# Organizational Growth
# and Change Management:
## Emerging Challenges and Lessons Learned

## 2011 Convening of Education Grantees

Prepared for the
W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation

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January 2012

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## *Introduction*

Committed to strengthening its network of education grantees as a robust learning community, the W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation hosted its fourth annual grantee convening in Chicago in 2011. Bringing together its grantee organizations from Boston, Chicago, New York and San Francisco, the Stone Foundation organized the meeting to probe the specific challenges and possible paths forward that education organizations face as they grow, expand their reach and work to deepen their impact— themes the foundation has helped its grantees explore in annual meetings since 2009. (See Appendix A for list of the foundation's education grantees.)

At the 2011 convening, grantees discussed issues related to change management, organizational sustainability, evaluation, communications and relationships with school districts. Specifically, the meeting was organized to accomplish these objectives:

- Examine the challenges of organizational growth and change all these organizations are confronting;

- Brainstorm and share possible strategies and approaches for overcoming these hurdles; and

- Identify considerations for successfully managing the "change process"—both within organizations and with external stakeholders.

In designing the meeting, foundation staff spoke with each grantee to identify needs and interests. The foundation also commissioned brief case studies of two foundation grantees—Partners in School Innovation and the Boston Teacher Residency—to anchor the meeting in real-life situations and present actual organizational growth and management issues to discuss. In addition, experts Laura Moran of Pivot Learning Partners[1] and Pranav Kothari of Mission Measurement[2] participated in the meeting and provided additional insights into these cases and the implications for other grantees in similar circumstances. (Biographies of all presenters at the meeting are included in Appendix B.)

This report synthesizes key ideas and themes from a full day of exploration dedicated to helping education organizations scale their work and increase their impact.

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[1] Moran is a senior consultant with Pivot Learning Partners, which works with schools and school districts across California. The organization provides system redesign services for school systems that aim to reduce costs, increase effectiveness, create more equitable opportunities and produce stronger results.

[2] Kothari is managing director of Mission Measurement, a social impact consulting firm. It works with corporations, nonprofits and government agencies to measure and improve the results of their social initiatives.

## *Best and Next Practices for Change Management:*
## *Building Organizational Capability*

To set the context for the case study discussions at the convening, Laura Moran, senior consultant with Pivot Learning Partners, summarized "best" and "next" change management practices for organizations seeking to scale their efforts, especially for those such as Stone Foundation grantees that also are focused on changing education systems. Regardless of the scale or greater impact an organization aspires to, managing the changes needed to accomplish new goals is fundamentally about building and deploying organizational capabilities.

Scale, she argued, can be achieved not just through expansion to new sites, schools or districts—which is how it is traditionally defined—but also in these additional ways[3]:

- "Going deeper" in current program offerings and focusing on program sustainability;

- Creating long-term sustainability;

- Spreading principles and beliefs—as changes are made and staff turnover occurs, ensure continual momentum of the essential program elements; or

- Shifting ownership of reform activities to become self-generative.

Moran also presented a "change compass" tool that asks organizational leaders to reflect on three factors needed to advance change[4]:

- The depth of **commitment** from people in the organization to the desired change;

- The organization's **capability** –including technology, structures and people—to accomplish the desired change; and

- The leadership needed to effectively move the organization in a new **direction**.

Gauging the degree of alignment among these three elements can serve as a helpful and immediate diagnosis for organization leaders—as "all three need to be aligned," she said (see Figure 1 on next page). For example, a gap in leadership makes it difficult for an organization to move in its desired direction, and differing belief systems about equity hinder organizational commitment to change.

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[3] Adapted from Cynthia E. Coburn. "Rethinking Scale: Moving Beyond Numbers to Deep and Lasting Change." *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 32, No. 6. See http://gse.berkeley.edu/faculty/cecoburn/coburnscale.pdf.

[4] Adapted from the Interaction Associates. See http://www.interactionassociates.com/services/collaborative-change-management.

**Figure 1: Organizational Change Compass**
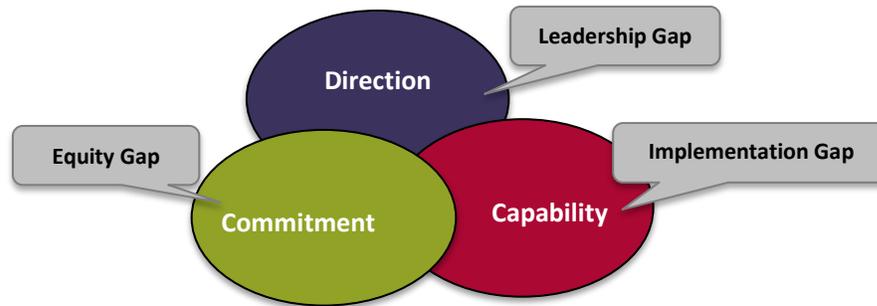


Moran also discussed how change management practices can be used not only to help organizations as they scale and manage their own changes but to also shed light on how to work most effectively with and help influence changes with school district partners. Moran encouraged attendees to "stretch themselves as leaders" and look at how to use current best practices and emerging new practices to get to scale faster and serve more students who need the most help.

She identified these challenges that organizations need to consider today when managing change specific to education reform:

- The broader national reform agenda, particularly the negative impacts and limited success of the federal No Child Left Behind Act and unstable policy environments with under-resourcing of public education.

- The recognition that teachers are most critical to success for student achievement while acknowledging that most "change efforts" have limited support or ownership from teachers.

- Insufficient cultural competency and ability among educators to transform courageous conversations about systemic oppression into reform practices and structures.

- An implementation gap that includes talent shortages and lack of school and district capacity to implement most change initiatives with fidelity and/or sustainability.

- Governance structures and politics that disrupt leadership and change management continuity.

Summarizing research findings about best and next change management practices—and considering the challenges she identified, Moran's recommendations to Stone Foundation grantees for working with school districts included:

- Use the "change compass" tool described above to explicitly assess strength and alignment of direction, commitment and capability within a school district as a pre-condition to forming a partnership.

- Co-create a diagnosis of "five dysfunctions" that can block effective implementation—unaligned/weak conditions needed for change (commitment, capability and direction on the "change compass"), fragmentation, lack of engagement, little accountability and lack of efficacy—and be a critical friend in helping change these patterns.

- Build or leverage new and existing networks that increase the social capital and voice of students, teachers, families and community in shaping and driving a reform agenda—one example, Moran suggested, is Stone Foundation grantee TeachPlus, which develops teacher networks and connects them with education policy makers who are making decisions affecting their classrooms.

- Assist district leaders in building and communicating a clear and compelling narrative across all stakeholder groups about performance data—and make the efforts of organizations working strategically with a district part of the official district "dashboard" tracking progress.

- Don't become another silo working for change in the community: Build or become part of a social network of change agents that are partnering with the school district.

- Promote the strengths of the district publicly and be an advocate to create the conditions districts need to succeed.

## *Synthesis of Case Studies*

At the 2011 Stone Foundation convening, Derek Mitchell, CEO of Partners in School Innovation, and Jesse Solomon, executive director of BPE[5], participated in discussions about their growth stories, as presented in written case studies prepared in advance for meeting participants. Following are summaries of each organization's growth plans and challenges as documented in the case studies. These case studies served as a lens to examine common challenges most foundation grantees are facing with their own growth strategies.

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### BPE/Boston Teacher Residency

*Organization Overview*

Created as a fresh approach to helping address high teacher-turnover rates that bedevil urban districts, the Boston Teacher Residency (BTR) is a 13-month residency program that has operated as a special partnership between the nonprofit Boston Plan for Excellence and Boston Public Schools to train and place new teachers in the district. BTR's mission is to "drive significant student achievement gains through the recruitment, preparation and support of exceptional teachers in Boston."

Each year, BTR supports 75 resident teachers-in-training who have committed to working alongside experienced mentors in classrooms throughout 12 Boston schools. Residents earn a living stipend and, upon successful completion of the program, a master's degree. In addition, teachers who stay with the district for three years receive tuition forgiveness. BTR offers graduates support, coaching and professional development for their first three years of teaching. The program focuses on helping teachers develop the content knowledge, experience in practical teaching methods and skills needed for success today in Boston schools.

Since graduating its first class in 2004, BTR has trained and placed nearly 400 graduates; more than 80 percent of these graduates stay teaching in Boston for at least three years and, from the program's inception, 80 percent overall are still teaching in Boston. It also is succeeding at providing schools with teachers in areas where they are needed the most, including math, science, English-as-a-second language and special education. BTR has also inspired similar programs in large cities nationwide.

*Organization Goals for Greater Scale or Impact*

While the program has worked successfully to increase the skills and success of individual teachers, BTR leaders increasingly believe the breakthroughs in improved student achievement they want to see will require change not only in the training and practices of individual teachers but in the capacity and culture of entire schools. In other words, even the best prepared teachers need functional school environments if they are to be maximally successful.

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[5] "BPE" is the new name for the Boston Plan for Excellence, which—as described in the Stone Foundation case study—has recently re-organized its work and refocused its mission.

With the resources and prestige of the $4.8 million federal Investing in Innovation (or "i3") grant in hand, BTR has embarked on a redesign of its residency program to create a stronger supply of excellent teachers for struggling schools in particular. To increase the impact of its teachers, BTR is planning to:

- Concentrate residents now spread across 12 schools into a smaller number of sites—perhaps as few as three eventually—and make core program improvements.

- Open one new teacher training academy—modeled on the idea of a teaching hospital in medicine—to pilot innovative training models within a school and better enable a tighter feedback loop (by 2017, BTR wants to see most of its residents placed in this sort of new training academy).

- Explore more intentional placement strategies into other district schools once BTR teachers complete their one-year residency—including choosing some of the district's lowest-performing schools as sites to concentrate graduates and supports.

When the long-time director of the Boston Plan for Excellence—BTR's umbrella organization—retired in early 2011, the organization's board of directors took the opportunity to merge the broader agenda of the Boston Plan with the specific teacher focus of BTR. The "merger" is creating an opportunity for organizational leaders to better attend to the school supports and culture that executive director Solomon also believes is critical to successful teaching.

Specifically, Solomon is taking the school-change expertise—including helping teachers analyze data and building professional learning communities—of the BostonPlan and fully integrating it into the BTR model. BTR also is beginning to work with its placement schools and these schools' other partners to align efforts with a whole school improvement model (based on Anthony Bryk's "five essentials" construct). Solomon explains, "We are working to take a number of elements at the Boston Plan for Excellence and combine them in a coherent approach in schools where it all comes together."

By linking a more comprehensive system of supports for schools to the specific changes to the BTR preparation and induction model, the newly configured BPE (as the organization will now be called) believes it can more aggressively improve teacher effectiveness, leverage whole-school changes and demonstrably improve student performance. Indeed, the new goal of the organization is to accelerate students' academic growth and close achievement gaps in the classes of the teachers it supports.

*Growth Challenges*

The new model will place demands on the combined organization: thorny contractual issues are barriers to concentrating BTR residents in schools, the organization will need new senior team members with different skills, and leaders will need to raise nearly $17 million more over the next 10 years to ramp-up the new approach (in addition to the federal i3 funds already awarded). BTR's current program budget is stable at $8 million for FY 2012 but relies heavily on federal grants that will last only through the next few years. BPE leaders will need to consider other fundraising options in order to fill the budget gaps once the grants run out.

Also, BTR and the Boston Plan have traditionally interacted with Boston Public Schools at both the school and district level. In focusing their activities more narrowly to achieve depth and impact, many legacy activities of both organizations are being discarded. What is the right relationship with the school district moving forward? How will organizational changes impact the long-standing relationships between BPE and individual schools and teachers?

When it first began its program, BTR paid most attention to teacher recruitment and retention. But over time, it has tried to focus more directly on teacher effectiveness: How well do the teachers it prepares impact student learning, in addition to how long they stay in the district? It has identified indicators of effective teachers that have helped improve recruiting and selection decisions. Now BTR is aiming to measure the actual effectiveness of its program graduates once placed in the classroom. "The students' growth and improvement has to be our bottom line," explains Solomon. New data suggest BTR residents teaching mathematics start out less effective at raising student test scores than other teachers with the same level of experience, but their effectiveness improves more rapidly over time: By their fourth and fifth years, BTR graduates outperform other BPS teachers with similar levels of experience.

Looking forward, as it implements the new approach, what should be the right indicators of progress for BPE? What metrics should be monitored most closely now? How will the organization use the data to drive program improvements in its residency model?

## Partners in School Innovation

*Organization Overview*

PartnersSI's mission is to "enable public schools in high-poverty communities to achieve educational equity through school-based reform." PartnersSI focuses its efforts on schools serving large numbers of African-American, Latino and English-learning students in low-income communities, and teachers rave about its success helping them improve outcomes.

In recent years, PartnersSI has helped struggling schools in the San Francisco Bay Area districts double and sometimes even triple their literacy and student-achievement gains over other public elementary schools. With this record of success, PartnersSI has grown from supporting five schools to working with 30 schools in three Bay Area districts and providing lighter-touch support to two additional districts in the area.

Conceived in 1993 as an opportunity to leverage the talents of AmeriCorps volunteers to work as "partners" in low-performing schools, PartnersSI's early efforts to improve schools met with solid anecdotal indicators of successful partnering but little impact in the critical area of student achievement—and PartnersSI subsequently transitioned its approach to instead recruit educators with urban teaching experience (in other words, to use partners who had already demonstrated the leadership and instructional skills in the classroom to help other teachers improve and become

successful). Today, PartnersSI's work builds district and school leader capacity through three key strategies:

1. *Continuously improve the core instructional program:* To help schools improve instructional coherence and promote common student expectations, PartnersSI's team works closely with educators to better define what students need to learn (the curriculum), identify best practices for delivering instruction, and put in place a comprehensive system for using assessments to identify learning needs and monitor progress.

2. *Develop a system for teacher professional learning:* In order to ensure that teachers are consistently and continuously supported to improve their practice, PartnersSI helps schools plan professional development on high-priority instructional strategies; support teachers in planning for their instruction, analyzing their results and adjusting practice; and improve instructional coaching in the building, including focused observations and follow-up support for teachers.

3. *Leading results-oriented cycles of inquiry:* To ensure sustainability of new structures and ways of working, PartnersSI provides on-going coaching for school leaders to strengthen their instructional leadership and to create a school environment where high quality teaching and learning can take place.

Beginning in 2008, PartnersSI began to recognize that district leadership was a critical component for success in its schools as well—and it started shifting its focus from developing relationships solely with individual schools to working with districts to support all their struggling schools. Derek Mitchell joined the organization in 2009, hired in part to figure out a way of scaling up the newly refined model.

*Organization Goals for Greater Scale or Impact*

PartnersSI began a path of expansion in 2009, looking to transfer its school-focused change model to several other districts around the country. Over the next 10 years, it plans to have strategically selected up to five urban districts and supported each for three to five years building in-house capacity and providing support to the districts' lowest-performing schools. As a result, by 2021, it expects to have helped at least three districts transform teaching and student achievement and become reform proof points.

The organization has also developed fee-for-service offerings to provide lighter-touch products and services to teacher leader "change agents" in other districts, thus extending PartnersSI's reach further: By 2021, it hopes to have trained approximately 10,000 change agents in districts who will use PartnersSI strategies to provide instructional excellence and improve student performance. In addition, PartnersSI plans to inform federal, state and local policies through publications, conferences and active engagement with decision-makers.

*Growth Challenges*

As it begins to scale, PartnersSI is confronting the challenge of which program adjustments are necessary as it "sells" the organization's value proposition: While it has improved literacy rates at partner schools, it has not yet proven it can help districts successfully and completely turn-around a struggling school. In addition, its growth aspirations require significant capital, new roles and services for the organization and its leaders, and expansion into unproven territory.

To successfully serve students on a larger scale, PartnersSI also has increased the number of members on its board of directors, developed senior-leadership positions and established partnerships with like-minded organizations. By 2017, PartnersSI plans to grow its staff from 30 to 82. These growth plans will require an additional $10-million in funding over the next five years. To raise the necessary funds, PartnersSI plans to pursue full recovery of direct costs from its district partnerships, seek out foundation funding for special projects and win general-purpose grants from donors committed to PartnersSI's mission.

In 2012, the organization will select its first regional expansion district partner and continue to add two additional regional expansion locations every two years over the subsequent four-year period. To date, PartnersSI's success has been based on a model of working with districts from "the ground up"—in other words, by engaging struggling schools as the avenue for working with district leaders. Can its model work when it flips its entry point by starting with a district-level engagement and then going to schools? What is different when working more closely with districts rather than schools? How should its long-standing relationships with current district partners evolve?

Another challenge for PartnersSI is determining which components of its current school improvement model are essential during program replication. Is everything it does now in schools replicable on a broader scale? And, conversely, how can it recognize and capture innovation and new approaches that take place in its new expansion sites and then disseminate that learning organization-wide? Additionally, as PartnersSI expands its new model—which is more district-focused and covers more districts over greater distance—what should be new indicators of success for PartnersSI? What metrics should be monitored most closely now? As Pranav Kothari observed, "PartnersSI has sold concepts, not products. How does its logic model change to reflect those who are buying products versus high-touch services? In the past, it's the high-touch of its programs that has produced client outcomes; how do these outcomes change in a product environment?"

## *Challenges and Issues Raised from the Case Studies*

As Stone Foundation grantees discussed the two case studies and implications for efforts to grow and scale their own organizations, three common themes emerged:

### Know Your Data to Achieve Your Results

Similar to conclusions offered at earlier foundation meetings for these grantees, the importance of collecting and analyzing data about program impact was underscored as a key driver for all organization improvement. While most nonprofit organizations worry about large-scale evaluations to prove the overall effectiveness of their program to board members, funders and schools, too few simultaneously worry about ensuring they have the regular, "formative" data to track regularly how well individual program components are working and to make adjustments in these components.

For these reasons, it is also important for organizations to push to get data—either generated internally or from school and district partners—just as quickly as possible. The faster data can be collected, the faster program improvements can be implemented and adjustments made to the model to produce better results.

Student achievement results are critical to consider, of course, but there are other, complementary ways to learn about the impact of programs, including tools such as the Results-Oriented Cycle of Inquiry framework that PartnersSI has created to see how well teacher (and encourage teachers to see how well) reforms are being implemented in the classroom. In this way, data importantly informs decisions about growth and impact.

Both PartnersSI and BPE are relying extensively on data to refine their program models, using them to decide what components to keep, which are less essential and how they might be improved.

For example, following on a more rigorous evaluation of its impact in 2005—that showed mixed success—PartnersSI worked to examine its program components more carefully. It found that the activities its staff led in each school looked slightly different, tailored to the needs of the each site; PartnersSI's began working to identify which components of these different approaches were most effective—and would comprise its work in every school going forward. Derek Mitchell offered one example: "Our program specifies the percent of their time that staff should be working directly with teachers versus leaders, but we found not all partners were meeting this expectation. We saw we had to create a strategy that ensured a level of implementation fidelity."

Other grantees at the meeting shared similar observations: Relentlessly collecting data, taking the time to examine it deeply and getting smarter about why your program delivers the results it does is a common and necessary strategy for any organization seeking to grow. Knowing how "x" produces "y" (or even how much of "x" produces "y") is essential as an organization seeks greater impact (and new funding models that usually come with growth).

Data also are an influential way to build relationships, reported grantees. An organization is in a strong place to influence decisions at a school district when it has specific data. Moving districts toward new programs and investments through the use of data is more effective than asking them to move on theory alone. "When you show districts that only three percent of male black students are graduating on time, they can't ignore the data," observed one grantee. "It's true that we need to keep pushing the district harder to improve. But you can't push on just theory. Use data when you can. Data is a powerful tool when you have it."

Finally, many foundation grantees with robust, in-house evaluation efforts to track data are finding these efforts are also critical contributors to internal knowledge management efforts—in other words, these efforts are not just focused on documenting how the program works but also documenting and sharing which organizational practices contribute to that. Among Stone Foundation grantees, internal performance management and evaluation leaders at both PartnersSI and the New Teacher Center are now tasked with internal knowledge sharing as well. Other grantees—such as Education Pioneers—are prioritizing opportunities for their regional offices to communicate, share practices and provide feedback.

### Districts as Clients Are Different Than Districts as Partners

Stone Foundation grantees recognized  how an organization decides to work within a district to change the system (as a service provider, school operator or other "capacity building" partner) or separately from the district creates different dynamics. Even the two case studies showcased different approaches: PartnersSI, as its name implies, works closely with school leaders to coach and support teachers, while BTR operates somewhat outside the traditional school system as a parallel teacher recruitment strategy for Boston.

Maintaining programs that rely on close partnerships with a district who is a client regularly presents at least two challenges, according to grantees: Districts often ask for customizations to the core program and/or they want to pick and choose different program components.

Grantees have found that when districts begin paying for services (rather than have external foundation funding cover costs), they often attempt to customize an organization's services and program elements. However, it is hard to build a customized set of services for different client districts to meet unique needs—doing so threatens program fidelity and integrity. Doing so also makes scaling a product or service challenging.

> *"When the client pays for the service, the client starts to tell you how to change your model to be what it wants. How do you build a customized set of services for your customers to meet their needs... while keeping the fidelity of your program?"*
>
> **LaShawn Route Chatmon**
> National Equity Project

Similarly, selling a "light" version of a product or offering a la carte services is not ideal for organizations that enter into client relationships with districts. As services are watered down or selectively chosen for implementation, the results often are not as strong—and the reforms or improvements promised by an organization will not materialize.

For example, the National Equity Project—another Stone Foundation grantee—has successfully transitioned its model so that districts now pay 60 percent of the cost of services themselves (instead of local funders underwriting nearly all the cost). Even so, its executive director, LaShawn Route Chatmon, still finds that maintaining a partnership framework with a district can be difficult when it is the district ultimately paying for the service: "When the client pays for the service, the client starts to tell you how to change your model to be what it wants. How do you keep the fidelity and integrity of the organization when the district wants to do everything but can't finance it? How do you build a customized set of services for your customers to meet their needs—and do it in a way they can afford—while keeping the fidelity of your program?"

Clarity around an organization's core model components and their exact costs is essential to determining to what degree a program can be customized to any client's unique needs or preferences. Before expanding a program, Pranav Kothari suggested organizations ask themselves the following questions:

- Can we demonstrate that high fidelity to the model produces results?

- Does the logic model for your program look the same in every situation and site?

- How adaptive is the model at different locations?

*"Economies of scale do not exist in education; scale in the for-profit world has not played out in the field of education. The next iteration of the model will have higher costs."*

**Pranav Kothari**
Mission Measurement

He also wondered whether the orthodoxy of scale—that adding more sites or locations can help deliver a product or serve more efficiently or less expensively—holds up in the education sector: "Economies of scale do not exist in education; scale in the for-profit world has not played out in the field of education. The next iteration of the model will have higher costs."

Grantees agreed that being clear about non-negotiable program elements and facilitating conditions for program implementation are key steps to successful partnerships with districts. For example, PartnersSI has identified three facilitating conditions that are needed for successful work with new districts or schools:

- Skilled and reflective transformational leadership,

- Leadership's commitment to resourcing the work equitably, and

- Leadership's deep and abiding belief in building teacher capacity.

Derek Mitchell, CEO of PartnersSI, observed, "If all three conditions are in play, we'll reach the highest levels of success. If one or the other is not in place, it takes a whole lot longer to reach success."

On the other end of the spectrum, grantees considered how organizations that work outside of a school district—to, in the words of one attendee, build an alternative model that eventually will "define what a district should do"—can be most effective. Some pointed out the danger of simply building great schools that will not in the end be scalable because districts were not included in their design and management. Srik Gopalakrishnan, chief impact and learning officer at New Teacher Center, asked, "Does our discussion mean that all of our programs should start their own schools, or do we believe that districts as smart systems can pull in the right programs that they need to improve student learning?" In other words, if grantees are too focused on building perfect schools where their interventions work perfectly, will districts themselves ever change? Others argued that many urban districts have a handful of key neighborhoods serving at-risk students—and that "tipping" the quality of schools in these areas can influence an entire school district.

> *"Does our discussion mean that all of our programs should start their own schools, or do we believe that districts as smart systems can pull in the right programs that they need to improve student learning?"*
>
> **Srik Gopalakrishnan**
> New Teacher Center

Finally, regardless of approach, grantees discussed strong and regular communication as an essential component for successful partnerships between organizations and school districts. With high leadership turnover rates within school districts, regular communication at multiple levels within a district is critical to stay in alignment on goals and expectations. Once these relationships are established, external organizations are in a much better position to push a school district forward consistently (and, as discussed above, having good data about school district performance helps, too).

## Improved Student Achievement May Require Whole School Effort

Grantees explored how their efforts to improve student learning and achievement increasingly cannot be focused on just a single element but must also account for a whole school's effort. While nearly all foundation grantees are focused on building the "human capital" element within school systems—improving the talent and skills of educators with "the right people on the bus," in the words of change management guru Jim Collins—they also are beginning to consider underlying structures that help or impede even the very best educators.

BTR—with its shift from working almost solely on preparing teachers to be effective in the classroom to considering ways it can influence the school environment in which its teachers work—is the most explicit example of this shift. But other grantees are considering the issue in their own way, as well.

Steve Tozer of the University of Illinois at Chicago's College of Education spoke to the importance of social capital and institutional structures and norms in schools as essential to effective teachers, arguing, "One challenge for us all is in representing how the quality of the teaching and learning experiences resides not centrally in individuals and the qualities they bring, but rather with the organization and how well it supports teaching and learning. The challenge is in showing that it is the organization that produces teaching and learning. You would expect to find that top schools have organizational structures in place to support adult learning in those organizations to meet the needs of the kids." In other words, it's not just the people in schools that matter—it's the structures that support the people.

> *"You can have average people teaching in the teams, because the team will allow them to do extraordinary things. The model becomes stronger. If you replicate across multiple schools, that group of schools is smarter than one school. Multiple principals are smarter than one principal. One of the jobs of the network is in part to buffer the principals, as well as to create the space for them to work together to grow stronger."*
>
> **Claire Sylvan**
> Internationals Network for Public Schools

Professional learning communities to support teams through a reform effort—coupled with deliberate efforts to ensure the quality of a team—is one strategy for spreading change. By placing teachers and leaders in teams and networks, they become stronger and smarter than the individuals in them. Claire Sylvan, executive director of Internationals Network for Public Schools shared, "You can have average people teaching in the teams, because the team will allow them to do extraordinary things. The model becomes stronger. If you replicate across multiple schools, that group of schools is smarter than one school. Multiple principals are smarter than one principal. One of the jobs of the network is in part to buffer the principals, as well as to create the space for them to work together to grow stronger."

## *Conclusion*

Weaving throughout discussions at the meeting, grantees flagged the challenge of wanting to share their lessons learned more broadly with the field—but also needing to stay focused on the quality and implementation of their own efforts. As an organization gains new insights into promising practices that can improve teaching and learning, a tension exists between organizations spending needed time and energy to implement these findings and organizations sharing these lessons learned more broadly with those that could benefit.

Grantees observed that there are no formal structures in place to enable them to consistently share with the field their own emerging "next" practices, their perspectives on school district reform or their lessons learned from working with school districts. The lack of any "architecture" to spotlight in real-time promising practices is hindering the speed and quality of education reforms and education practice improvements across the country. But the Stone Foundation annual convening, although a modest approach, provides 17 leading organizations a venue to share and learn from each other.

## *Appendix A: W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation 2011 Education Grantees*

- Academy for Urban School Leadership

- Boston Plan for Excellence/Boston Teacher Residency (now renamed BPE)

- Center for Collaborative Education

- Chicago Public Education Fund

- Education Pioneers

- Internationals Network for Public Schools

- National Equity Project

- New Leaders

- New Teacher Center

- New Visions for Public Schools

- Partners in School Innovation

- San Francisco Teacher Residency

- Strategic Literacy Initiative

- Teach Plus

- The University of Chicago Urban Education Institute

- University of Illinois at Chicago Urban School Leadership Program

- Urban Teacher Residency United

## *Appendix B: Speaker Biographies*

### PRANAV KOTHARI, managing director—Mission Measurement
*www.missionmeasurement.com*

As managing director of Mission Measurement, Pranav advises leading funders, education initiatives and nonprofit organizations on measurement and program strategy. His current and past clients include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Education Pioneers, Cristo Rey Network, USA Funds and School Leaders Network. Pranav has been working in the philanthropic sector for 14 years, including serving as a program director at KnowledgeWorks, a Cincinnati-based education enterprise. He holds an A.B. in Economics from Washington University in St. Louis and an M.B.A. in Corporate Strategy and Organizational Behavior from the Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan.

### DEREK MITCHELL, chief executive officer—Partners in School Innovation
*www.partnersinschools.org*

Before joining PartnersSI in June of 2009, Derek served as executive director of the Opportunity Zone in Prince George's County in Maryland, where he led critical efforts to instill innovative school options as a core component of district-wide reform. He also has served as the director of technology and student achievement for the Oakland Unified School District where he addressed equity-related challenges in assessment, technology and achievement. Subsequently, he joined the Stupski Foundation and managed efforts to support district-wide reform across the country, including in districts such as Jackson Public Schools in Mississippi and the Baltimore City Public Schools System in Maryland. Born and raised in Chicago, Derek Mitchell attended Pomona College in Claremont, California, and later earned a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from the University of California-Los Angeles.

### LAURA MORAN, senior consultant—Pivot Learning Partners
*www.pivotlearningpartners.org*

As senior consultant for Pivot Learning Partners, Laura has led the development of a customer-focused performance management system to realign central offices to the needs of schools and their communities. Previously as chief service officer for Oakland Unified School District, she played a key role in implementing an innovative reform strategy called "Expect Success!" which helped OUSD become the most improved California urban school district for over six years. Laura was also the leader of the Organizational Development function and program manager for the Stupski Family Foundation, where she worked with districts across the country to build central office leadership capacity to design and manage their reform efforts. Laura holds a B.S. in Organization Behavior from University of San Francisco.

### JESSE SOLOMON, executive director— BPE
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Jesse is the executive director of BPE. Prior to founding BPE's Boston Teacher Residency program in 2003, he taught middle and high school math for 10 years — at the King Open School in Cambridge, Brighton High School, and City On A Hill Public Charter School. Jesse has been an instructor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and is a National Board-certified teacher. He holds a B.S. in Mathematics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a M.Ed. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.