



## 2017 Roundtable Summary: Leading for Change in Early Childhood Education

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This summary provides a high level overview of the [Annual Roundtable](#) meeting, a list of resources shared by presenters and attendees, and summaries of the meeting sessions. To learn more about the Roundtable, see the [2017 Roundtable page](#) on the [CEELO website](#).<sup>1</sup>

### What we set out to do

State early education specialists from across the US convened in San Francisco to learn about strategies they could lead for change and to share insights from their work with their colleagues. This year's theme was *Leading for Change in Early Childhood Education*. Attendees participated in sessions and plenaries that strengthened their capacity to provide informed leadership about research-based practices to support an effective, high performing statewide systems for children birth through third grade

The desired outcomes of the meeting were for attendees to increase their:

- Effectiveness in engaging diverse partners and perspectives to drive system change
- Utilization of results-focused leadership and planning to achieve policy goals
- Integration of implementation science to support program expansion and policy goals
- Knowledge of the barriers, tools and strategies to address racial, economic and cultural diversity and equity

To provide participants with strategies they could take home and use, the sessions were designed to be interactive and “hands-on.” Each attendee received a workbook with material and exercises to practice with during the Roundtable meeting. There were four plenary sessions – *Systems Thinking, Implementation Science, Leading P-3 Work, and Leading for Equity*. Breakout sessions provided a time for deeper

The [Roundtable](#) is collaboratively planned by national technical assistance partners to build capacity of state early childhood specialists. The meeting encourages peer exchanges of research and innovative practices to enhance state policy. As one attendee noted:

*It is always inspiring to be among such knowledgeable educators from across our nation. Our agency is much stronger and strategic because of this Roundtable and our engagement over the past three years.*



Graphic 1 Hands-on Group Work

<sup>1</sup> Information in the summary comes from a variety of resources – notes taken by staff, information shared by panelists and speakers, Twitter comments, and a post-meeting survey



exploration within the first three areas. A fourth breakout session delved into results-based leadership. In each breakout, facilitators weaved in equity considerations. To make connections and plan for at-home use, participants completed action commitment forms.

A cohort model allowed participants to create deeper ties with participants from other states. Each participant was placed in one of four cohorts (grey, white, blue, and green). The cohorts stayed together throughout the meeting as they rotated together to each of the breakout sessions. Participants found value in the cohort structure, both in terms of access to content and relationship-building with colleagues in different states. These quotes from the post-meeting survey highlight how respondents viewed the model:

- *The cohort planning was effective in moving from one session to the other with ease and efficiency as well as built opportunities to establish relationships.*
- *The structure of the break-out sessions supported the ability to discuss and share issues and to learn about the work other states are doing in various areas.*
- *The breakout sessions - having the cohorts stay together - was a great opportunity to build conversation and collaboration.*
- *I appreciated the organized set-up of the cohorts. Being the only representative from my state her, this rotating model made it possible for me to gather more information to bring home. Also, the size of the cohorts was just enough to offer conversation, opinions and networking.*

Presenters and facilitators continually emphasized connections between the different sessions to support participants taking in of information and practical use. Survey respondents noted this, with comments such as:

- *I like the organization of the cohorts and the efforts the presenters made to connect topics from one session to the next.*
- *Plenary sessions were inspiring. Breakout sessions supported continued thinking of the plenary subjects.*

## Who came

One hundred five (105) attendees, representing state agencies, federal technical assistance centers, national organizations, and institutes of higher education, came together in San Francisco for the convening of the Roundtable. Sixty-two attendees, representing 30 states<sup>2</sup>, came from a state department or local school district. They were joined by individuals from comprehensive centers, national organizations, foundations, and/or universities.



Graphic 2 Engaging in Systems Work

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<sup>2</sup> States attending with number of individuals representing the state: AL(3), AZ (3), CA (2), CO(1), CT(5), GA (2), HI (2), IL (2), IN (1), IA (1), KS (1), KY (2), ME (1), MD (3), MA (1), MI (7), MN (1), MS(1), MO (1), NE (4), NV (2), NJ (4), NC (2), OH (1), OK (1), PA (2), WA (2), WV (1), WI (1), WY (2)



## What we learned

Through the experts and peer learning opportunities, attendees were encouraged to go deep and stretch their skills over the course of the days. One attendee positively noted that she was “being asked to do more and prepared to meet that challenge.” In reflection time at the meeting, attendees noted that sometimes it is better to start small and targeted and then grow and improve as they learn more. Using the tools they acquired to identify and understand problems and barriers would help solve these problems.

The sections below provide a snapshot of the goals and desired outcomes of each session. Workbook materials and slides are provided, by session, at the end of this document.

## Systems Thinking

Tracy Benson ([Waters Foundation](#)) and Maurice Sykes kicked off the meeting with a plenary on [systems thinking](#). In the plenary, Tracy provided an introduction to systems thinking and Maurice offered discussion points for the group. During the breakout, Tracy led participants in delving deeper into the practice and adoption of the [Habits of a Systems Thinker](#) and applying those habits and systems thinking tools to leadership at state-level early childhood. Key concepts from the session were:

- Leading change as a systems thinker is not a solo endeavor
- Deep understanding of the system at multiple levels maximizes the identification of high leverage actions
- Becoming a systems thinker takes intentional practice
- Awareness of mental models, where they come from and how they influence the way people think and act is essential practice of a systems thinker



Graphic 3 Systems Thinking in Action

Attendees reflected on the importance of the human factor – what you do matters and the importance of building trust and creating shared responsibility.

## Implementation Science

In their [plenary presentation](#), Dale Cusumano and Angela Preston from the [National Implementation Research Network \(NIRN\)](#) at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill shared how *effective practices* (usable practices), *effective implementation* (drivers, stages), and *an enabling context* (teams, data & communication) lead to improved outcomes. They also described the stages of implementation – exploration, installations, initial implementation, and full implementation and introduced attendees to the Integrated Stage-Based Conceptual Framework and shared tools to guide attendees in identifying implementation drivers and thinking of opportunities for change in their work.



In the breakout session, attendees identified the components of active implementation, learned to operationalize the role of the systems thinker in using effective implementation practices, and assessed current stage of implementation for respective identified practice/initiative. Observed reflections include:

- Taking a step back and engaging in the exploration phase important – some states noted that were learning and implementation while writing the policies made it difficult
- Implementation science works but a huge challenge is outside forces that want things done a certain way or want a piece of the funding
- There is a tendency in states to implement in whole state at once – better to create “transformation zones” and start with just a few districts and expand from there



Graphic 4 Learning all about Implementation Science

Maurice Sykes noted that systems thinking supports implementation science because it gets us thinking about systems want to change and looking at the current situation and desired outcomes. It forces us to think about systems we want to change and study them, rather than jumping into a “fix.” He highlighted that implementation science is a strategy that can be used to look at systems for our desired results.

### Leading P-3 Work

Rick Falkenstein (Kingwood Township School District, NJ) and Mary Ann Dewan (Santa Clara County Office of Education, CA) provided local provided local perspective on leading P-3 work during the plenary session. Participants learned about initiatives from New Jersey, Connecticut and California designed to support learning in preschool and beyond. What often results from our fragmented system of care and education is a lack of *rigorous* and *appropriate* experiences for children as they transition from early childhood settings to the primary years of schooling.

- For teachers, this fragmentation looks like a push-down of expectations on our youngest learners
- For administrators, this fragmentation creates a lack of alignment in curriculum and assessment practices
- For children and families, this fragmentation leads to isolation as engaging a disjointed system is confusing





## CENTER ON ENHANCING EARLY LEARNING OUTCOMES

The plenary provided an in-depth look at a research and professional development initiative s that the states and districts have designed in partnership with others to assist preschool through third grade educators with fusing academic and social development.

During the breakout, led by CEELO's David Jacobson, participants examined the role of state education agencies in promoting P- improvement. State leaders with experience in different aspects of P-3 improvement kick-offed discussions by sharing their reflections on one of their priority initiatives. Attendees then reviewed strategies states use to build P-3 capacity at the community level and, in groups, identified common challenges that are emerging for the field. Attendee reflections include:

- Thinking about collaboration and how, when you're at the middle, to work with the top and the bottom levels- how to bring everyone together and break down barriers?
- Engaging those who aren't often included in P-3 work such as non-center based providers (e.g., family child care). P-3 is has too many systems with varying levels of history/vision/beliefs and practices - need to disrupt the system and find commonality.
- If there aren't shared values in new state structures then it's hard to advance P-3 work
- Interest in digging into: leadership development, assessment, pedagogy, child care centers, transitions, principal development, use of data, formative assessment
- There are huge disparities among equity and resource distribution. How do we shift the needle? Rather than throwing resources, how do we change adult behavior?

[Graphic 5 P-3 Breakout Share-Out Poster](#)

### Leading Towards Results

This breakout session prepared participants to move from intention to action for young children and emphasized the power of self as an instrument of change. CEELO's Jana Martella and Jim Squires shared tools and resources that participants could use to further their leadership toward action producing results, including adaptive leadership and results-based, data-driven work. During the session, participants examined their behaviors, roles, and relationships and also developed new skills needed to lead organizations and systems toward lasting improvements in child outcomes. Participants were:

- introduced/reviewed the key components of results based leadership (RBL)
- actively engaged and learned new leadership skills and exercises
- asked to make action commitments using the concepts of the session

### Leading for Equity

In a call to action session, Maurice Sykes and Steve Barnett (CEELO/NIEER) provided reflections, insights, and suggestions for attendees to return to their offices with a mission to lead for equity. Steve Barnett [shared data](#) that highlighted problems and identified possibilities. Maurice led the audience in discussion and advised attendees:

- Set audacious goals
- Ask for what they really want



## CENTER ON ENHANCING EARLY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Press on equity issues within their reach
- Work up a budget of what it would take for us to get into every classroom every year and the supports we need, might not happen but need a plan
- Collaborate with others outside of education who touch a child's life (multi-system approach)
- Reorganize structures and forcing collaboration, take advantages of opportunities that are placed in front of them

Actions states can take including provide guidance or developing tools that use an equity frame (e.g., Massachusetts' Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's [Equitable Access to Excellent Educators Playbook](#)) and creating dedicated office or positions (e.g. Washington State's [Equity and Civil Rights Office](#)). Attendees noted that ESSA provides opportunities to lead for equity.

As the meeting concluded, attendees were encourage to "take a stand for kids" and reminded that nothing is won without a struggle, so it's necessary to step outside of the line and do the right thing

### What's next

From conversations at the Roundtable to commentary attendees provided in the post-conference evaluation, it is clear that leadership for change, particularly for equity, is valued. CEELO has several ways to support participants in continuous development to achieve this.

- Connect with CEELO staff - we are available to help states think through and make plans to support policies and practices. See [this page](#) for your state liaison.
- Check out [the CEELO Leadership Academy](#) page, which hosts numerous resources for developing leadership skills.
- In the coming year, CEELO staff will work with state offices of early learning, building their capacity, deploying resources, and gaining insights for peer learning. The 2018 Annual Roundtable will be hosted in Austin, Texas, Wednesday through Friday, June 6-8.



## Resources

Presentation slides, readings, handouts, and other material are available on the [2017 Roundtable page](#). Also available is a [Storify](#) that shares tweets from the meeting (#Lead4ECE). Resources are broken out by topic area below.

### SYSTEMS THINKING

#### *Preliminary Readings*

[Leading Change for Early Childhood: No better time for systems thinking](#)

#### *Plenary*

[Slide Deck](#)  
[Workbook](#)

#### *Breakout*

[Slide Deck](#)  
[Workbook](#)

[Habits of a Systems Thinker](#)

[What is Systems Thinking](#)

### IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE

#### *Preliminary Readings*

[An Integrated Stage-Based Framework for Implementation of Early Childhood Programs and Systems](#)

#### *Plenary*

[Slide Deck](#)  
[Workbook](#)

#### *Breakout*

[Slide Deck](#)  
[Workbook](#)

[The Critical Role of State Agencies in the Age of Evidence-Based Approaches: The Challenge of New Expectations](#)

### LEADING P-3

#### *Preliminary Readings*

[Building P-3 Systems: Learning from Leading States](#)

#### *Plenary*

[Slide Deck](#)

#### *Breakout*

[Slide Deck](#)  
[Workbook](#)

[Giving Young Students a Bigger Slice of the Pie \(Chart\)](#)

[Four Education Priorities Democrats and Republicans Can Agree On: Bipartisan partnerships are still possible in education](#)



**RESULTS BASED LEADERSHIP**

*Preliminary Readings*

[Leading for Results: Developing Talent to Drive Change](#)

*Plenary*

No plenary

*Breakout*

[Slide Deck](#)  
[Workbook](#)

[Theory of Aligned Contributions: An Emerging Theory of Change Primer](#)

**LEADING FOR EQUITY**

*Preliminary Readings*

[Equity and Excellence: African-American Children's Access to Quality Preschool](#)

*Plenary*

[Slide Deck](#)

*Breakout*

No breakout (equity discussions woven through breakouts)

[The Pedagogy of Poverty Versus Good Teaching](#)

[Case Study: Socio-Economic Status and Student Opportunity](#)

**2016 PRESCHOOL YEARBOOK**

*Preliminary Readings*

[Raising the Bar on Quality](#)

[The 2016 Preschool Yearbook Executive Summary](#)