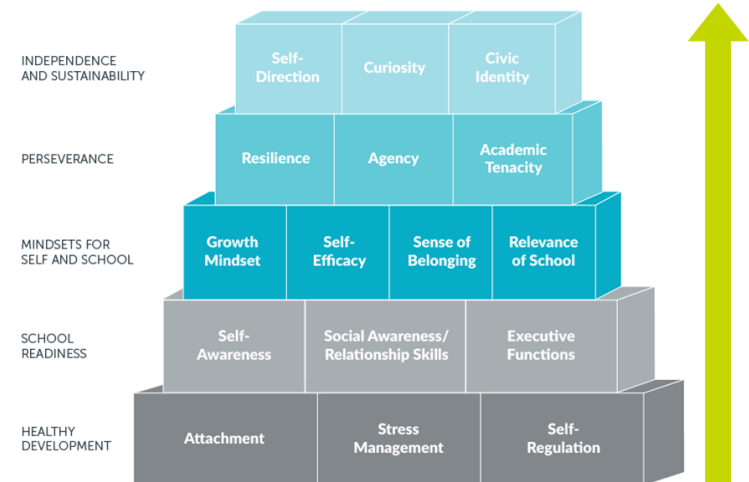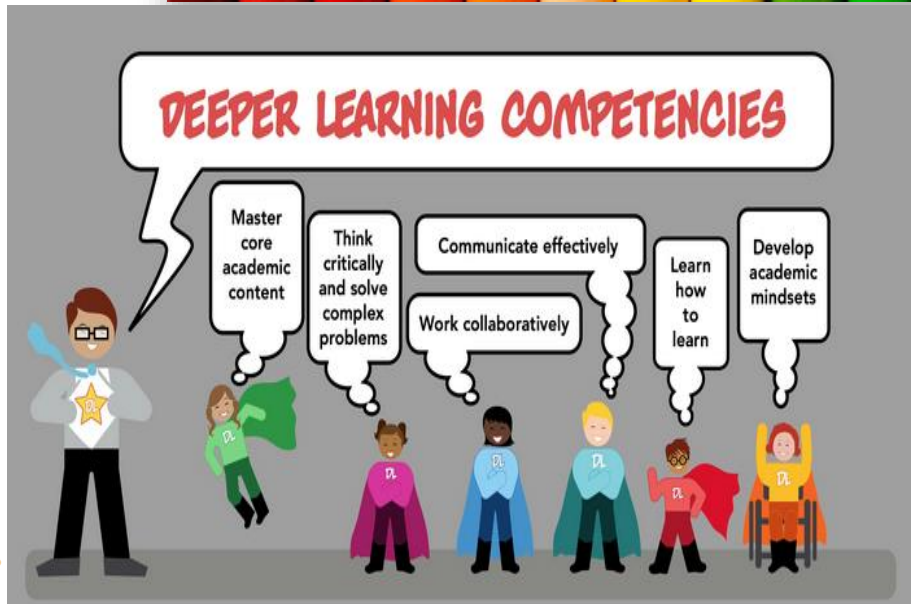# What's Next for Innovative Schools?

Recommendations for Funders and the Field to Build the Research Program and Evidence Base

July 2018

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experience | quality | results

Innovative schools adopt new approaches to teaching and learning, often with new tools, and they expand traditional definitions of student success

While innovative school models and practices are taking hold across the U.S., the field lacks sufficient research, evidence and support to ensure high-quality implementation, widespread scaling and improved student success

Innovative school models are evolving and spreading quickly, with limited efforts to capture knowledge about what works in different contexts and for different types of students

Key stakeholders (from funders to researchers to practitioners to thought leaders) **lack the capacity, structures and incentives for sharing knowledge and collaboratively building the field** for innovative school models

Ensuring effective implementation and efforts to scale will require serious research, new technical solutions and strategy and policy assistance

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Table of Contents

Desired State	Slides 5-7 describe **the desired state**: the change we hope takes place in the field of personalized learning and innovative schools research in the next 3-5 years
Current State	Slides 8-13 describe **the current state**: the field of personalized learning research as it exists today

Recommendations for the field

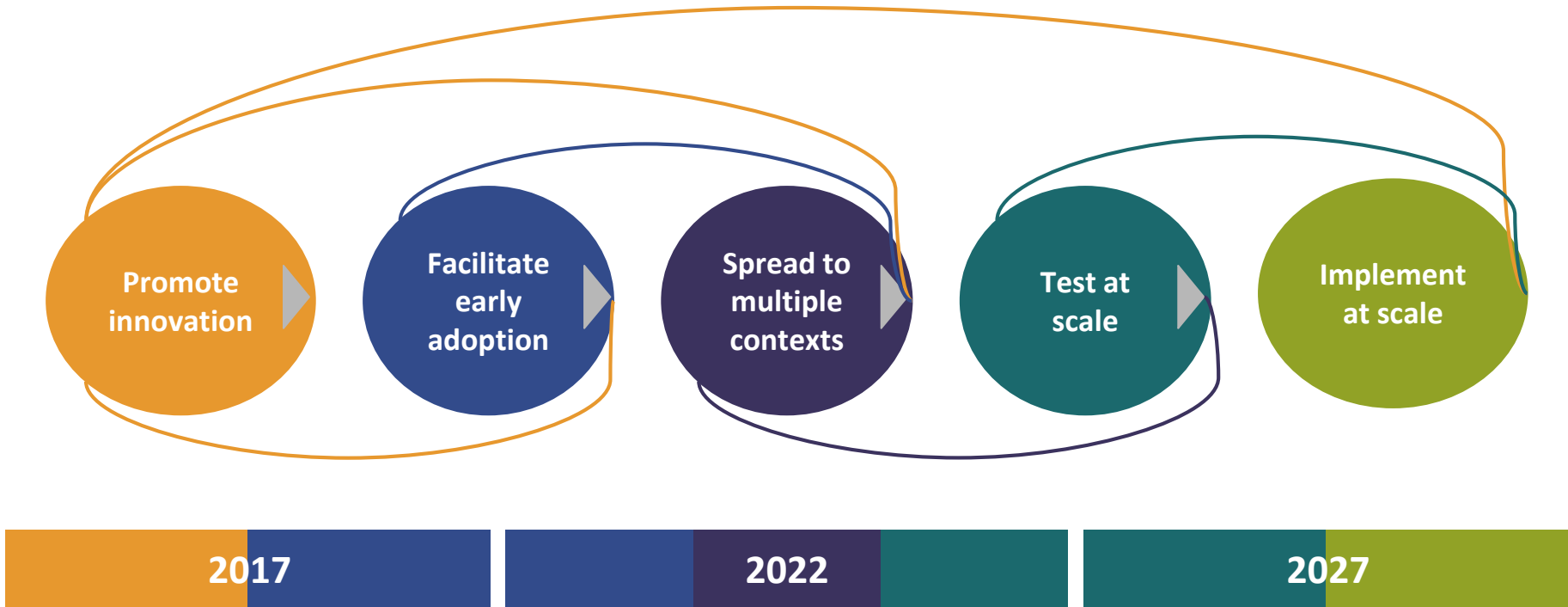- Build research capacity and skills
- Bet on a small cohort of models
- Support more impact studies

Slides 14-37 offers a series of recommendations to support the **development and implementation** of effective innovative school models

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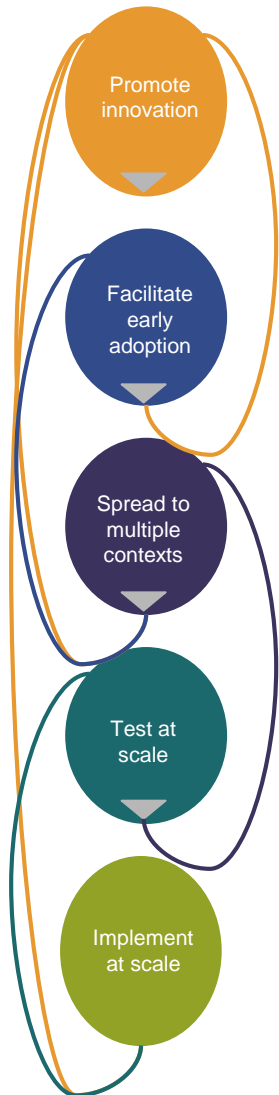# We need a wide range of research to support new ideas and models as they move from innovation to spread and scale over the next 10+ years

| Promote innovation | Facilitate early adoption | Spread to multiple contexts | Test at scale | Implement at scale |

2017   **2022**   **2027**

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In each phase, the research and dissemination activities need to answer core questions, including:

Promote innovation

Facilitate early adoption

Spread to multiple contexts

Test at scale

Implement at scale

What do we know about how young people learn? And what are the **critical practices, strategies and elements** that help support all youth to learn?

How do we define whether innovative strategies and models for learning (models, practices) are "working"?
- What are the practices, strategies and elements that comprise personalized learning?
- What are the **key metrics** for measuring success?
- What is the **best mix of quantitative and qualitative measures** for creating a full picture of success?

What **conditions or structures** are needed to support effective implementation of personalized learning and other innovative school models?
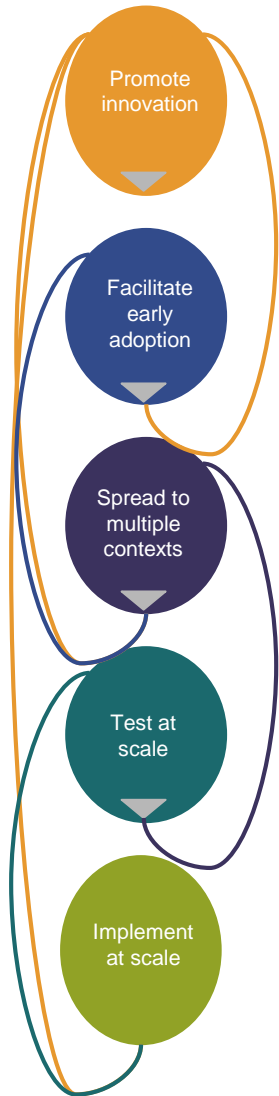
What **challenges** do schools experience in implementing personalized learning and other innovative models? What **strategies** are most effective in overcoming these challenges?

What specific practices, strategies or elements of innovative approaches **make the most difference for students**?

What works, for what students, in what circumstances?

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In each phase, many more types of research, knowledge management and dissemination methods are needed

Phases:
- Promote innovation
- Facilitate early adoption
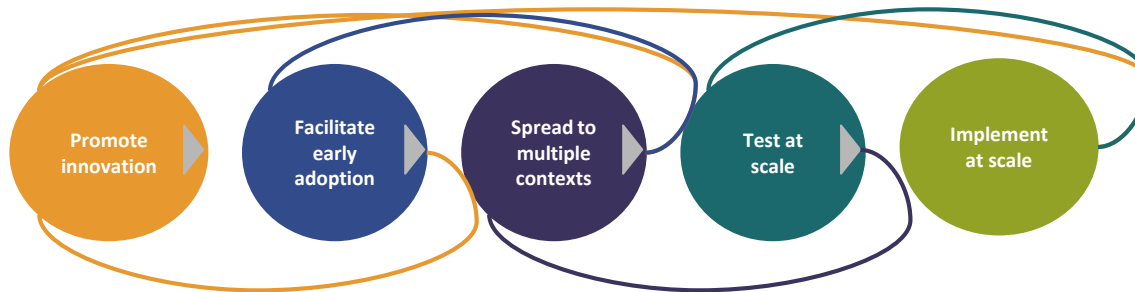- Spread to multiple contexts
- Test at scale
- Implement at scale

Research methods

- Basic research
- Rapid-cycle R&D
- Model and measure development & design

- Qualitative implementation research
- Test instruments, measures, models, approaches with larger sample, more rigorous methods and in various contexts
- R&D to refine models, implementation research (e.g., improvement science)

- Large-scale, outcomes-based research in multiple contexts
- Capture programs' and models' impact with more precision

Knowledge management and dissemination tactics

- Research translation
- Materials for policy/advocacy
- Networks and collaboratives
- Use cases/case studies
- Lessons learned
- Best practice guides
- Playbooks and toolkits
- Frameworks

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Based on a review of funders' investments, current research is focused mainly on *facilitating early adoption*

SEL (incl. mindset & student agency)

- Mindset Scholars Network
- RAND Repository of Measures
- Harvard Taxonomy Project
- Math Agency Improvement Community
- SAIC
- RAND PL Study
- Measurement Framework for Portfolio of Innovative Schools
- Math Agency Improvement Community
- SEL Taxonomy
- Building Equitable Learning Environments
- Learning with Others

Blended Learning

- Proving Ground
- Learning Assembly

Competency-based Learning

- KnowledgeWorks

Promote innovation → Facilitate early adoption → Spread to multiple contexts → Test at scale → Implement at scale

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Based on a review of funders' investments, current research is focused mainly on *facilitating early adoption*

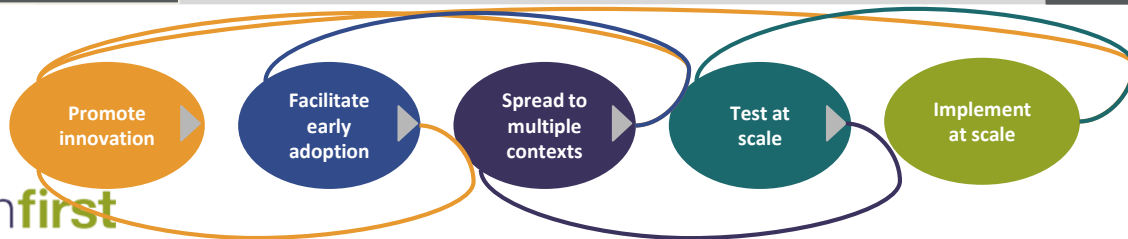|		
Case Studies/ Implementation Documentation		- CRPE National PL - FSG Case Studies - PL School Caselets and Tagging Schema - NGLC in Oakland - Next Gen Schools Fund
Continuous Improvement		- Math Agency Improvement Community - Measurement Framework for Portfolio of Innovative Schools - Math Agency Improvement Community - Building Equitable Learning Environments - SAIC
Landscape Scans		- PL Landscape Scan - PL School and Network Case Studies - Next Gen Schools Fund - RAND Repository of Inter- and Intra-Personal Competencies - Innovative Schools List - RAND Repository
Academic Outcomes		- Learning Assembly - RAND PL study - Proving Ground - Measurement Framework for Portfolio of Innovative SchoolS - Next Generation Schools Fund - NGLC in Oakland - Innovative Schools List
Non-Traditional Outcomes		- Math Agency Improvement Community - Mindset Scholars Network - Student Agency Improvement Community

Promote innovation → Facilitate early adoption → Spread to multiple contexts → Test at scale → Implement at scale

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A large portion of currently funded projects seek to answer questions about SEL-related measures and outcomes
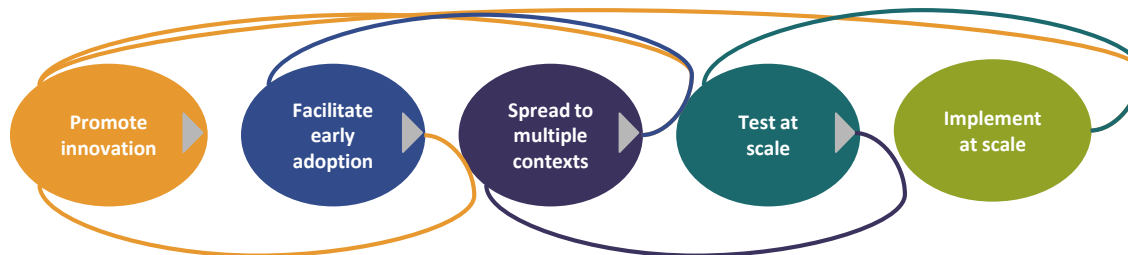
SEL: FIELD-BUILDING

- What are the best existing measures for SEL? What is their appropriate use within a K-12 setting?
- How can we solve for the terminological issues that prevent schools and policy-makers from knowing what to prioritize in terms of SEL?

MINDSET

- What is the relationship between mindset and learning environment? What changes to learning environment impact mindsets?
- What is the impact of adult mindset?

STUDENT AGENCY

- What teacher practices best foster student agency?
- For whom and under what conditions do these strategies work best?
- What student-centered classroom practices, structures and routines promote mathematical agency and success, particularly for students from traditionally marginalized groups?
- How might practices/structures/routines that promote mathematical agency and success be adapted across diverse contexts to be most effective
- For whom and under what conditions do strategies/practices that best foster student agency work best?
- What changes to the learning environment lead to student agency? How do we measure student agency?

Promote innovation → Facilitate early adoption → Spread to multiple contexts → Test at scale → Implement at scale

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Research on specific programs or models is also underway
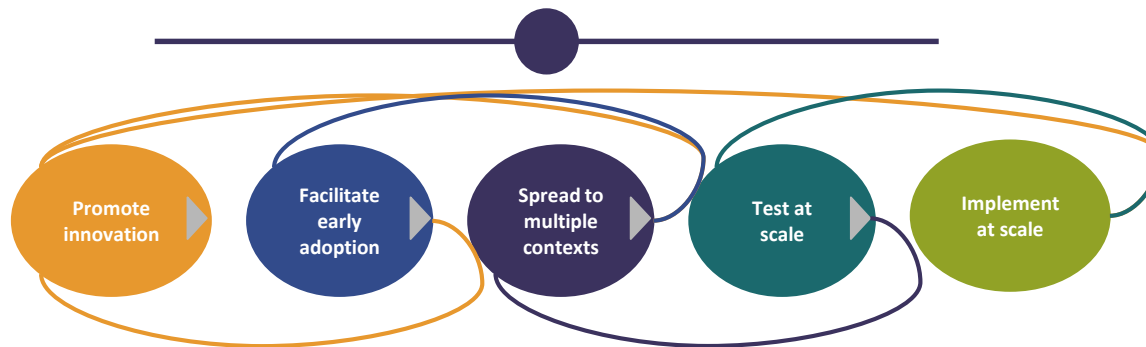
BLENDED LEARNING

- How can ed tech companies use critical feedback from teachers and students to improve their products?
- What is the impact of edtech on learning outcomes?
- What are the best edtech tools in the market? Why are they the best?
- What edtech tools have the strongest impact on learning outcomes?

CBL

- What is the "story" of how competency-based learning is implemented in district?
- What are the hallmarks of implementation in competency-based learning models?
- What is the effectiveness of competency-based models?
- What additional components are in place now in each school site?
- What are the challenges faced by schools at different stages of implementation?

PBL

- What are the key components of student-centered learning and project-based learning in the district as a whole and common/shared across school sites?

Promote innovation → Facilitate early adoption → Spread to multiple contexts → Test at scale → Implement at scale

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Numerous projects focus on documenting what it takes to implement PL models effectively and in multiple contexts
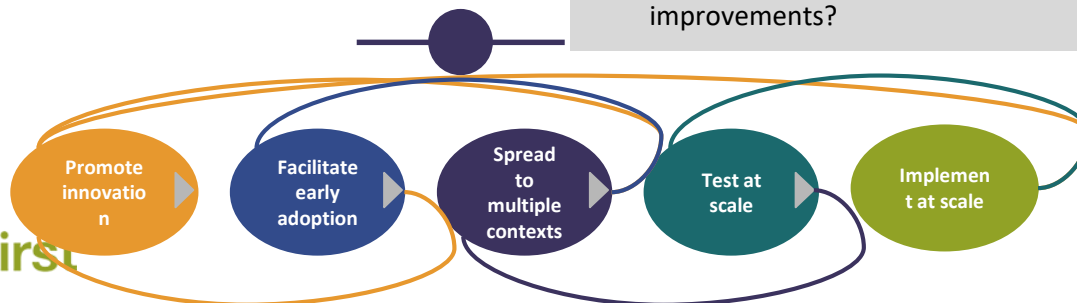
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- How can schools begin to answer the research questions they have based on data provided?
- What student-centered classroom practices/structures/ routines promote mathematical agency and success, particularly for students from traditionally marginalized groups?
- How do we support the adoption of continuous improvement cycles to ensure schools are building improvement muscles and capturing their improvements?

LANDSCAPE SCANS

- What is the level of PL activity across the country? In particular states and regions? How does it compare to early adopters?
- What are exemplars of schools and systems implementing personalized learning and what was their journey in development an implementation?
- How many schools are innovating with quality currently?
- Amongst those schools, what are the patterns/gaps in geography, location type, grade level served, school management, launch v. redesign, stage, area of innovation, model descriptor, demographics?

CASE STUDIES/IMPLEMENTATION DOCUMENTATION

- What are exemplars of schools and systems implementing personalized learning and what was their journey in development and implementation?
- How can schools raise student achievement through PL models?
- What is the story of how competency-based learning is implemented in district?
- Are there new approaches to schools (beyond the no-excuses charter model) that lead to better student outcomes?
- What do principals, teachers and system leaders need to know and be able to do to support, implement and scale-up PL?
- What policies and practices – at the classroom, school, district, partnership, and state levels– are the most important supports (and barriers) to successfully implementing and scaling-up PL?
- What conditions support the effective implementation and adaptation of student-centered practices in diverse contexts?
- What are the challenges faced by schools at different stages of implementation?
- How do the practices, behaviors and attitudes of teachers and students in PL schools compare with schools nationally?
- What are the leading networks supporting PL around the country and what network approaches are most important in the development and implementation of PL?
- How do we support the adoption of continuous improvement cycles to ensure schools are building improvement muscles and capturing their improvements?

Promote innovation → Facilitate early adoption → Spread to multiple contexts → Test at scale → Implement at scale

Several projects are examining the impact of PL or specific school models on different student outcomes

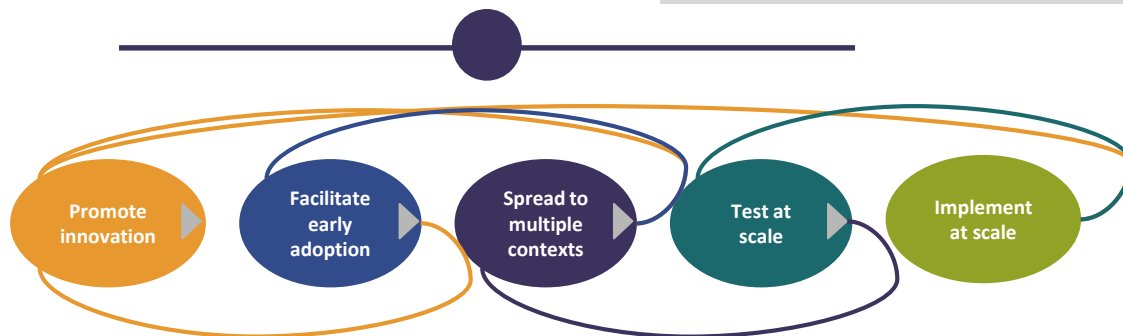## ACADEMIC OUTCOMES (MODEL AGNOSTIC)

- Are there new approaches to schools (beyond the no-excuses charter model) that lead to better student outcomes?
- How do students benefit from PL in schools?
- What impact does PL have on student achievement?
- What is the impact of schools/school models on student growth, proficiency and other measures important to schools?
- Where in the Innovative Schools to Watch List are the bright spots in terms of outcomes?
- How do we deepen our understanding of what practices correlate with stronger outcomes?
- How can schools raise student achievement through PL models?

ACADEMIC OUTCOMES (MODEL/INTERVENTION SPECIFIC)

- What is the impact of edtech on learning outcomes?
- What is the effectiveness of competency-based models?

NON-TRADITIONAL OUTCOMES

- What student-centered classroom practices/structures/routines promote mathematical agency and success, particularly for students from traditionally marginalized groups?
- What is the relationship between mindset and learning environment? What changes to the learning environment impact mindsets?
- What changes to the learning environment lead to student agency?
- What unique, non-traditional, school-based expanded indicators of achievement do the schools collect already that indicate an otherwise unmeasured sense of school quality?

Promote innovation → Facilitate early adoption → Spread to multiple contexts → Test at scale → Implement at scale

To move the innovative school models field forward, we recommend *three priorities for funders and the field*

1
Establish new systems, structures and opportunities to build stronger research capacity and skill sets to respond to practitioner needs and build the evidence base

2
Invest strategically in a small cohort of promising models to refine implementation and codify and spread best practice

3
Corral resources to build the evidence base about "what works" faster and with more rigor

To move the innovative school models field forward, we recommend *three priorities for funders and the field*

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Priority 1: Establish new systems, structures and opportunities to build stronger research capacity and skill sets

The need

- Currently, the field relies on a **small group of researchers** to conduct research in the PL/innovation space, limiting research capacity to take on the broad set of questions that make up the PL and innovative schools learning agenda; this also limits the perspectives and methodologies being brought to bear on the PL/innovation learning agenda.
- Rigorous research **training does not support flexible, creative and interdisciplinary approaches** to conducting research in an applied setting and in partnership with practitioners - a unique need within PL and other innovative models
- **Practitioners often lack the capacity and/or skills** to conduct the formative research necessary to build cycles of continuous improvement

Key strategies to build research capacity

Build the talent pipeline	Establish a network of scholars to support the PL/innovation learning agenda	Strengthen research-practice partnerships

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Talent pipelines: Establish new systems, structures and opportunities to build stronger research capacity and skill sets

Build the talent pipeline

Establish a network of scholars to support the PL/innovation learning agenda

Strengthen research-practice partnerships

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Partner with leading universities to **develop training programs focused on advancing the PL/innovation learning agenda**
- Interdisciplinary programs, centers or partnerships to develop new metrics and/or methods
- Doctoral/post-doctoral fellowships (e.g., TLA blended learning fellowship)

Establish research fellowships or residencies to site up-and-coming scholars in leading innovative schools and/or models (e.g., Strategic Data Project; Education Pioneers Data Fellows)
- Focus on cultivating researchers of color
    - → Fellowships and residencies for scholars of color
    - → Explore potential partnerships with NSVF's DEI leadership portfolio

There are a small number of existing data & research fellowships that this group could consider leveraging further in support of research on innovative models and approaches

Strategic Data Project	■ Housed at Harvard's Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) ■ Places highly skilled researchers into school systems (districts and CMOs) and non-profits to conduct rigorous applied research in service of organizational needs; also serves a capacity-building function for organizations (2-yr fellowships) ■ Broad network of clients around the country with a range of research interests; access to leading researchers (heavy focus on quantitative research)
TLA Blended Learning Measurement Fellowship	■ Currently in its first (pilot) year; will support up to five current graduate students to conduct research projects aligned to TLA's Measurement Agenda for Blended Learning ■ One-year fellowship with access to TLA resources and network; includes a small stipend and professional development opportunities (e.g. a Community of Practice)

While these examples could be potential starting points, building the talent pipeline to **support flexible, creative and interdisciplinary approaches** to research in an applied setting and in partnership with practitioners **will likely require bigger shifts in the way both researchers and practitioners are trained**.

Scholars network: Establish new systems, structures and opportunities to build stronger research capacity and skill sets

Build the talent pipeline

Establish a network of scholars to support the PL/innovation learning agenda

Strengthen research-practice partnerships

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Develop a **network of scholars** focused on core concepts within PL and other innovative models to encourage cohesion, increased collaboration and spread of innovation in research
- Build on successes and lessons learned from Mindset Scholars Network (MSN). Could consist of multiple affinity groups within the broader scholars network (e.g., focus on models such PBL, BL, CBL; focus on concepts such as role of teacher, role of student, use of time, use of space, definitions of student success)
- Activities of network may include: coordinating large-scale studies, issuing RFPs, facilitating work groups, awarding grants to early-career researchers, mentoring relationships and other ad hoc advising.
- Over time, network could expand into advocacy and communications, translating research policy and practice, and building mechanisms for interdisciplinary collaborations.

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Why develop a network of scholars organized around a PL/innovation learning agenda? (1 of 2)

There are few *inter-disciplinary* venues for researchers to discuss their work

- University-based researchers often **conduct their work in isolation from colleagues in other disciplines**, even though they may all be trying to answer parts of the same research question.
- There are growing bodies of research addressing many of the key research questions about how students learn, but thus far there have been **few opportunities for researchers to connect the dots across research fields** and explore the implications of their diverse findings for their own work.
- Some research centers are aiming to play a "connector" role; however, these are **typically limited to a certain topic area, target student population and/or methodological approach** (such as Stanford's Mindset Scholars Network, Harvard's Center for the Developing Child and Carnegie's improvement science networks).

Personalized learning (and other types of innovation) can take many forms in practice, which creates significant challenges for evaluating its impact on student outcomes using rigorous quantitative methodologies; we need to inspire and promote more creative thinking to tackle this challenge

- The research field has **not reached consensus** on the suite of interventions that constitute personalized learning and other innovative approaches; as a result, researchers have difficulty evaluating the impact of personalized learning and other innovative models in a consistent way across diverse settings and with different student populations.
- What is evaluated often differs across studies, which creates **obstacles for the research field in building a convincing evidence base** for personalized learning to support high-quality implementation and scale.
- Researchers have produced many qualitative analyses and case studies of personalized learning in practice; but in recent years, a couple of **quantitative research studies have documented the positive effects of personalized learning on student academic achievement** (including RAND's ongoing evaluation of personalized learning funded by the Gates Foundation and SRI's evaluation of blended learning funded by the Dell Foundation).

Build talent pipeline | Scholars' network | RPPs

Why develop a network of scholars organized around a PL/innovation learning agenda? (2 of 2)

Researchers are piloting new methodologies to collect and analyze data faster to inform ongoing implementation of student learning initiatives, but the field lacks a strong avenue for leveraging and sharing that learning across disciplines and contexts
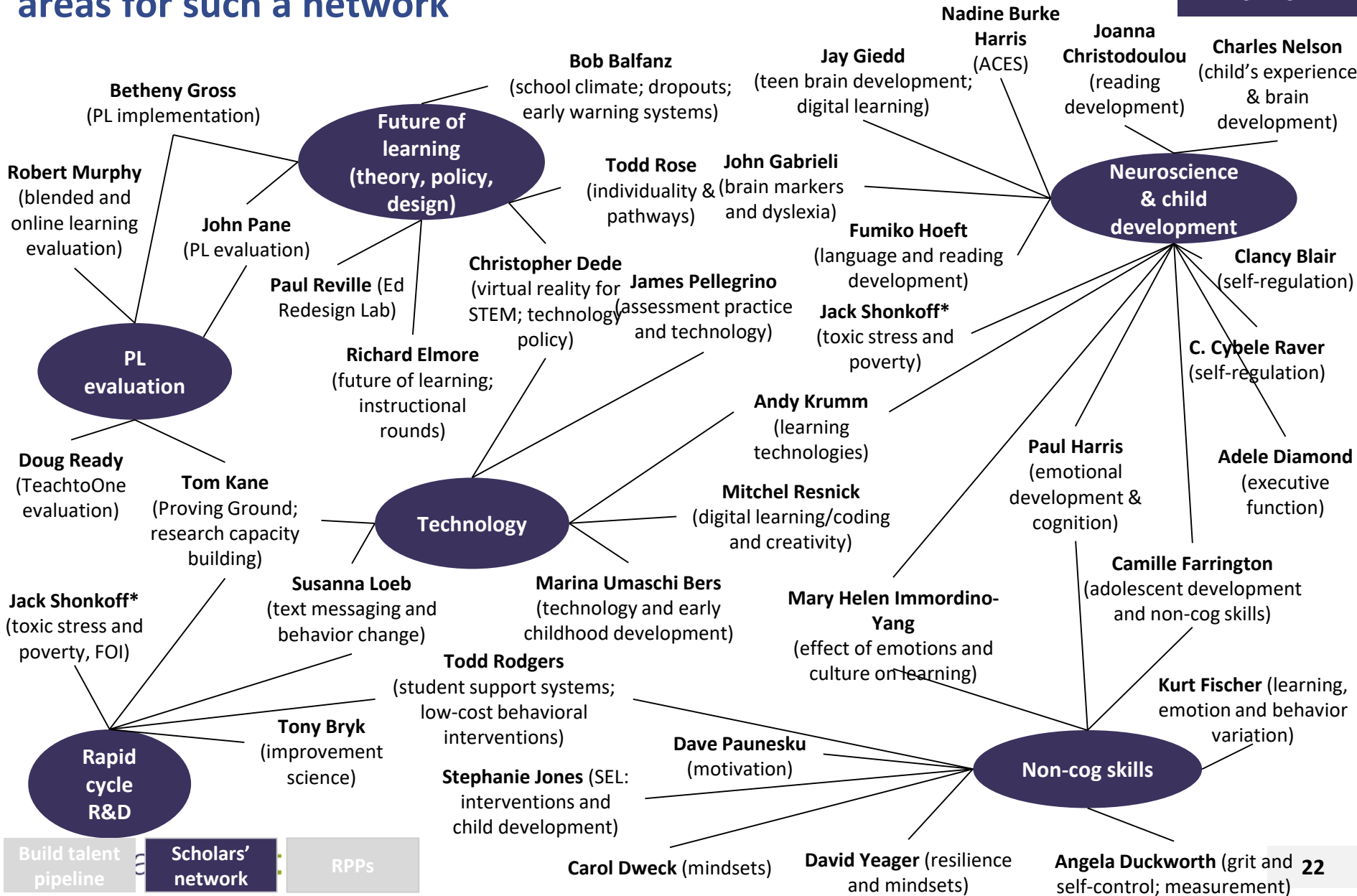
- The concept of **practitioner-led research** for applied purposes has been around for several years, with Richard Elmore's instructional rounds as one example; **Improvement science** provides a new methodology for systematically focusing data collection and analysis to answer specific research questions with direct applications to practice, but few outside of these networks have access to what is being learned
- Researchers are experimenting with **low-cost digital and text message interventions** to study the effects of providing various kinds of information or activating various support networks on student behavioral outcomes.
- Technology presents an opportunity to **bridge the gap** between methodological rigor and statistical significance of findings (a researcher's priority) vs. speed of analysis and practical applications of findings to inform ongoing implementation (a practitioner's priority), but low research capacity among practitioners is a challenge.

Student success involves both academic and non-academic dimensions, but researchers have not yet agreed on valid and reliable non-academic outcome measures for the field - we have an opportunity to actively engage researchers to develop this knowledge base together

- A growing body of research is devoted to the **role of non-academic factors in enhancing student learning**, including grit (Angela Duckworth), mindsets (Carol Dweck), resilience (David Yeager) and other social-emotional learning factors; at this point, however, there are no standard non-academic outcome measures in the field.
- As a result, there is a **limited research** on the effects of personalized learning on these non-academic factors (major impact studies have used academic achievement as the key outcome measures).

Build talent pipeline | Scholars' network | RPPs

An initial scan of researchers working on topics relevant to PL and innovation underscores the need and suggests a number of focus areas for such a network

Betheny Gross (PL implementation)

Robert Murphy (blended and online learning evaluation)

John Pane (PL evaluation)

Future of learning (theory, policy, design)

Bob Balfanz (school climate; dropouts; early warning systems)

Todd Rose (individuality & pathways)

John Gabrieli (brain markers and dyslexia)

Jay Giedd (teen brain development; digital learning)

Nadine Burke Harris (ACES)

Joanna Christodoulou (reading development)

Charles Nelson (child's experience & brain development)

Neuroscience & child development

Paul Reville (Ed Redesign Lab)

Christopher Dede (virtual reality for STEM; technology policy)

James Pellegrino (assessment practice and technology)

Fumiko Hoeft (language and reading development)

Clancy Blair (self-regulation)

PL evaluation

Richard Elmore (future of learning; instructional rounds)

Jack Shonkoff* (toxic stress and poverty)

C. Cybele Raver (self-regulation)

Andy Krumm (learning technologies)

Doug Ready (TeachtoOne evaluation)

Tom Kane (Proving Ground; research capacity building)

Technology

Mitchel Resnick (digital learning/coding and creativity)

Paul Harris (emotional development & cognition)

Adele Diamond (executive function)

Jack Shonkoff* (toxic stress and poverty, FOI)

Susanna Loeb (text messaging and behavior change)

Marina Umaschi Bers (technology and early childhood development)

Mary Helen Immordino-Yang (effect of emotions and culture on learning)

Camille Farrington (adolescent development and non-cog skills)

Rapid cycle R&D

Tony Bryk (improvement science)

Todd Rodgers (student support systems; low-cost behavioral interventions)

Stephanie Jones (SEL: interventions and child development)

Dave Paunesku (motivation)

Kurt Fischer (learning, emotion and behavior variation)

Non-cog skills

Build talent pipeline   **Scholars' network**   **RPPs**

Carol Dweck (mindsets)

David Yeager (resilience and mindsets)

Angela Duckworth (grit and self-control; measurement)

What lessons can we learn from the Mindset Scholars Network?

AIM & PURPOSE

- The conceptual focus and the terms we use shape we can recruit and who will feel included; high-visibility concepts bring political challenges
- Forming around a problem rather than a solution makes for a broader, more inclusive foundation for collaboration
- Independence and neutrality are paramount; MSN has credibility because it emerged from theory and does not exist to validate a particular model or reform strategy

MEMBERS & LEADERS

- Different levels of seniority confer different assets: Younger scholars can be highly productive; senior scholars provide credibility and leadership
- Vet for compatibility with the model and aims (scientific integrity, openness, generosity, willingness to collaborate)
- Leadership and facilitators need to be able to stand up to and be respected by scholars; seek input and be open to revision but be clear about overall vision

SCHOLARS' MOTIVATION

- Money can help move the agenda along, but we may also need to offer something more internally motivating
- Scholars are motivated by the same fundamental needs as students: competence, relatedness and autonomy
- Scholars want to learn from one another and be exposed to new ideas, theories and methods

PROCESS

- Interdisciplinary scholarship requires more trust, time and money
- In-person time is at a steep premium but is also necessary for building trust and fomenting collaboration
- New projects determined by scholars provide grist for productive interactions and engaging meetings
- Make it possible for scholars to participate in different ways given interests, expertise and bandwidth

Build talent pipeline | Scholars' network | RPPs

What lessons can we learn from the Mindset Scholars Network?

1 Consider the implications of PL's origins in practice (vs. scientific theory) and its blurry conceptual boundaries. **What does this mean for how we frame the "problem"?**

2 Be clear on goals and design structures accordingly; and pick leadership and governance structures carefully. **Who is best positioned to lead this work?**
- Find a "bridger" who understands stakeholders' perspectives and can liaise with scholars and funders
- Determine how multiple core funders will factor into relationship management and decision-making

3 Use scholars' time minimally but strategically; focus in-person time on active work, relationship building and idea generation. **What are our goals in bringing scientists to together? What do they gain from this and what does the field gain?**

4 Think about your scholarly membership as a portfolio and seek diversity and balance among multiple dimensions. **How can we support and nurture truly interdisciplinary collaborations?**

5 Be intentional and provide scaffolds when inviting non-scientists to participate in community activities. **What role should practitioners and non-scientists play?**

Build talent pipeline | Scholars' network | RPPs

RPPs: Establish new systems, structures and opportunities to build stronger research capacity and skill sets

Build the talent pipeline

Establish a network of scholars to support the PL learning agenda

Strengthen research-practice partnerships

Practitioners rarely use research to inform decision-making

Questions researchers ask differ from the questions practitioners need to inform their decisions

Rigorous research moves at too slow of a pace for practitioners

Research often not done in partnership with practitioners

Research is inaccessible to practitioners
- Hard to interpret
- Findings often not actionable
- Findings not easily available (largely confined to academic journals, conferences)

Funders can play a unique role in bringing researchers (and their work) together with school designers and operators (1 of 2)

Build the talent pipeline

Establish a network of scholars to support the PL learning agenda

Strengthen research-practice partnerships

Key goals and functions could include…

Convene

Bring researchers and practitioners together to chart a new way of doing research (e.g., convene leading researchers to collaborate across disciplines)

Build practitioner capacity

Support practitioners (e.g., grantees) to develop strategic partnerships with researchers that drive learning about both implementation and outcomes

Change how research is done

Leverage funding and amplified voice to push for new research questions and methodologies

Build talent pipeline

Scholars' network

RPPs

Funders can play a unique role in bringing (and their work) together with school designers and operators (2 of 2)

Build the talent pipeline

Establish a network of scholars to support the PL learning agenda

Strengthen research-practice partnerships

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Provide increased, strategic **funding and space for practitioners and researchers to collaborate** to answer meaningful questions. Examples in the field include:

- Support for continuous improvement (implementation research):
  - → Efforts to spread principles of improvement science to new schools/districts/CMOs through networked improvement communities (NICs) for new cohorts of practitioners (e.g., Raikes/Carnegie Student Agency Improvement Community, Nellie Mae Student-Centered Learning Research Collaborative, Carnegie Building a Teaching Effectiveness Network)

- Build on best practice for improving the use of research evidence in education:
  - → Broader RPPs (Hewlett Diffusion of Innovation, Spencer Foundation RPPs, WT Grant Foundation RPPs) to encourage close collaboration on a range of research questions from implementation to impact

Build talent pipeline | Scholars' network | RPPs

While there are a number of recent examples of efforts to support continuous improvement using improvement science, these focus on PL and innovation in limited ways

Student agency improvement community (SAIC)	■ Network testing interventions to improve student agency: Harrisonburg City Public Schools (VA), Summit Public Schools, New York City Department of Education, the Productive Persistence Network of the Pathways, Schools that Lead, and High Tech High ■ Partnership with **Raikes Foundation**, **Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Mindset Scholars Network**
Student-Centered Learning Research Collaborative	■ Funded two student agency NIC projects in 2016: → American Institutes for Research (AIR) and New Tech Network partnership to study teacher practices that support the development of student agency → High Tech High and AIR partnership with middle and high schools from four districts to improve student agency and learning outcomes in math ■ Funders: **Nellie Mae Education Foundation** and **Overdeck Family Foundation**
ExSEL Network	■ Draws on improvement science, but more flexible (and less resource-intensive) than a formal NIC ■ Goal is for all districts to create a **practical plan** to move forward with their implementation of SEL ■ 8-10 MA districts in 2017-18; each district brings an **SEL Planning Team** consisting of 4-6 individuals from across central office and schools; network encourages district's leadership to participate to ensure ideas and policies can be adopted ■ **Led by Transforming Education, Rennie Center and Teachers21**
CORE Districts NIC	■ Aim is to close math gaps for African American and Latino youth in grades 4-8, with SEL as a key strategy ■ 8 large CA districts: Fresno, Garden Grove, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento, San Francisco, and Santa Ana Unified ■ Maintained by **CORE Districts** with support from **Transforming Education** (measurement) and **Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)** (research agenda)

Build talent pipeline | Scholars' network | RPPs

Several broader efforts to support RPPs may serve as examples of best practice

Spencer Foundation	■ **Spencer Foundation** supports (1) place-based **research alliances** that work with either school districts or youth-serving organizations that cross multiple sectors in addition to education; (2) **design research** teams that seek to simultaneously build and study solutions in real world contexts; and (3) **networked improvements communities (NICs)** "that seek to leverage diverse experiences in multiple settings to advance understandings about what works where, when, and under what conditions." ■ Does not fund standalone projects and/or program implementation and evaluation
WT Grant Foundation	■ **WT Grant Foundation** supports projects that improve the use of research evidence, particular focus on reducing inequality in youth outcomes. Strong interest in capacity-building and communications. ■ Houses a comprehensive toolkit on RPPs, based on previous efforts to fund RPPs (http://rpp.wtgrantfoundation.org/funding)
National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships	■ Launched in January 2016 within Rice University's Kinder Institute for Urban Research. Funded by: **WT Grant, Spencer, Wallace, Annie E. Casey, and Arnold Family Foundations** ■ Coordinates national network of researcher and school districts partnerships. Current cities include: Baltimore, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Newark, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Portland, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. ■ Convenes network annually to share best practice and lessons learned
Hewlett Diffusion of Innovation	■ New grant opportunity to support research-practice partnerships focused on understanding how to scale deeper learning practices in school systems ■ **Hewlett** will invest $5M in 2017; $3M in 2018; $2M in 2019 ■ Grantees not yet selected

Build talent pipeline | Scholars' network | RPPs

Centers and/or other organizations focused on applied research can also provide helpful insight about how to set RPPs up for success in the long-term

UChicago Consortium on School Research

- One of the oldest RPPs; partnership between University of Chicago and Chicago Public Schools. **Numerous past and current funders** (https://consortium.uchicago.edu/about/funders-supporters).
- Close partnership between CPS and the consortium, driven by answering research questions of mutual interest
- Has produced groundbreaking research on an array of school reform issues. Current research projects range from focus on teacher evaluation to non-cognitive skills.

Project for Education Research that Scales (PERTS)

- Partners researchers with practitioners to test behavioral interventions. Employs a user-driven, design approach. Core sponsors include: **IES, NSF, Joyce Foundation and Raikes Foundation**
- Emerged from mindset research(Carol Dweck); heavy emphasis on testing mindset, self-regulation interventions
- Projects include:
  → Mindset Kit (resources for teachers)
  → Mindset Challenge (testing student motivation for online learning)
  → College Transition Collaborative

Transforming Education

- Mission to build measures and policy case for mindsets, essential skills and study habits (MESH). **Core funders include: Einhorn, Raikes, Bechtel, Gates, Stone, New Profit and NSVF.**
- Pairs researchers at CEPR (Marty West) and MIT (John Gabrieli) with practitioners. Key partnerships include:
  → CORE districts – developing and implementing SEL measures for accountability
  → Boston Charter Research Collaborative (BCRC) – developing and testing scalable measures of and interventions to improve students' fluid intelligence and social-emotional capacities

To move the innovative school models field forward, we recommend *three priorities for funders and the field*

1 Establish new systems, structures and opportunities to build stronger research capacity and skill sets to respond to practitioner needs and build the evidence base

2 Invest strategically in a small cohort of promising models to refine implementation and codify and spread best practice

3 Corral resources to build the evidence base about "what works" faster and with more rigor

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Priority 2: Invest strategically in a small cohort of promising models to study and refine implementation and codify and spread best practice

The need

- Practitioners are testing (and rapidly revising and prototyping) a variety of models and archetypes, but have **limited opportunities to document, analyze and share what they are learning and doing** with the broader community
- The field needs **stronger, more consistent data about impact and implementation documentation** to support spread and scale
- Practitioners new to PL and innovation (or interested in learning more) would benefit from **access to tools and resources** to support adoption of new models

Key opportunities to codify and spread best practice

Build systems and structures to support leading edge practitioners	**Support research and documentation of best practices of leading edge models**	**Help new adopters learn from best practice**

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Priority 2: Invest strategically in a small cohort of promising models to refine implementation and codify and spread best practice

Build systems and structures to support leading edge models	Support leading edge models to refine implementation and study practice: ▪ Broker relationships to researchers ▪ Disseminate emerging findings from research ▪ Create a network for cohort to share emerging lessons and explore opportunities to collaborate on tools and resources
Support research and documentation of best practices of leading edge models	Fund research projects focused on documenting emerging lessons and best practice from cohort: ▪ Best practice guides ▪ Case studies ▪ Playbooks and toolkits ▪ Formative evaluations
Help new adopters learn from practice	Support new adopters with resources and knowledge needed to implement with fidelity: ▪ Funding to support implementation ▪ Networks and convenings ▪ Technical assistance and coaching

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There are a number of promising schools/models that could be profiled to inform research and investment priorities

NewTech	**Lindsay Unified**	**Rocketship**
EL Education	**Valor**	**KIPP LA & Bay Area**
New Classrooms ★	**Thrive**	**KIPP Empower**
Summit ★	**Thrival**	**AltSchool**

education**first** ★ = Models that currently have significant, rigorous research already underway

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Priority 3: Corral resources to build the evidence base about "what works" in a broader set of contexts and with more rigor

The need

- The **research currently underway is insufficient** for establishing the necessary proof points for PL over the next five years
- Current studies of model impact focus on a **narrow set of student outcomes** or in a **small number of sites** (e.g., New Classrooms i3 study, Summit PS)
- To better answer "impact" questions, the **field needs studies with broader range of outcomes, larger sample sizes and more creative approaches/methods** for looking at impact
- Rigorous outcomes studies require **significant investment** of both time and money

Key opportunities to build the evidence base

| Expand the models currently being studied | Create incentives for researchers through co-funding |

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Priority 3: Corral resources to build the evidence base about "what works" in a broader set of contexts and with more rigor

Expand the models currently being studied

Invest in more rigorous research on a wider range of models
- Which models (archetypes) should serve as the main proof points for the field?
- What research is currently being done to study the impact of these models? And where are there opportunities to introduce more rigorous research?

Create incentives for researchers through co-funding

Corral resources to conduct rigorous studies on a wider range of models
- Bring researchers and practitioners together to solve design challenges and test feasibility of impact studies on an ideal set of proof point models
- Determine optimal structure for supporting any continued research efforts (e.g., REL/Center idea or PL Scholars Network)

Potential next steps
- Determine highest leverage opportunities for more rigorous impact studies
- Bring together researchers and practitioners to engage in a "design" summit to develop potential study approaches and to tackle challenges (measures, methods, sampling, etc) and test feasibility (cost, timelines)
- Select the most promising study approaches for further development, through funding and any support for additional next steps

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List of Works Consulted

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Thank you!
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