**Plenary 4:** *Leadership for Quality Improvement: A Theory of Change*
Thursday, April 18, 2019
3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. | *Constitution CDE*

**1. Descriptive Information**

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| **Plenary 4:** *Leadership for Quality Improvement: A Theory of Change*<br><br>The purpose of this session is to contemplate a new theory of change for leadership in early care and education and to consider how this theory relates to our work in designing systems for quality improvement. The cornerstone of the presentation will be the draft theory of change developed by the Early Care and Education Leadership Study (ExCELS) which relies on existing research in early childhood and other related fields. Each of the subsequent presentations will react to and align their work in relation to the draft ExCELS theory of change.  The second presentation will focus on research and aligned QI systems design in the state of Illinois.  This session will present research findings from early care and education administrators on perceptions of their leadership competencies aligned with the Whole Leadership Framework and will be followed by a policy administrator's perspective on how this data has informed state systems efforts to support ECE administrators. This presentation will also align their efforts to the ExCELS theory of change. The third presentation will present study findings from a sample of Ohio ECE administrators regarding their leadership challenges and capacities as it relates to the constructs outlined in ExCELS. | **Facilitator**<br>    **Anne Douglass**, University of Massachusetts-Boston<br><br>**Presenters**<br>    **Anne Douglass**, University of Massachusetts-Boston \| *Theory of Change for ECE Leaders as Change Agents for Quality Improvement*<br><br>    **Michael Abel**, McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University \| *The Whole Leadership Framework and State Systems Building*<br><br>    **Kelly Purtell**, The Ohio State University \| *Understanding Center Directors: Backgrounds, Responsibilities, and Leadership Efforts*<br><br>**Scribe**<br>    **Gabi Kirsch**, ICF |

**2. Documents Available on Website**

- o [Leadership for Quality Improvement](#)
- o [Abel_Administrator Role Perceptions Survey 2019](#)

**3. Brief Summary of Presentations**

- **Anne Douglass**, University of Massachusetts-Boston | *Theory of Change for ECE Leaders as Change Agents for Quality Improvement*
    - o This presentation will explore a new theory of change for leadership for quality improvement. All presentations will share an aspect of leadership and will relate to the theory of change.
    - o ExCELS is the early care and education leadership study. This is launched and supported by OPRE. It is conducted by Mathematica and UMass Boston.
    - o The purpose of the project is to fill the definitional and measurement gaps to understand how leadership in center-based ECE settings can improve quality experiences for children.
    - o Right now, the team is assessing knowledge by completing a literature review and creating a compendium to assess knowledge. They will be using that literature to define the theory of change (the draft that Anne is presenting). They will be developing survey items, pretesting those, and conducting a descriptive study. Finally, they will measure ECE leadership in center-based settings. There are products related to each of these steps including briefs, webinars, a literature review, and a descriptive study report.
    - o Leaders sometimes have a formal title but sometimes they do not. What leaders bring and do are at the center of leadership. Center characteristics, policy, regulatory and fiscal infrastructure, and professional

development and workforce supports influence leadership. Leaders influence improved child and family outcomes, ECE center quality outcomes, and staff outcomes.

- o Leaders may have pedagogical knowledge, education and experience, other knowledge and skills, values and beliefs. "Who leaders are" is about the structure of leadership. Do they have participation in decision making? Are teachers leading? Do they have a formal leadership role? "What leaders do" may include promoting and facilitating high quality teaching, fostering a culture of respect and continuous learning, establishing and following a shared strategic vision, etc.

- **Kelly Purtell**, The Ohio State University | *Understanding Center Directors: Backgrounds, Responsibilities, and Leadership Efforts*
    - o Kelly focuses on center directors as leaders. She is focusing on what affects leadership and who are the leaders. She is looking at center characteristics: responsibilities/challenges (for example, turnover) and supports (professional development, support staff). "What leaders bring" has to do with their backgrounds, goals and perspectives.
    - o They sent out online surveys to all directors of licensed type C and engaged with 150 directors.
    - o Of the directors, the most common salary was between 30 and 39 thousand dollars. The majority of the directors were white.
    - o Funding sources may influence ECE leadership due to regulations and the paperwork associated. 53% of centers accepted 1 funding source other than private contributions from parents. Others accepted more than 1, some accepted none.
    - o Teacher turnover may also affect ECE leadership. The vast majority experience the lead teacher turnover. Replacement challenges influence ECE leadership, which directors see as challenging. Staff support also may be a challenge. Just over half of the directors had some sort of office support.
    - o Professional development was seen as somewhat sufficient for center directors. Center directors wanted more staff support, teaching trainings, etc. Most center directors had very similar job responsibilities. 30% also taught.
    - o Kelly's team investigated the leader's background. Half had a Bachelor's degree. 19.2% had an Associate's degree. 44% of the center directors had some sort of management experience before becoming a director.
    - o More directors thought that they were making an impact with their job than would choose to do their job again. Kelly pointed out that this indicates the high demands of the job since directors see they are doing good work but would not choose the role a second time. Job satisfaction was the biggest predictor for director performance.
    - o Directors have varied responsibilities and types of preparation. Characteristics of both the center and the director influenced their perceptions of their leadership.

- **Michael Abel and Tom Layman**, McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University | *The Whole Leadership Framework and State Systems Building*
    - o If we do not have strong leadership in program administration, we will not have programs to offer in teaching and learning. This framework is about leadership as a whole (not an individual person). This is about leadership and not management. This framework has pedagogical leadership (instructional knowledge and family engagement) and administrative leadership (community leadership, advocacy leadership, strategic leadership, and operational leadership). It is built upon leadership essentials.
    - o Michael's team developed an administrative role perception survey to understand where leaders are in their phase of their careers. Are they new, proficient, or advanced? This helps influence the trainings at the McCormick Center. Each phase of their careers as a director provided different challenges for the directors.
    - o From that study, Michael's team developed a training for novice directors that is focusing on the leadership essentials to understand leadership style, the power of reflection and self-awareness, transitioning from peer to supervisor, and productivity and project management.
    - o Tom Layman spoke about how the state of Illinois is using this to influence the professional development work there. Tom is the director of QRIS in Illinois. There was a problem: the quality standards were treated as a checklist (a compliance way of thinking). The TA and coaching staff felt like

they were wasting their time in programs that did not have cultures of improvements. Tom's team wanted to make recommendations to support program leaders to advocate for program improvement.

- o What does a program leader do? A program leader must: (1) lead by example, (2) establish time for communication, (3) develop teams/share leadership, (4) build professional leading into program improvement, (5) engage families and staff to shape program mission and values, (6) know program standards, (7) facilitate annual goal-setting, and (8) lead weekly or monthly CQI cycles.
- o He is preparing inventory of public supports for any of the 8 components, making recommendations for enhanced support, and planning use by communities of practice.

## 4. Summary of Key Issues Raised

- o Leaders may have pedagogical knowledge, education and experience, other knowledge and skills, values and beliefs. "Who leaders are" is about the structure of leadership. Do they have participation in decision making? Are teachers leading? Do they have a formal leadership role? "What leaders do" may include promoting and facilitating high quality teaching, fostering a culture of respect and continuous learning, establishing and following a shared strategic vision, etc.
- o Teacher turnover may affect ECE leadership. The vast majority experience the lead teacher turnover. Replacement challenges influence ECE leadership, which directors see as challenging. Staff support also may be a challenge. Just over half of the directors had some sort of office support.
- o A program leader must:
    i. lead by example,
    ii. establish time for communication,
    iii. develop teams/share leadership,
    iv. build professional leading into program improvement,
    v. engage families and staff to shape program mission and values,
    vi. know program standards,
    vii. facilitate annual goal-setting, and
    viii. lead weekly or monthly CQI cycles.