



Regional Coordinator

Evaluation Brief, 2018-2019 School Year

AESD ASSOCIATION OF
EDUCATIONAL
SERVICE DISTRICTS

Nine ESDs. One Network.
Supporting Washington's Schools and Communities.

Executive Summary

Each Educational Service District (ESD) has three Regional Coordinators (RCs)—one for each content area including math, science, and English Language Arts (ELA). Some ESDs also have staff who provide early childhood education and assistance that supports WaKIDS, Early Learning Fellows, and other Pre K–third-grade initiatives.¹ RCs are masters at navigating the complexities of education leadership. They are responsible for implementing a myriad of ever-changing and evolving state initiatives as the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the legislature respond to Washington State students’ education needs. In particular, this study focused on RCs’ valuable contribution to increasing and expanding the knowledge, skills, and abilities of teachers and education leaders within the Fellows’ Network. To conduct this study, Puget Sound Education Service District (PSESD) contracted with Kauffman & Associates, Inc., to conduct focus groups with RCs from each of the four content areas.

The first major theme in the RCs’ work is the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships with the school districts and education partners. RCs create a trusting learning environment and foster a sense of belonging to an expansive professional learning community.

As a second major theme, RCs are engaged in the design and implementation of the Fellows’ Network, a highly successful professional learning program convened by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the Association of Education Service Districts (AESD). Four essential elements emerged about their work within the Fellows’ Network. First, RCs collaborate with the Fellows Advisory Committee to strategically design and implement the program. Implementation includes helping write the curriculum for Fellows’ Network meetings across the state. The curriculum has common statewide and regional features designed to meet the needs of local schools. Second, RCs weave a common thread of racial equity throughout all of the Fellows’ Network meetings. Conducting research and turning to their professional organizations, RCs meticulously search for resources to teach Fellows how to lead and teach with equity in mind.

A third major theme of RCs’ work in the Fellows’ Network is their intentional focus on cultivating personal connections through feedback. They promote a culture of open feedback through carefully designed surveys to solicit formative input. They encourage Fellows to voice their opinions and critically examine the feasibility of practicing the ideas they learn in the convenings. RCs demonstrate a growth mindset as they strive to improve the program and their own practices. Lastly, RCs engage in the cycle of inquiry and documentation of outcomes from the program. In 2018-19, a group of Fellows completed the Fellows’ Action Plan and data collection on the PDfor.us online platform. RCs use this data to monitor outcomes, provide assistance to Fellows, observe Fellows’ growth, and reflect on ways to improve.

¹ Early Learning RCs were not funded in the 2018 legislative session. However, ESD staff with early learning expertise may operate similarly to a Regional Coordinator offering services and supporting Early Learning Fellows.

Overall, racial equity is at the center of all of the RCs' work. This fourth theme pervades across all of the professional learning offered in math, science, early learning, and ELA content and pedagogy. RCs model how to lead with equity, bolstering the Fellows' confidence to engage in conversations with their peers and district leaders about equitable education.

Many RCs bring expertise in adult learning and foster networking and collaboration among the Fellows throughout the year. Informal email, Canvas pages, and Schoology are a few ways that RCs offer Fellows so they can share their experiences with implementing the new strategies they learned in the convenings.

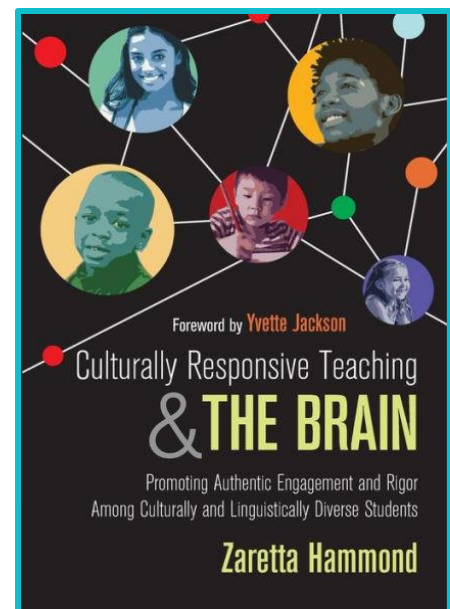
In sum, RCs play a key role with OPSI and ESD leadership to develop and implement a successful Fellows' Network. They invite Fellows' administrators to participate and have found that their participation accelerates progress made toward Action Plan goals. Always engaged, RCs continue to collect qualitative and quantitative data that demonstrates longitudinal evidence of program effectiveness.

Introduction

Across the content areas and ESDs, RCs are responsible for delivering timely, relevant, and effective professional learning. RCs play a key role in the delivery of professional learning to educators, district administrators, and school leaders within the Washington State Fellows' Network. To learn more about this key role, a sample of nine RCs participated in a 60-minute focus group or interview (three science RCs, three math RCs, one ELA RC, and two early learning RCs). Using Dedoose software, KAI coded the transcripts and performed a qualitative narrative analysis. Themes that emerged in the analysis are discussed throughout this study.

The Fellows' Network aims to build the capacity of teacher leaders and administrators to improve student academic and non-academic outcomes. Fellows commit to a 3-year program, facilitated by RCs, that is designed to increase their leadership capacity and enhance their content knowledge, skills, and abilities.

In tandem with the Fellows Advisory Committee, RCs across Washington State operate as a collaborative that prioritizes the goals and develops the curriculum and content agenda for the Fellows' Convenings. The RCs from the nine ESDs assemble by content area to collaborate on planning the content, focus, and materials for the four Fellow Convenings each year. One RC explained, *"Our really big piece of shared work is thinking about what this year's Fellows are doing, what's the curriculum for the Fellows, what's going to be in the [Convening]. We plan most of the meeting together."*



Cover of *Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain* by Zaretta Hammond

Actively seeking research-based teaching methods, RCs look to their professional organizations, such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Science Teachers Association, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, to inform the Fellows' Convening curricula. Simultaneously, RCs are self-motivated to learn about new practices and research to share and discuss as a group. They also use book studies to delve deep into material they could potentially use to teach the Fellows content and pedagogy. RCs choose resources that address equity, such as this year's study of the book, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond.

Building Strong Relationships

Each RC conducts independent work to meet the needs of the teachers and school districts in their ESD region. This work takes the form of onsite school visits, facilitating professional learning classes, and developing education resources. Overtime, their efforts result in strong relationships with professional learning participants and Fellows.

RCs used the terms *collegial*, *supportive*, *partnership*, and *trusting* to describe their relationship with their Fellows and staff who frequently attend professional learning sessions. An RC said, *"I just realized it's like a family. I hate to sound sappy, but everyone comes to the ESD and it's, 'Oh my gosh, welcome back,' and it's like a homecoming and there's hugs. These are the teacher leaders that come to everything and we go to other sessions together as well. It's just a warm place of learning."* Another RC added, *"There is just an energy in the room that is so wonderful that it's hard to describe."* RCs walk beside educators, administrators, and district leaders in their journey and go the extra mile to build strong and meaningful professional relationships. An RC said:

Rapport means everything to me ... so beyond just what we're doing in the convening, how's life back in your classroom? What can I do to help? Can I come out for a visit? It's not about an evaluative visit. It's just simply just to be there as like a partner in the experience. Over time you build this kind of a collaborative and collegial relationship rather than "I'm an instructor and you're a learner" relationship.

The RCs worked with Fellows and non-Fellows to build a sense of belonging to a learning community. Their collaboration and knowledge sharing have established a trusting, supportive network that effectively builds participants' capacity to lead. An RC said:

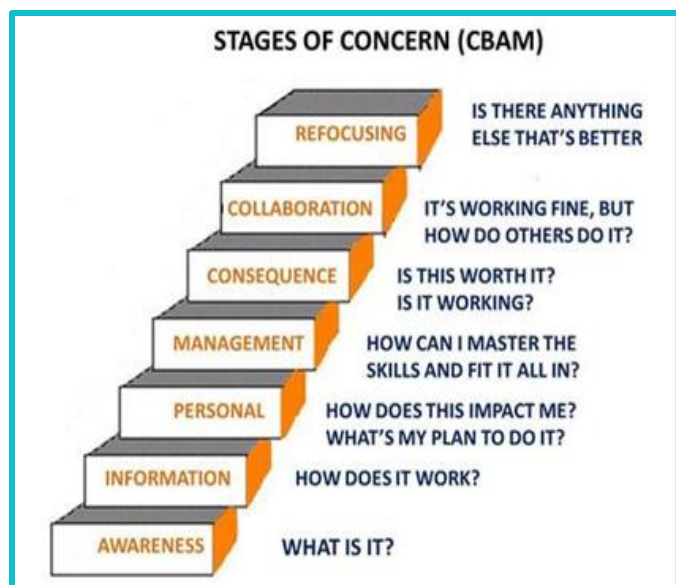
I love all the different types of professional developments that I do, so I can't ever say that a certain one is my favorite, but the reason that I love Fellows is really about the leadership and the teacher capacity. We have teachers that are coming in that are just beginning to feel comfortable to talk with their peers and to know and have confidence and they have great ideas and they know some strategies that they can share with other people.

Developing Education Leaders across Washington State

The RCs are engaged in the development and implementation of the Fellows’ Network. RCs talked extensively about the Fellows’ Network and shared the following four key ways they are involved.

1. Collaborating with education leaders in the Fellows Advisory Committee

The first essential element in the Fellows’ Network is collaboration with state education stakeholders in the Fellows Advisory Committee. The committee is composed of OSPI and ESD leadership who provide strategic direction to optimize the program for participants’ growth, positive impacts at the system and school levels, and program sustainability. RCs work with designated OSPI and ESD assistant superintendents to effectively implement the direction provided. For example, in 2017-18, the Fellows Advisory Committee decided to use the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM)² for the state-wide leadership strand, as it is a 3-year cycle that fits well with the 3-year program. An RC shared that the CBAM leadership strand *“has gone really well this year.”*



The CBAM model.

2. Bringing Equity to Student Learning

The second essential element in the Fellows’ Network is RCs’ emphasis on equitable opportunities and accessibility. The RCs weave together a common thread about equity in student learning across school systems, including remote rural schools, and accessibility, such as for students with special needs, diverse cultures, etc., throughout the four Fellows’ convenings. All of the RCs mentioned the importance of equity and cited research on how scholars across the

² Hord, S. (2014). Taking Charge of Change. *Southwest Educational Development Laboratory*, 2. <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/taking-charge-of-change-2014.pdf>

country recognize the need to include discussions of race and social justice in education leadership programs.^{3,4}

There are several layers of conversation about equity in the Fellows' Program. First, equity appears in the conversations about leadership. Across all content areas, RCs facilitate discussions about ways to lead with equity. They also cover tactics and strategies to tackle discriminatory practices. Within each content strand, they study ways to increase equitable access to academic content and assessment. Lastly, they consider the unique context of each ESD's communities and challenge Fellows to transform any student marginalization.

3. Cultivating Connections

Third, RCs cultivate feedback and input from the Fellows. This communication fosters connections between themselves and their Fellows' learning experiences. This culture demonstrates a growth mindset, as the RCs strive to improve their own professional practices.

RCs cultivate connections by promoting a culture of open feedback. They encourage Fellows to voice their opinions and critically examine the feasibility of practicing the ideas they learn in the Fellows' Network meetings. When Fellows reconvene, RCs facilitate guided reflection periods and promote feedback about their strategies to implement the Next Generation Science Standards, *Routines for Reasoning* in math, differentiated instruction in ELA, and social/emotional management in early learning.

RCs also carefully designed formal surveys to cultivate connections and solicit input. An RC said, *"I think that surveys are a big part crosstalk."* The crosstalk provides formative information to improve the program. An RC explained, *"Going through the PDforUs surveys, we always provide the survey at the end of all our convenings. [Response rate] is always 90% or higher ... we [RCs] always make it a point to go in after the fact and look through their responses to see what went well and what can be improved."*

³ Furman, G. (2012). Social justice leadership as praxis: Developing capacities through preparation programs. *Educational Administrative Quarterly*, 48, pp. 191–229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X11427394>

⁴ López, G. R. (2003). The (Racially Neutral) Politics of education: A critical race theory perspective. *Educational Administrative Quarterly*, 39(1), pp. 68–94. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X02239761>

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February Professional Development

AESD Professional Learning English Language Arts Survey

★ Required field

★ 1. Grade level(s) currently teaching/current role (please check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-K	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
<input type="checkbox"/> K	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 9
<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 12
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> College or University
<input type="checkbox"/> 6	

A screen capture of the PDforUS database used by RCs to solicit Fellows' input

4. Communicating the Cycle of Inquiry and Documenting Outcomes

The last essential element in the Fellows' program is the RCs' communication regarding the cycle of inquiry and documenting outcomes. Through this effort, the RCs help their Fellows complete Action Plans, which include personal goals. Fellows work collaboratively with their district leadership to outline how the Fellow's leadership will support the implementation of their personal goals, such as the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Early Learning Guidelines, or participation in leadership opportunities. Fellows use their Action Plans in slightly different ways across the content areas; however, these documents provide a universal way to capture Fellows' professional growth as ideas are tried, modified, adopted, or rejected.

Action Plans document and communicate the cycle of inquiry. An RC explained:

The Action Plans are a source of data ... specifically how their Action Plan changes and evolves over the course of one, two, or three years. A lot of my Fellows start the year and their Action Plan thinking changes based largely on or at least based in part on the work that we're doing as a group and also what they're learning from each other.



The RCs can efficiently access data through the PDforUS platform and approximately 10% are piloting the online plan in 2018-19. An RC said, *“I’m looking forward to online Action Plan going live for all Fellows. I think I would be able to monitor and offer assistance in a more nimble way.”*

Facilitating Continued Networking between Fellows

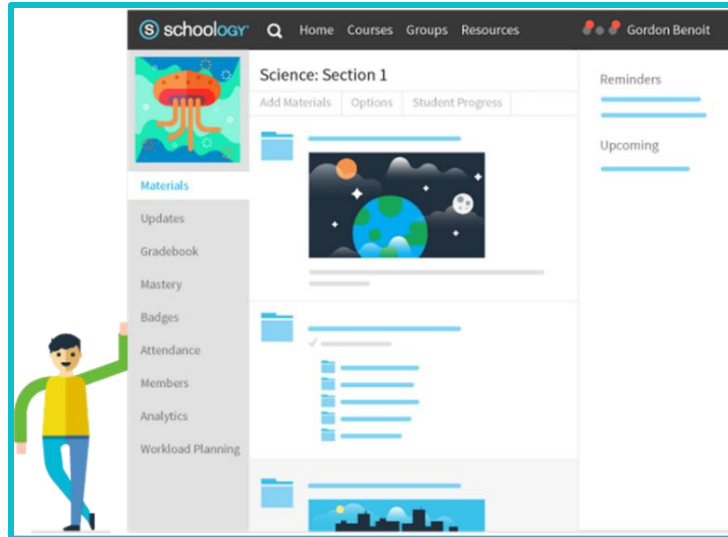
Many RCs bring expertise in adult learning and foster networking and collaboration among the Fellows. They know the value of continued networking after the professional learning sessions and convenings. RCs facilitate ongoing connections with their Fellows through informal emails. Some RCs are experimenting with different ways to keep Fellows connected to continue fostering collaboration. For example, one RC is experimenting with the Canvas platform where Fellows can share what they learned from implementing new strategies and materials discussed during the convening. She explained:

I have created Canvas pages for my Fellows and a Canvas page for my district leaders. The Fellows' [pages] are open to anybody who is or has been a Fellow. It has discussion groups, and they can pull the material from Fellows' meetings and interact with it. The district leader [pages] are open to anybody who has asked and is a district leader in our region or close by. There are also materials and discussion groups and ongoing work there.

Another RC has had success with Schoology and is considering using it with the Fellows. Schoology is a learning management system for K-12 schools that allows users to create, manage, and share content and resources. She explained:

 					
Ongoing Reflections & Plans - Section B As part of ongoing reflection and planning, complete Section B, in collaboration with the principal and/or district administrator, after each Fellows convening. Keep an ongoing, dated log that addresses the following:					
Action Items/Strategies <small>What is are your next action items for your school/district? What are the steps you will take to implement this element?</small>	Timeline <small>When will you complete each action item/ strategies?</small>	Responsibilities <small>Who will be responsible for completing this element? The Fellow? Others?</small>	Equity <small>In what ways might the action item support all educators (e.g. special education, ELL, highly capable)?</small>	Resources <small>May include teacher release time, meeting space, differentiated materials for all educators and their focus, facilitation materials, etc.</small>	How Will We Monitor and Evaluate? <small>What will be the evidence of impact of the Fellows' work? What will you see teachers and students doing differently?</small>

A Fellows’ Action Plan template facilitates communication between Fellows, RCs and administrators



Schoology is a learning management system that some RCs use to facilitate Fellows’ discussion.

We use Schoology for one of our other coordinator groups. [It is] just like Canvas, but it offers opportunity for dialogue. You can still house your resources. We house our materials from the meeting into that and then it has a chat section. If there's any after-conversation, you can use that.

Engaging Fellows’ Administrators

RCs facilitate the engagement of Fellows’ principals and assistant principals in the buildings where they work to promote greater awareness of their Fellows’ expanding capabilities. Some RCs initiate communication with congratulatory welcome messages to the Fellow and their administrator in the beginning of the program. Currently, they invite administrators to the Fellows’ orientation each year and encourage them to attend the convenings. This method is very effective because a Fellow and their administrator can collaborate on the action plan. An RC explained, “[This method has] been really useful. Districts that have their administrator [at the convening] actually make progress on their plans in terms of doing the actions they planned.” All of the RCs felt that even attending two hours of the meeting is extremely beneficial to administrators. They routinely encourage frequent, open dialogue between the Fellow and their administrator to share relevant content, materials, and activities for their school and to share any concerns and questions.

Conclusion

RCs collaborated with education leaders at OSPI and the ESDs to implement a successful Fellows’ Network across all content areas. Many RCs referenced longitudinal data on Fellows’ growth and commented that the transformation from classroom teacher to education leader is observable. An RC said, “A fair amount of Fellows move onto [being a] Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) or [take on] administrator roles. Some become tutor instructors. That’s a data point for me.” Another RC commented, “I look at ... people that no longer participate in [the] Fellows [Program]

that used to [participate] and they've moved on to other leadership positions. They might [have become a] principal [or] they might [have taken] on different roles." Effects of teacher leaders are also evident at the building level. An RC said, "I know that [one Fellow] ... totally changed their [building's] science fair and how they ran it and how they did science STEM Night. That ripple effect went to all of the other teachers and students that she was working with there. So I think that that was really powerful."

By dedicating their expertise to the Fellows' Network, RCs have supported a growing group of educators who are well positioned to lead Washington State to improved outcomes for all students. One RC shared:

I would just finally ... say that [a] critical mass of expertise [has been developed] that is so needed in the classroom and ... leadership ... so that we don't just have little pockets of excellence for teachers here ... but we're developing a critical mass where the whole system is beginning to shift, which is something we rarely accomplish in education ... it's a big enough piece of a system that the system is beginning to change.