Event 13
Evaluate Other Change Efforts

When and Why to Use this Event

Who conducts this event? The facilitator and the Core Team.

Intent. There are two purposes of this event, evaluating and dealing with other change efforts, and elaborating the profile of the district.

When. We recommend that this event not be done until after the Core Team has developed an understanding of systemic design and has redesigned this event (Event 11).

Context. By the time you (the Core Team) engage in this event, you will already have adapted it to your situation as a part of Event 11, which required you to have skills in systems design (also Event 11). After this event, you will be better prepared to design the process for expanding the Core Team (Event 14).

Synopsis. The intent of this event is accomplished by sharing information and collecting documents (Activity 13.1), and by discussing the findings and their implications for the change effort (13.2).

Rationale. Evaluating other change efforts is important because those efforts can strongly influence the success of this change effort. This is the Core Team’s first opportunity to evolve the profile of the district and begin to identify candidates for the expanded teams. It is useful to get a clear consensus among the members of the Core Team on what has happened in the district before exploring individuals’ openness to change, which in turn is helpful to do before trying to get a sense of the overall culture for change.

Implied Values. Participation, conversation, honesty, dialogue, disclosure, honoring diversity, inclusivity, language, organizational learning, openness, relationships, respect, stakeholder development, systemic thinking.

Past interlinkages. What information already gathered informs this event? The district profile that was created in Event 3 and elaborated in later events should be considered in performing this event.

Future interlinkages. The information gathered in this event will be useful for identifying the unique character of your district and adjusting this systemic change effort accordingly.

Prerequisites. Events 7 and 8.

Calendar Time. About 2 - 3 weeks.

Goals
1. To identify, evaluate, and honor past and ongoing change efforts in the district (school system and community), and to deal with any effects they may have on this effort.

2. To elaborate the profile of the district, including individuals' attitudes about change, their capabilities, and so forth.
Activity 13.1
Share and Collect Information

When and Why to Use this Activity

Who conducts this event. The facilitator and the Core Team as a group.

Intent. The purpose of this Activity is to learn about previous and current change efforts. During this activity, you (the Core Team) will be pursuing the 2 goals listed for Event 13 on the previous page.

Context. The information that you (the Core Team members) collect in this activity will be synthesized and summarized in Activity 13.2 to identify the implications of previous change efforts for the new change effort.

Synopsis. This event entails sharing and collecting information about previous and current change efforts, including collecting any helpful documents. It includes creating a working document that identifies sub goals for each goal, followed by a sequence of activities to achieve those sub goals in an integrated manner.

Rationale. Getting good information is crucial to understanding how current and previous change efforts may help or hinder your change effort.

Calendar Time. 1-2 weeks.

Process

1. Prepare to foster an understanding of systemic change. (For Goal 2.)

   In all your interactions with stakeholders, you (the team members) should be constantly building an understanding of what systemic change is and why it is needed. Your preparation should result in relevant items for the working document. For each of the following understandings that you as a team believe are important, the working document should identify specific objectives and information for fostering those understandings. The following are some discussion questions that may be helpful in developing this document.
The Need for Systemic Change

In what ways is your current system failing to serve some of your learners?
In what ways is your current system having detrimental effects on some learners?
What needs are not being met well for any learners by the current system?
What community problems could best be addressed by education but currently are not?
What is the difference between an educational system designed for sorting versus one designed for learning?

(Learners learn at different rates, but in the current system we hold time constant and allow achievement to vary. This allows us to rank and sort students. To design a system for learning, we would have to allow each child as much time as they need to work at their maximum rate to reach high standards for each of the essential skills.)

Which kind of system would you want for your children (or grandchildren)?
In what ways is your current system assuming a role of being responsible for learners, versus being responsible to them?

Others:

The Nature of Systemic Change

What are the differences between piecemeal and systemic approaches to improving education (or any system)?
What are the differences between a planning approach and a design approach to change?
What are the advantages and disadvantages of envisioning an ideal educational system, rather than just one that is better than what we now have?
What is the user-designer (or stakeholder) approach to change, and what are its strengths and weaknesses?
What is the logic of a systemic change process? (See Unit 1.)
How long is a systemic change process likely to take?
What kinds of resources are necessary for a successful systemic change process?

Others:

(Time: 1-3 hours)
(Materials and Resources: Notes, results, and conclusions from Event 11)

2. Come to a common understanding of what a change effort is. (For Goal 2)

You (the team members) should reach agreement on what activities should be considered change efforts and which ones should not. You should keep in mind the importance of identifying all the change efforts that might have some impact on your change process, including past efforts. In addition to change efforts initiated by the school system, there may be some community change efforts that don't formally involve the school system, but that may influence your change effort. Be sure to prepare a report that summarizes the team members' common understanding, so that you can share it with other stakeholders and with the new members when you expand the Core Team.
**Some Issues to Consider for Defining Change Efforts**

What competing reform efforts are currently underway? At what level (classroom, school, district)?

In what area (curriculum, instruction, assessment, etc.)? Who is involved?

How large is the scope of its impact? Does it go beyond a change being made by a single teacher?

Does it go beyond making a change in the lunch schedule?

Who and what stakeholders are impacted? Is it just administrators? Just teachers?

How many within each stakeholder group are impacted and how strongly are they impacted? Does it need to stir strong parental or community interest (e.g., a textbook controversy)?

Possible types of impacts to consider:

- What is competing for money?
- What is competing for stakeholders' time?
- What is influencing stakeholders' mindsets?
- What is either increasing or decreasing resistance or divisiveness?

Other issues:

(Time: 1/2 hour)

3. **Have a discussion to prepare for your discussion.** (For Goal 2.)

You (the core team) need to discuss what information is needed about each change effort and how to collect any information you don’t yet have.

With respect to **what** information is needed, you (the team members) will be identifying all important change efforts, and you will be collecting information about each effort.

With respect to **how** to collect it, for identifying all important change efforts, you may want to start by brainstorming all the efforts you team members are aware of. For collecting information about each change effort, you should consider document collection and interviews at the sites. It is also important to brainstorm the kinds of documents to look for and how to look for them.

3.1 **Review the district profile and any other relevant information.**

You should all review the profile of the district, both to orient yourselves to information that has already been collected about the district in general, and to look specifically for information regarding change efforts that are currently underway. Also, try to think of additional kinds of information you may have collected in prior events. This information can be used as a starting point for Step 3.2.

3.2 **Brainstorm a list of all current and recent change efforts.**

You should brainstorm an initial list of efforts, based on what each of you is aware of, using the common understanding and issues arrived at in Step 3.1. This should include both ongoing and past efforts. It may be helpful to brainstorm the past and ongoing efforts separately.

3.3 **Decide what data to collect on each of those efforts.**
There are two categories of information to collect: what you as a team want to know about all the efforts and what is only relevant to one or a few efforts. The information you want on all the efforts may be different for past than for ongoing efforts, so you may want to brainstorm for each separately. For information on all the ongoing efforts, the following are some questions you may want to consider addressing through interviews and documents. Keep in mind that it is difficult for a focus group of eight people to address more than about 3 major questions in a single meeting, and it is often helpful to have sub-questions in mind for probing each major question. (Use grid.)

**Questions to Consider Asking for Ongoing Efforts:**

What process is being used to plan and implement the changes?
- How piecemeal versus systemic is it?
- Who is involved and who is not? Who is making the decisions? How are those people perceived? Who should be involved?
- What obstacles is it encountering? Are they ones you need to be concerned about?

What changes are being attempted?
- What are its purpose and quality? Is it clearly focused? How is it perceived?
- What motivates the change effort? What should motivate it?
- What are the values that underlie the change effort?
- What changes are or will be mandated, and which self-selected?

What effects have emerged so far from this effort?
- What is impacting? Who are the winners and losers?
- How much involvement has been generated? Backlash? Resistance? Receptivity?
- In what ways is it influencing stakeholders’ mindsets?
- Is it increasing or decreasing resistance or divisiveness?
- How much stakeholders’ time is it absorbing? How is it being used?
- How much money is it absorbing? How is it being used?
- How many other resources is it absorbing? How is it being used?
- How will each of the above impact on your effort?

Other questions?

For information on all the past efforts, the following are some questions you may want to consider addressing through interviews and documents:

**Questions to Consider Asking for Past Efforts**

What process was used to plan and implement the changes?
- How piecemeal versus systemic was it?
- Who was involved and who was not? Who made the decisions? How are those people perceived? Who should have been involved?
- What obstacles did it encounter? Are they ones you need to be concerned about?

What changes were attempted?
- What was its purpose and quality? Was it clearly focused? How was it perceived?
- What motivated the change effort? What should have motivated it?
- What are the values that underlie the change effort?
- What changes were mandated, and which self-selected?

What were the results of this effort (successes and failures)?
- Who did it impact? Who were the winners and losers?
- How much involvement was generated? Backlash? Resistance? Receptivity?
- In what ways did it influence stakeholders’ mindsets?
- Did it increase or decrease resistance or divisiveness?
Make a list of all the information that you want to collect and tentative questions to get that information. This list should become a part of the working document that you initiated in Step 4.1 and elaborated in Step 3.2.

3.4. Arrange the efforts and information needed into a table.

The list of change efforts (from 4.2) and the list of information to collect (from 4.3) can be arrayed into a table, with change efforts on one dimension and the information on the other. This will prove helpful for synthesizing the information later after you have collected it for all the change efforts.

(Time: 2-4 hours)

4. Prepare to elaborate the profile of the district and key stakeholders. (For Goal 4.)

There are two major purposes of elaborating the profile of the district and its key stakeholders: to identify people who would make good members of the expanded team and to learn more about the district's capacities and areas of resistance to change.

For this goal, you as a team should review the district profile that you created in Event 4, including individual profiles, as well as the cumulative capacities of stakeholder groups and the district as a whole. Decide how to update the district and individual profiles and to create new individual profiles (especially their attitudes about change and their capabilities) as you (the Core Team members) interact with stakeholders during Activity 13.2.

Your preparation should result in generating relevant items for the working document you have been evolving. Those items might include specific attitudes and capabilities to assess.

(Time: 2 hours)

5. Decide what documents to collect and how to collect them.

One way of obtaining information about past and ongoing change efforts is to collect documents about them. The first step is to identify what kinds of documents are available. They might include meeting minutes, reports, newspaper articles, video tapes, pictures, newsletters, documentation generated by working groups, and so forth. Then you need to determine how to gain access to those documents. This may include identifying who to gain authorization from (if necessary) for either inspection or copying. Issues of confidentiality must often be considered. It is often important to identify someone who can provide context and elaboration on a document.

(Time: 2-4 hours)
Make a list of all the information that you want to collect and tentative questions to get that information. This list should become a part of the working document that you initiated in Step 3.1 and elaborated in Step 3.2.
Activity 13.2
Synthesize Results and Develop Feedforward

When and Why to Use this Activity

Who conducts this activity. The facilitator and the Core Team as a group.

Intent. The purpose of this activity is to identify ways that current and past change efforts may impact your change process.

Context. You (the Core Team members) have just collected data about current and recent change efforts (Activity 13.1). After you synthesize the findings (this activity), you should develop an agreement for systemic change (Event 10) and redesign the process for expanding the Core Team (Event 14).

Synopsis. This event entails synthesizing the findings for all current and past change efforts (from Activity 13.1), developing feedforward for adjusting your change process based on the findings, expanding the individual profiles and the cumulative capacities of the district, and communicating the findings to all relevant groups.

Rationale. The findings must be analyzed and synthesized in order for the Core Team members to understand their implications. Feedforward is important for adjusting the change process to your district's situation, and should include addressing competing change efforts. And communicating the findings is important for building the trust and openness so essential to the success of the change effort.

Calendar Time. 2-4 weeks.

Goals

To synthesize the findings for all change efforts. This addresses goals 2 and 3 for Event 13 (see box below).

To identify implications of the findings for the systemic change effort. This addresses goals 2 and 3 for Event 13.

To develop feedforward for accounting for those implications. This addresses goal 3 for Event 13.

To expand the individual profiles and the cumulative capacities of the district. This addresses goal 3 for Event 13.
To improve the readiness and capacity of the district by communicating the findings to all relevant groups. This addresses goal 2 for Event 13.

**Overall Goals for Event 13**

1. To foster understanding of the nature of, and need for, a systemic change effort in general, and the change process you are undertaking in particular. This includes an understanding of, and appreciation for, the values that underlie a systemic change effort.
2. To identify, evaluate, and honor past and ongoing change efforts in the district (school system and community), and to deal with any problems they may present for this effort.
3. To elaborate the profile of the district, including individuals’ attitudes about change, their capabilities, and so forth.

**Process**

1. **Synthesize the findings.**

   Decide how to synthesize the findings, then do it. To decide how to synthesize the findings, first consider how the findings will be used. We recommend you (the Core Team) consider using them (1) to identify ways to improve the readiness and capacity of the district for a systemic change effort, and (2) to identify ways in which you (and the subsequent Design and Decisioning Teams) will want to customize the activities we offer for the systemic change process.

   For each way in which you (the Core Team) intend to use the findings, you may want a different format for synthesizing the findings. For example, for identifying ways to improve the readiness and capacity of the district, you might identify obstacles (negatives) and capacities (positives) that emerged in previous or ongoing efforts that are likely to be obstacles or capacities for this systemic effort. They might include (a) mindsets about education, change, and the change process, and (b) relationships among stakeholders, such as who is trusted or distrusted, who was involved and should be involved, who are people aligned with, who is disenfranchised, what antagonisms have arisen, and so forth. You might find it helpful to use some of the categories ("Criteria") from Activity 3.1. A written report will likely be very helpful.

   (Time: 2-6 days, depending on number of change efforts)

2. **Address ongoing efforts.**

   Every ongoing change effort absorbs time, energy, and other resources, all of which are already severely limited. Other ongoing efforts will compete with the systemic change effort for those scarce resources, so it is important for you (the Core Team) to think about how to address this serious but politically delicate problem, and to take appropriate action.

   There are basically three options:
   (1) let the other efforts continue in parallel with the systemic effort,
   (2) encourage those in each of the other efforts to explore putting a temporary moratorium on theirs, and
   (3) try to terminate all other efforts.
The first option is likely to jeopardize the success of the systemic effort, and the third option is likely to create much animosity and resentment that would probably doom the systemic effort. Therefore, we strongly recommend the second option.

For the second option, we recommend that you (the Core Team) use a consensual approach and ask those involved in each other change effort to pause and consider how their effort relates to the larger systemic effort. This approach requires convincing them to step back momentarily for a broader view—to understand the context within which their effort is operating and the larger framework of needs, of which their project addresses one part. Community members may be particularly hesitant to put their efforts on hold, so you may need to develop effective ways of addressing their particular concerns and needs. Encourage them to consider the costs and benefits of continuing with their effort compared to delaying it for a while. One benefit might be that the broader systemic effort could support the changes they are exploring, making them more likely to be implemented and to endure. Also, it would be wise to actively involve, in your effort, one or two of the main advocates of each ongoing effort, so they will have a sense of progress while their effort is on moratorium, and they will gain an appreciation of the need for a systemic approach, as well as an understanding of how their effort needs to relate to the larger whole. The important point is that the people involved in each change effort need to be empowered to make their own decision regarding continuation.

You should identify specific actions for you (the Core Team) to take in using such a consensual approach, who will take each action, by when, and so forth, for each ongoing change effort. For example, you may decide to talk first to one or a few respected leaders in an ongoing effort to get a sense for how to approach the larger constituency involved in the effort and to solicit their help in approaching them, or you may choose to go directly to the larger constituency and facilitate them through a process of understanding your effort, how their effort relates to it, what would be the advantages and disadvantages of both efforts proceeding independently of each other, and what to do about it (if anything).

(Time: 1-3 days)

3. **Identify implications of the findings as feedforward for the systemic change effort.**

The implications for the systemic effort will probably relate to the same categories you developed for Step 1—obstacles and capacities, including mindsets and relationships. This is important for helping you (all those involved in the systemic change effort) to avoid the mistakes of previous efforts and helping you to understand the climate and conditions that may influence the way you customize the systemic change process and how to transcend the current thinking in the district (community and school system) about education and the change process. The results of Step 2 should be a part of your feedforward.

(Time: 2-6 hours)

4. **Expand the profiles of individuals and groups in the district.**

Expanding the profiles of *individuals' capabilities* entails using the results of the interviews and document analysis both to elaborate those profiles that were created in
Activity 4 and to add new ones. Feel free to modify the format of those profiles any way you (the Core Team) think would be helpful.

Expanding the profiles of district capacity entails using the results of the interviews and document analysis both to elaborate the information about each criterion that was addressed in Activity 4 and to possibly add other criteria.

As you do this, keep in mind that the purposes of the profiles are:

- To help you (not just the Core Team, but the expanded teams and indeed the whole community) to decide who would be good to include on the expanded teams,
- To help you identify capacities that need to be developed and maintained to facilitate the change effort, and
- To give you a greater understanding of the district and its people, so that you may better design and conduct your change process to meet the needs of the community.

(Time: 1-3 days)

5. **Give feedback on the findings and communicate the feedforward.**

This is an opportunity to build a relationship with each site and to foster further understanding of the nature of, and need for, a systemic change effort in general, and the change process you are undertaking in particular (Event Goal 1). It also communicates the importance you attribute to the community.

It is important to share results with the Leadership Advisory Group and subsequently with the expanded teams (Design and Decisioning) and indeed the whole community. However, there are some delicate communication issues to grapple with. If your approach to addressing ongoing change efforts entails trying to convince those involved in each effort to put theirs on hold, publicity about that approach may generate resistance before you have a chance to begin taking those actions. On the other hand, the values of trust and openness are cornerstones of a systemic change process, and to violate them will almost certainly doom the effort. Occasionally values conflict. Certainly, the value of respecting confidentiality can conflict with the values of openness and honesty. As you, the Core Team, make decisions about communicating your findings, keep your values firmly in mind, and look for ways to resolve value conflicts with the least compromising of values possible. For example, there may be some circumstances that warrant delaying certain communications. These are issues the Core Team needs to discuss openly and reach consensus on.

**Leadership Advisory Group.** It is important to share results with the Leadership Advisory Group, in order to inform them of what efforts have occurred, what obstacles, successes, and failures those efforts have encountered, how people feel about the efforts and attendant changes, and the current conditions for change. It is also a way of communicating about what the Core Team is doing, which will convey the value the Team places in openness, will foster understanding of the change process, will communicate the Team's accomplishments, and will demonstrate accountability for the Team's activities. It may also be helpful to have a written report briefly summarizing the findings and feedforward, but most members of the leadership advisory group are likely to be too busy to take much time to read it. We strongly encourage you to give an oral report to the leadership advisory group to ensure they come away with a minimum
understanding of the findings and feedforward and to give them an opportunity to ask questions, engage in discussion, and communicate their perspectives to the Core Team regarding the findings and feedforward.

**Design and Decisioning Teams.** These teams, which are formed in Events 13 and 14, will assume the major responsibility for the systemic change effort. The expanded teams will need to be oriented to what has happened so far, including a good understanding of previous and ongoing change efforts and of the current profile of the district, and what has been accomplished to that point regarding the feedforward. This will occur in Activity 4 of Events 13 and 14, if you keep the basic structure of those events as we have portrayed it. Because of the time that will elapse before you can communicate the findings to those teams, we strongly encourage you (the Core Team) to write up a detailed report of the findings and feedforward. But it will also be important to have in-depth discussions of them with the new teams. More guidance about this is provided in Events 13 and 14.

**The Community.** The more the community understands the history of change and the current situation, including what has worked and what has not, the more valuable the contributions they will be able to make to the process. Now is also a good time to motivate the community to get actively involved in the change process. If negative feelings are revealed among some community members about some changes, this is a good opportunity to involve them in figuring out how negative results can be avoided in the future. Think about and decide how information regarding the findings can be communicated to the community. Try to get the mass media to play an active role in the communication process, but beware that negative headlines always play better than good news. It may help to assess the intent of the reporters you deal with before deciding which ones to involve actively in the communication process. Also, a mailing could be sent out to the voter mailing list, followed by public meetings to share results and gain more historical perspective from the community. Try to anticipate the range of public reaction to each piece of information you communicate, and develop ways of turning any negativism into positives for the process, such as enhanced motivation for public participation in the process.

(Time: 2-4 weeks)

**Potential Problems with the Process**

The following are some of the problems you may anticipate in trying to conduct this process:

- As this information is communicated, there will be some who disagree with the findings. It is important to make sure that their thoughts are received with an open mind, that they feel they have been listened to with an open mind, and that their perspectives are noted as part of the district's profile. It is also important to communicate both the evidence that led to the conclusions, and how that evidence was collected. It is important to honor the different perspectives of all community members rather than to pass judgment on them.

- As this information is communicated, there will be some people who react defensively to it because of their earlier role. It is important not to cast blame, but
to focus on what you can learn for the future. This is a very sensitive problem that could result in resentment if not handled well.

- As this information is communicated, there will be some people who are angry at others for what they perceive as poor decisions. Again, it is important to get people to focus on the future rather than the past, and to turn their negative energy into a positive force for the change effort.

- There may be pressure from some team members to not communicate all the findings. This will reveal agendas and mindsets that need to be disclosed, discussed openly, and evolved until there is consensus among all team members. The success of the change effort will depend to a large extent on building trust, and that requires complete openness and acknowledgment of past mistakes and successes.

- Imposing temporary moratoriums raises to the surface political agendas, pet projects, and personal motives. Many participants in these on-going efforts have spent a great deal of time and emotional energy investing in the success of a given effort. It is possible that you, as the facilitator, may become the lightning rod for much of the politics and disagreements that surface during this process of shifting to moratoriums. Imposing moratoriums will create even more potential for negative discourse.

**Understandings**

We offer the following suggestions for specific understandings you may wish to work on. Again, please do not feel you have to use these understandings, and we hope you will identify other understandings you think are important.

- What are the likely effects of communications that are perceived as incomplete or censored compared to ones perceived as open, honest, and complete?

- What are the likely effects of attributing blame for past problems as opposed to focusing on avoiding similar problems in the future?

- How important is it to build trust?

- What are the likely effects of honoring participants' contributions to past efforts?

- How important is it to understand the causes of successes and failures in past efforts? How can those causes help in developing a systems view of education and the change process, and vice versa?

- How can collecting and communicating findings about past efforts increase a sense of stakeholder ownership and participation in the systemic change process?