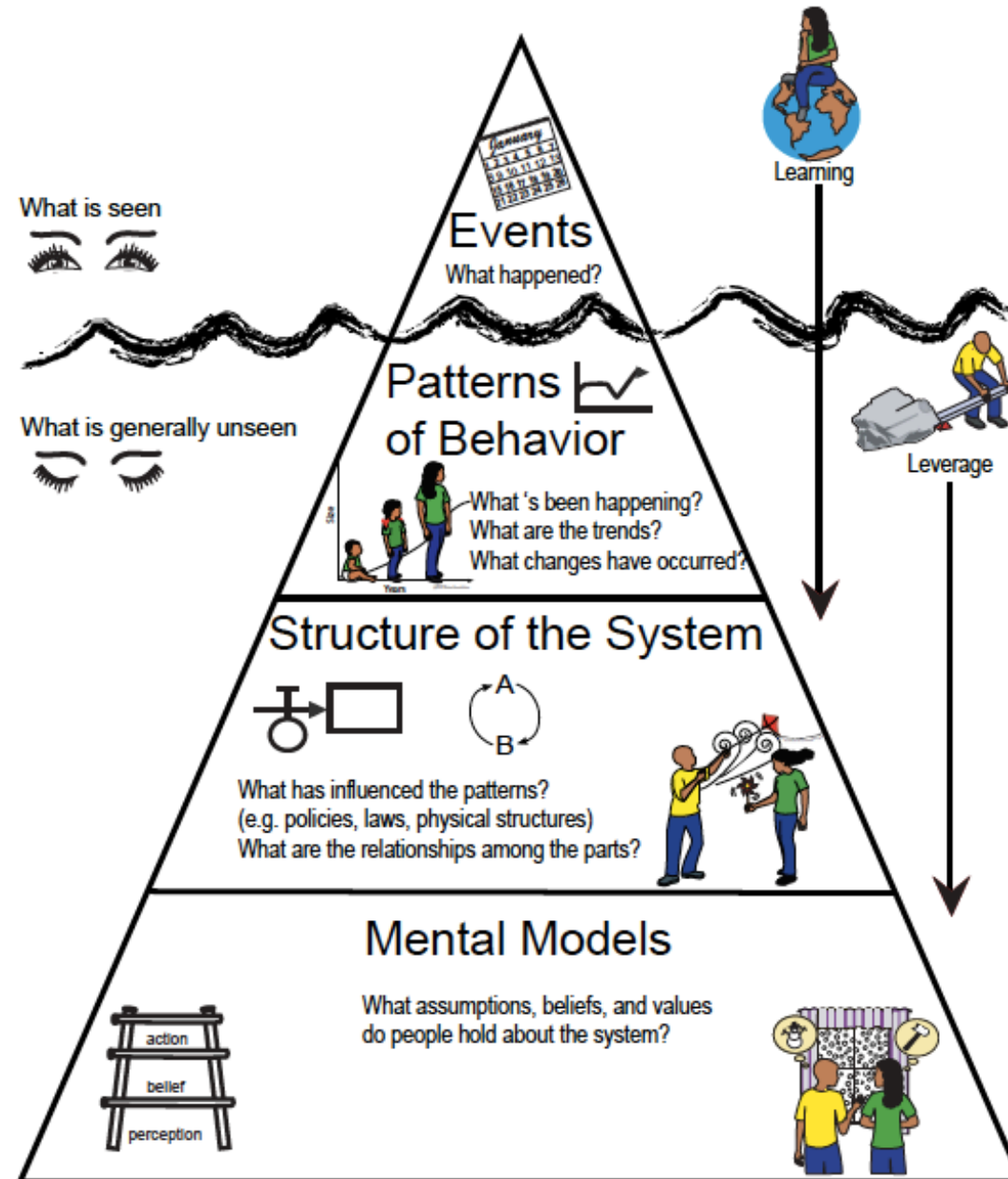


The Big Picture

Seeks to understand the
“big picture”



Iceberg... Seeing What's Below the Surface



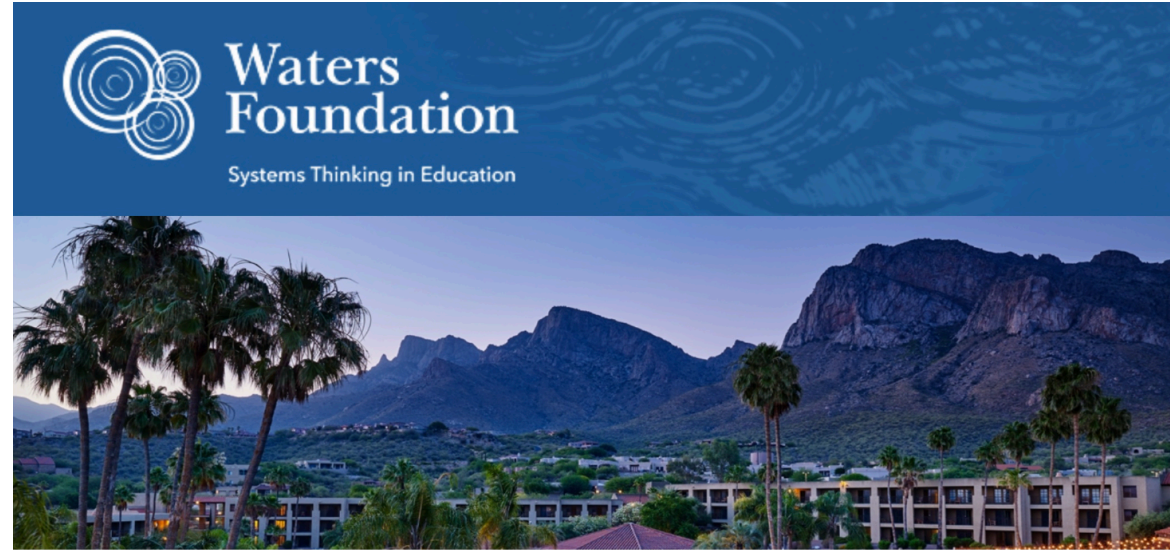
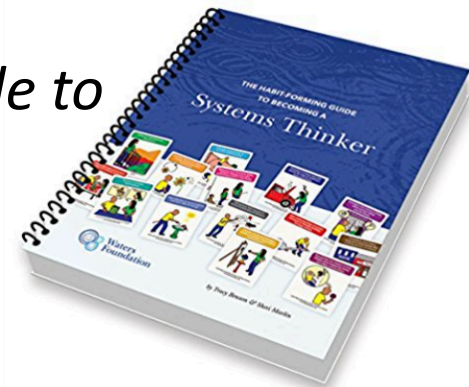
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Thank you Early Childhood Advocates & Leaders!

To continue your systems thinking learning:

www.watersfoundation.org

*Habit-forming Guide to
Becoming a
Systems Thinker*



Better Together: Think Big. Think Bold. Think Systems!

Systems Thinking Institute

September 27–29, 2017

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ST Habits

App sold in iTunes and Google Stores