



Thank you for being here!
We will begin shortly. In the meantime, please reflect on this quote and provide your thoughts in the chat.

“Systems don’t change just because we identify them; they change because we disrupt them” -Cornelius Minor



Transforming State Systems
to Improve Outcomes for
Children with Disabilities

2022 Thought Leader Conversation Series

Pursuing Equity at the Intersection of Language, Culture, and Disability

Systems Coherence

November 30, 2022

Welcome and Introduction to NCSI

The National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) supports states to transform systems to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

Welcome and Introduction to NCSI continued

We are committed to helping state agencies and their stakeholders understand the intersection of language, culture, and disability in education **in order to resolve inequities that disadvantage students designated as English learners with disabilities or those who may be identified as needing special education services.**

Series Recap

**Foundational Session
(held June 7, 2022)**

**Data Literacy Session
(held July 27, 2022)**

**Authentic Engagement of Family, Schools, & Community Partnerships Session
(held September 7, 2022)**

**Research-Informed Practice Session
(held October 19, 2022)**

Session recordings, webinar materials, and related resources are available at

<https://ncsi.wested.org/resources/pursuing-equity/>

Session Agenda

- Introducing our Thought Leaders
- Session Objectives
- Session Framing
- Systems Coherence
- Challenges to Systems Coherence
- Building and Strengthening Systems Coherence
- Systems Coherence in Action





Introducing Our Thought Leaders

Today's Thought Leaders



Dr. Jamey Burho
WestEd



Ximena Hurtado
Lee County School District



Dr. Sara Kangas
Lehigh University



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New Mexico Public
Education Department



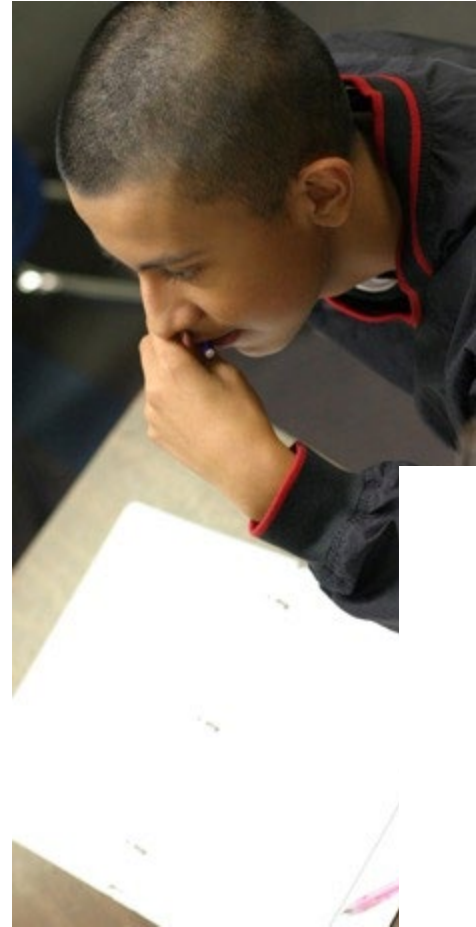
Dr. Cara Richards-Tutor
California State
University, Long Beach



Timothy Tipton
San Diego Unified
School District

Session Objectives

- Understand how coherent systems can support students designated as English learners with disabilities
- Recognize the current challenges that exist which prevent systems coherence and discuss how to move toward dismantling these barriers to improve outcomes for students designated as English learners with disabilities
- Identify elements of systems coherence and understand ways to strengthen and/or build practices that support and sustain these systems



Framing Today's Session

This session will address intersectionality at the systems level with an emphasis on creating coherence between systems that are normally siloed, addressing the converging needs of students designated as English learners with disabilities.

A Story of Systems Coherence

The director of Multicultural Services in a school district noticed there were gaps in services for students designated as English learners with disabilities. To understand how school-based multidisciplinary teams were serving these students, she attended a different IEP meeting each day for an entire month.

The director observed silos in how general education, special education, and English language development (ELD) services operated. Students' instructional programs lacked coherence and ELD professionals rarely attended the meetings. IEP teams were operating under a misconception that special education was more critical than ELD. As a consequence, students' language development received little attention in the eligibility and IEP processes and students designated as English learners with disabilities were being removed from ELD.

Systems Coherence

What is Systems Coherence?

- Creating consistency in beliefs, policies, procedures, and practices ensuring there is a shared depth of understanding both collectively and individually about the purpose and nature of the work
- Taking action to ensure that all parts of the system are functionally aligned so that people see their part in achieving the purpose of the organization

Challenges to Systems Coherence

Challenges to Systems Coherence continued

- **Complexities** of structure, culture, and politics across education systems impact how the work is approached (Hopkins et al., 2022).
- Various departments exist at the state level and these departments often **do not work in tandem** as it pertains to students designated as English learners with disabilities.
- Silos are commonplace and federal funding streams are often used as a rationale to maintain **separate initiatives**.

Challenges to Systems Coherence continued (1)

- **Lack of coherence** within and between departments due to competing interests and varying beliefs (e.g., special education, bilingual education, general education).
- The way people have been **trained and the frameworks** they use have an impact on how systems operate.
- **Xenophobia/bilingualism**—systems have been constrained in relation to the supports by linguicism/multilingualism/multiliteracy development that connects to racism and xenophobia.

Challenges to Systems Coherence continued (2)

- **Families and communities continue to be excluded** yet are most impacted by the lack of cohesiveness between various departments.
- Students designated as English learners with disabilities are more prone to experience systems coherence breakdowns due to the nature of their language status in conjunction with their disability status. Coherence around specific needs is often lost due to **misaligned systems**.
- Students receiving more services that are separate (e.g., special education, bilingual education, general education) **stresses systems and educators**. We often can do more with less through coherence, with teams working together to provide services.

After Recognizing a Lack of Coherence in the System...

The Director of Multicultural Services decided to approach their special education counterpart to better understand how special education was implemented in the district, specifically on behalf of students designated as English learners with disabilities. The two directors began sharing insights and gaining a strong understanding of how their work overlapped. Together, they reflected about how well services aligned in the district, addressing questions such as:

- *Which experts were available in each school site to serve the students?*
- *What instructional training did special education, general education, and ELD teachers need?*

Elements of Systems Coherence

Elements of Systems Coherence continued



Elements of Systems Coherence continued (1)

Shared Purpose

Foundational in creating coherence

Starts with leadership—silos have a better chance of being bridged to build coherence

Engages communities, especially those who lie at the intersection of language and disability

Elements of Systems Coherence continued (2)

Deliberate Collaboration

Purposeful collaboration in creating processes and procedures

Cross-departmental collaboration examining special education frameworks

Considers students designated as English learners when initially developing processes

Combines strategic alignment

Examines data with different lenses to look for commonalities across departments

Intentional and authentic family and community engagement

Elements of Systems Coherence continued (3)

Strategic Resource Allocation and Use

System coherence has clear role definition ensuring there is no duplication of effort

Strategic allocation of resources (e.g., time, money, staff expertise) should be prioritized when determining service delivery

Elements of Systems Coherence continued (4)

Reflection and Improvement

Investing and implementing professional development to build and sustain collaboration

Centering students as drivers of the system

Being aware of healthy conflict and prepared for it as a common occurrence when attempting to change and strengthen systems

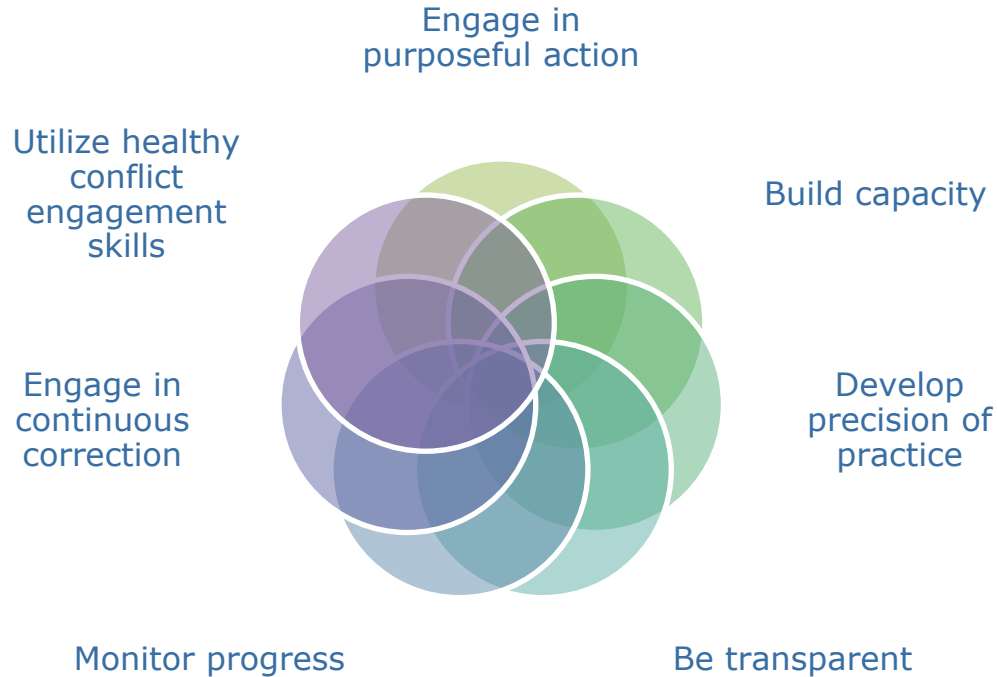
Understanding Their Systems

Based on an analysis of data and their systems, the directors created a focus team—comprised of district administrators—to advocate for dually identified students at the district and school levels. The team met with principals and site coordinators to ask how instructional services were scheduled and coordinated. The two directors then began researching best practices for students designated as English learners with disabilities. Their team adopted a philosophy to guide their collaboration: “These are our children we share. We need to work as a team.”

Building and Strengthening Systems Coherence

Building and Strengthening Systems

Coherence continued



Progress Through Deliberation

Over time, the directors worked across disciplines to dismantle silos. The Director of Multicultural Services worked with the speech language pathologists and diagnosticians to refine the process of determining language development versus disability. Thanks to these efforts, speech language pathologists in the district are now empowered to push back against rushed eligibility processes and prevent the misidentification of students designated as English learners with disabilities.

The directors also became highly involved in selecting special education and ELD curricular materials that aligned with performance-based standards in general education. As part of these efforts, the district began to adopt literacy-based therapy, in which speech language pathologists provide literacy-based instruction that supports content learning. For example, speech language pathologists might use curriculum vocabulary to teach articulation skills.

At the intersection of Language, Culture, and Disability

All students are general education students first. When all parts of the system are functionally aligned and connected, students succeed.

Examples of Activities and Actions That Strengthen Systems Coherence

Pooling &
Leveraging
Resources

Sharing
Responsibilities &
Accountability

Minimizing
Duplication of
Efforts

Exchanging
Information
Regularly

Ensuring
Authenticity of
Data

Collecting Data

Interpreting Data

Building Consensus
Among
Interventionists/
Services

Dunway et al., 2006

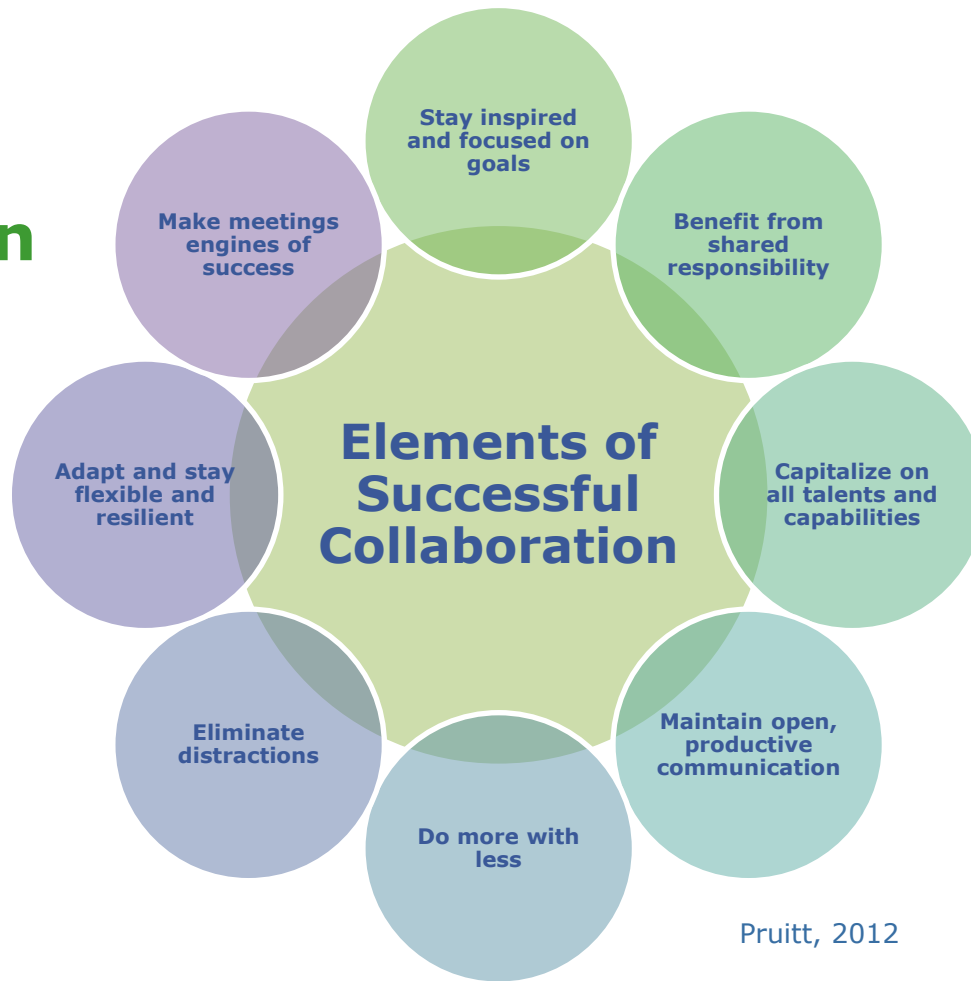
As a Result of Developing Greater Coherence

After four years of consistent messaging, all the district's eligibility and IEP meetings on behalf of students designated as English learners now include an EL representative.

About 90% of IEPs on behalf of students designated as English learners now correctly indicate the student's EL status on the first page. The focus team is continually disseminating next steps and site specialists and teachers always expect to learn about new developments.

Elements of Successful Collaboration

Elements of Successful Collaboration continued



In Conclusion

They shared recommendations for other district leaders who hope to dismantle silos and increase collaboration to better serve EL students with disabilities. Productive collaborative relationships can begin with a single conversation.

It's okay to not know exactly where to start, and at first it might feel like stumbling in the dark. It's about taking that initial walk across the parking lot. Listen to people. Hear about challenges from teachers, administrators, families, and students. It's hard to balance, but people matter.



Panel Session

Session Evaluation

- We appreciate your feedback on our session today so we can continuously improve.
- You can use the evaluation link in the chat or the QR code.
- The evaluation link will also be emailed to registrants.

https://meadowscenter.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bIUYIdW3WnnMKq

Where to Find TLC Information

Materials, including the PowerPoint and recording, from today's session will be posted to the NCSI website under "News & Events."

ncsi.wested.org

Gratitude

- Thank you to our **Thought Leaders** for initiating and framing this important conversation.
- Thank you to **all of you** for your commitment to creating inclusive, equitable systems that support all students to succeed and thrive.

Thank you

The content of this document was developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, #H326R190001. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer: Perry Williams (October 2019)

WestEd is the lead organization for NCSI. For more information about the work of WestEd, NCSI, and their partners, please visit www.ncsi.wested.org and www.wested.org



NCSI includes staff from the OSEP funded Parent Training and Information Center and Regional Parent TA Centers and the OESE funded Statewide Family Engagement Centers.