### PLENARY—Systems Thinking while Leading for Change in Early Childhood Education

**PURPOSE:** Provide an overview of systems thinking and how to apply it to the concept of leadership at the State level. Identify strategies to engage diverse partners and perspectives to drive systems change (from Roundtable outcomes)

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Introduce the habits of systems thinking
- Experience the habits of systems thinking from various perspectives
- Using an equity lens and a systems thinking approach, examine state level efforts to incorporate ESSA early childhood provisions
- Introduce and apply the Habits of a Systems Thinker to state-level work
- Explore how mental models influence effort to drive systems change and identify strategies to impact this influence
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND STUDENT OPPORTUNITY
(Case Study from Teaching for Educational Equity)

NOTES | QUESTIONS
Circle of Influence

Circle of Concern

Adapted from S. Covey
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Influential Leadership Positions

Leading from the Top

Leading from the Middle

Leading from the Bottom

Adapted from Barry Oshry and David DeVane
Seeks to understand the big picture

Observes how elements within systems change over time, generating patterns and trends

Recognizes that a system's structure generates its behavior

Identifies the circular nature of complex cause and effect relationships

Makes meaningful connections within and between systems

Changes perspectives to increase understanding

Surfaces and tests assumptions

Habits of a Systems Thinker

Considers an issue fully and resists the urge to come to a quick conclusion

Considers how mental models affect current reality and the future

Uses understanding of system structure to identify possible leverage actions

Considers short-term, long-term and unintended consequences of actions

Pays attention to accumulations and their rates of change

Recognizes the impact of time delays when exploring cause and effect relationships

Checks results and changes actions if needed: “successive approximation”
Ladder of Inference

I notice certain information & experiences.

I add my own meaning. (cultural & personal)

I develop beliefs based on the meaning I add.

I do something because of my beliefs.

Information & experiences around me

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My beliefs affect what I choose to notice in the future.

Adapted from The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook
Systems Thinking in Schools, Waters Foundation
Rubber Band Exercise

Person A: What is happening now?
Describe the current state of early childhood education in our system, being sure to talk about equity. (30 seconds)

Person B: What are your hopes for the future?
Describe the vision for an equitable early childhood education system. As you describe the vision, begin to move away from Person A (current state), so that you can show the gap between now and the desired future. This will create tension. (30 seconds)

No matter how small the step, the time is now to take action on behalf of high quality early childhood education for all.