



**Carnegie Foundation** for the Advancement of Teaching

## **ADVANCING TEACHING – IMPROVING LEARNING (ATIL)**

Using Evidence to Advance  
Teaching:  
The Promise of Improvement  
Science in Networks

### **MEETING SUMMARY**

**National Convening**

**Washington, D.C. • September 3, 2014**

**Report prepared by Sarah McKay**

**October 2014**

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching  
Stanford, CA

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Meeting Summary

## OVERVIEW

On September 3, 2014, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching convened a group of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners at the Georgetown Marriott in Washington, DC. The purpose of the meeting was to use the work of Austin Independent School District (AISD) as a case study through which to examine the processes of quality improvement and the implications of networked improvement communities for policy.

## AGENDA

The agenda included plenaries, panel discussions, and opportunities for audience engagement in the form of small group discussions and whole-group question and answer sessions.

President Tony Bryk started the day with a keynote presentation on the core principles of improvement (listed below) and the unique promise of networked improvement communities (NICs).

<b>Carnegie Foundation's Six Core Principles of Improvement</b>	
<b>1. Make the work problem-specific and user-centered.</b>	The work starts with a single question: "What specifically is the problem we are trying to solve?" This question enlivens a co-development orientation: engage key participants early and often.
<b>2. Variation in performance is the core problem to address.</b>	The critical issue is not what works, but rather what works, for whom, and under what set of conditions. Aim to advance efficacy reliably at scale.
<b>3. See the system that produces the current outcomes.</b>	It is hard to improve what you do not fully understand. Go and see how local conditions shape work processes. Make your hypotheses for change public and clear.
<b>4. We cannot improve at scale what we cannot measure.</b>	Embed measures of key outcomes and processes to track if tested changes are improvements. We intervene in complex organizations. Anticipate unintended consequences and measure these, too.
<b>5. Anchor practice improvement in disciplined inquiry.</b>	Engage rapid cycles of Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) to test fast, learn fast, and improve quickly. That failures may occur is not the problem; that we fail to learn from them is.
<b>6. Accelerate improvements through networked communities.</b>	Embrace the wisdom of crowds. We can accomplish more together than even the best of us can accomplish alone.

Bryk's keynote presentation ended with a set of implications of improvement work to explore during the day and in the future. These included potentially changing educational practice so that improvement science is seen as the defining feature of high-performing organizations (rather than as the "next project") and by making improvement central to educator professionalism. Improvement science has implications for the academy as well, by elevating the status of practical problem-solving research. Finally, Bryk urged participants to consider how policy can embrace the new mantra of improvement, rebalance accountability to support local improvement efforts, and support educational research and

development on high-leverage problems carried out through networked improvement communities. The majority of the morning was devoted to the second session, presented by Carnegie Foundation staff members Sandra Park, Sola Takahashi, and Amanda Meyer. They provided an overview of the Building a Teaching Effectiveness Network (BTEN) and AISD's improvement process. Presenters outlined BTEN's theory of change: the aim of the network was to increase the number of new teachers judged efficacious and to improve their retention rates, and the primary drivers contributing to this aim were hiring and placement systems; school-based professional communities; feedback that supports improvement; relationships between principals and new teachers; and professional development for new teachers. Austin, the presenters explained, decided to focus on improving feedback systems for new teachers. In small groups, participants reflected Austin's process of identifying secondary drivers and change ideas to improve feedback. Participants then shared key insights with the whole group and had a chance to ask questions of the presenters. The session's focus then shifted to measurement; presenters explained the characteristics of measurement that supports improvement and outlined the different types of measures, both broadly and in the context of the AISD case study. Participants again had the opportunity to discuss, share out, and ask questions. The last segment of the BTEN session explained Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycles, Austin's use of PDSAs, and findings from the district on teacher retention and burnout. The session concluded with a final small-group discussion, whole-group share-out, and whole-group question and answer.

In the afternoon, practitioners from Austin participated in a panel discussion reflecting on their years in the BTEN NIC. Daniel Girard (Principal, Akins High School), David Kauffman (Principal, Perez Elementary School), Josie Hughes (District Improvement Facilitator), and Karen Cornetto (Senior Research Associate) answered questions from moderator Paul LeMahieu (Senior Vice President, Carnegie Foundation) and audience members on the process, successes, and challenges of executing improvement work in Austin ISD.

The practitioner panel was followed by a policymaker panel, featuring Brad Jupp (Senior Program Advisor, US Department of Education), Bethany Little (Senior Policy Advisor, EducationCounsel), and Michael Cohen (President, Achieve). Panelists responded to questions from moderator Thomas Toch (Senior Managing Partner, Carnegie Foundation) and audience members on the relationship between policy and improvement science. Though the panelists were cautious about how far policymakers should go in terms of promoting improvement science, all three agreed that the time is right for policymakers to think about and to discuss the topic. Since the US education system has shifted, in recent years, from a focus on minimum standards to more ambitious expectations for college and career readiness, policy will need to change as well. The current "command and control" governance mindset, as Little described it, must give way to one that allows for learning and best practices to be shared among states, districts, and practitioners.

## **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

Participants and presenters seemed to agree that there are a number of challenges to furthering the practice of improvement science in education, especially through the use of policy. Chief among these concerns was the issue that school systems are not necessarily structured in a way that would support improvement work. To focus on improvement work, schools and districts would need to make investments of time, capacity, and human capital—and this at a time when many districts have tight or dwindling budgets. Many participants seemed to believe, based on Austin's experience with BTEN, that this work is possible in individual schools, but that scaling up to districts would require district-level

systems (like data collection) to be dedicated to the pursuit of improvement work and in some cases, put into place, staffed, and funded.

Another issue that arose concerned leadership for improvement science in practice. Improvement science is an iterative process and requires stable leadership over time; this stability is not always possible in a system where school boards, superintendents, and elected officials experience frequent turnover. Even where leadership is stable over time, improvement work may not be appealing to politicians who favor quick and easy “wins” over the inherent riskiness of trying new approaches in order to learn from failure.

A third challenge that was the focus of many comments and questions from participants was that of changing the mindsets of educators and policymakers from being exclusively outcome-focused to being process-focused, which improvement work requires. Federal policy, especially, would need to pivot from a “command and control” strategy to one of empowering states and districts to explore innovative solutions through disciplined inquiry and to share best practices. Practitioners and policymakers would have to shift from looking for silver bullets to focusing on continuous improvement.

Presenters and panelists shared key learnings from their experiences in Austin and in the policy world. One takeaway was that focused, targeted work in continuous improvement trumps larger efforts to scale quickly (often before there is adequate knowledge about how to implement complex ideas in practice). The practitioner panelists emphasized that small changes are important and, when carefully structured, they lead to big changes. Small changes do not require a great deal of additional work for educators, and if small changes are successful, those changes can spread from teacher to teacher. David Kauffman, principal of Perez Elementary, shared that, in his school, the one teacher he first worked with to test the feedback system became successful, and that teacher’s success served as a model to others in his school, building will for the ideas that he was seeking to introduce. His one-on-one intervention—characterized by Kauffman as a small change that was not a lot of additional work—had a ripple effect of improvement that touched the practice of a number of other teachers.

There was a sense from all of the policy panelists that the time is right to talk about improvement science and policy. Many participants stressed the importance of building will for improvement work, rather than attempting to legislate or mandate it. When asked what the role of policy is in improvement science, Michael Cohen suggested a focus on building leaders with improvement mindsets in districts and schools to support the work in a grassroots way. Bethany Little emphasized the possibility of directing funding towards improvement science projects and the importance of figuring out how peer-to-peer knowledge transfer happens and how to scale what works in that arena.

Overall, both participants and presenters appeared to share the belief that improvement science work is an important lever for increasing education quality. There was open and lively conversation about the challenges facing the scalability of the work, and both panelists and audience members put forth and discussed potential policy solutions.

## APPENDIX A: AGENDA

8:30-9:00	<p><b>Check-In</b></p>
9:00-9:10	<p><b>Welcome and Introduction to the Day</b>          Thomas Toch, Senior Partner for Public Policy Engagement; Director of Washington, D.C. Office, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.</p> <p>The purpose of this convening is to provide an overview of <i>improvement science in networks</i>, and to provide a concrete example of the tools and processes of improvement that can be used in schools and districts through the case study of the Building a Teaching Effectiveness Network (BTEN), a network of districts dedicated to using the methods of improvement science to improve the support, efficacy, and retention of new teachers.</p>
9:10-10:00	<p><b>Improving Education: Using Improvement Science to Solve Problems in a New Way</b>          Anthony Bryk, President, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching</p> <p>In this keynote presentation, Bryk will outline the core tenets of improvement necessary to address the quality chasm between the education students routinely experience and the aspirations we have for them. He will describe Networked Improvement Communities as a new way to bring stakeholders together to solve high-leverage problems of practice.</p>
10:00-12:00	<p><b>Overview of BTEN: Background, Problem Specification, and the BTEN Working Theory of Practice Improvement</b>          Sandra Park, Senior Associate, Improvement Science; Director of the Building a Teaching Effectiveness Network</p> <p>This session will describe how Austin ISD came to focus on the topic of new-teacher effectiveness and will examine BTEN’s “driver diagram,” the network’s working theory of practice improvement. This session will also cover measurement for improvement, and describe the similarities and differences between measurement for improvement and measurement for accountability. We will also explore the importance of understanding the systems within which problems exist and the value of testing solutions as part of a continuous-improvement process.  <i>A 10-minute break will be built into this session.</i></p>
12:00-1:00	<p><b>Lunch</b></p>
1:00-2:10	<p><b>Voices from Practice: BTEN practitioners reflect on the use of improvement science in NICs</b>          Panelists: Daniel Girard (Principal, Akins High School); David Kauffman (Principal, Perez Elementary School); Josie Hughes (District Improvement Facilitator); Karen Cornetto (Senior Research Associate)          Moderator: Paul LeMahieu (Senior Vice President, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching)</p> <p>In this session, we will hear from BTEN practitioners who implemented improvement methods in their classrooms and schools in Austin. They will describe how the improvement science approach differs from other improvement initiatives and reflect upon how it has changed how they view their work. They will also describe how they have used improvement to address other issues outside of the BTEN context.</p>

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<p><b>2:10-3:30</b></p>	<p><b>Policy Implications: Discussion of the consequences of improvement science for policymakers</b> Panelists: Brad Jupp (Senior Program Advisor, U.S. Department of Education) and Bethany Little (EducationCounsel), Michael Cohen (President, Achieve) Moderator: Thomas Toch</p> <p>This session will include organizational leaders and policymakers who will respond to a series of questions about the relationship between policy and quality improvement. How might policy advance more improvement science and networked improvement communities in education? And how might improvement science and networked improvement communities improve policy?</p>
<p><b>3:30-3:45</b></p>	<p><b>Closing Remarks</b> Anthony Bryk</p>

**APPENDIX B: REGISTRANT LIST**

First	Last	Position / Title	Organization/Institution
Catherine	Barbour	Principal Turnaround Consultant	American Institutes for Research
Charles	Barone	Policy Director	Democrats for Education Reform
Andy	Baxter	Vice President for Educator Effectiveness	SREB
Tony	Bryk	President	Carnegie Foundation
Steve	Cantrell	Senior Program Officer	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Leo	Casey	Executive Director	Albert Shanker Institute
Jeanne	Chang	Director of Technology Innovation	E.L. Haynes Public Charter School
Marc	Chun	Education Program Officer	The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
Michael	Cohen	President	Achieve
Lora	Cohen-Vogel	Distinguished Associate Professor	UNC and National Center for Scaling up Effective Schools
Karen	Cornetto	Senior Research Associate	Austin ISD
Candace	Crawford	Executive Director	Teach Plus D.C.
Charles	Cummings	Program Director	America Achieves
David	Davis	Member-Leader	American Society for Quality - Education Division
Jenny	DeMonte	Assoc. Director of Education Research	Center for American Progress
Dana	Diesel Wallace	Executive Director	The Vision Network of Delaware
Mary E.	Dilworth	Consultant	Independent
Corey	Donahue	Special Associate to the President	Carnegie Foundation
Segun	Eubanks	Director of Teacher Quality	National Education Association
Maria	Ferguson	Executive Director	Center on Education Policy
Nikola	Filby	Senior Program Director	WestEd
Elizabeth	Foster	VP Strategic Initiatives	NCTAF
Sofi	Frankowski	Director of Professional Development	The Vision Network of Delaware
Will	Friedman	President	Public Agenda
Daphne	Garcia	Associate Research Scientist	US Department of Education - Institute of Education Sciences
Daniel	Girard	Principal	Austin ISD - Akins HS
Don	Glass	Director of Evaluation	NCTAF
Eve	Goldberg	Senior Research and Policy Associate	Nellie Mae Education Foundation
Aaron	Goldstein	Manager for Government Relations	AACTE
Valerie	Greenhill	Chief Learning Officer	EdLeader21
Alicia	Grunow	Senior Partner	Carnegie Foundation
Mary	Harrison	VP for Programs	Nellie Mae Education Foundation
Susan	Headden	Senior Associate	Carnegie Foundation
Phyllis	Hedlund	Chief Academic Officer	E.L. Haynes Public Charter School
Juliana	Herman	Legislative Assistant	Sen. Michael Bennet

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<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Position / Title</b>	<b>Organization/Institution</b>
Michelle	Hudacsko	Deputy Chief, IMPACT	DCPS
Josefina	Hughes	Professional Learning Specialist	Austin ISD
Anne	Hyslop	Policy Analyst	New America
Henry	Johnson	Assistant State Superintendent	Maryland State Department of Education
Brad	Jupp	Senior Program Advisor	United States Department of Education
Kirsten	Kainz	Director of Statistics	UNC-Chapel Hill
David	Kauffman	Principal	Austin Independent School District
Lillian	Kivel	Post-Baccalaureate Fellow	Carnegie Foundation
Jim	Kohlmoos	Principal	EDGE Consulting Partners
Deborah	Koolbeck	Director, Government Relations	American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)
Mark	LaCelle-Peterson	VP for Policy and Programa	AACTE
Richard	Laine	Director of Education	National Governors Association
Kimberly	Landis	VP Strategic Initiatives	Educational Policy Institute
Kerstin	Le Floch	Managing Researcher	American Institutes for Research (AIR)
Paul	LeMahieu	Senior Vice President for Programs	Carnegie Foundation
Bethany	Little	Senior Policy Advisor	EducationCounsel
Shannon	Litton	Govt. Rel.	ETS
Lydia	Logan	Managing Director, Chiefs for Change	Foundation for Excellence in Education
Marcus	Markle	Program Associate	America Achieves
Christine	Mason	Executive Director	Center for Educational Improvement
LaWanna	McCleave	Master Educator	DCPS
Dana	McCurdy	Research and Evaluation Manager	Partners In School Innovation
Sarah	McKay	Research Assistant	Carnegie Foundation
Michele	McLaughlin	President	Knowledge Alliance
Kate	McMahon	Director, IMPACT Operations	District of Columbia Public Schools
Amanda	Meyer	Post-Baccalaureate Fellow	Carnegie Foundation
Angela	Minnici	Director	American Institutes for Research
Nick	Morgan	Executive Director	Harvard University, Strategic Data Project
Melissa	Moritz	Vice President, STEM and Education Initiatives	Teach For America
Jeannie	Myung	Director of the Advancing Teaching-Improving Learning Program	Carnegie Foundation
Emma	Naslund-Hadley	Lead Education Specialist	Inter-American Development Bank
Jennifer	Niles	Founder & Head of School	E.L. Haynes Public Charter School
Carol	O'Donnell	Group Leader, Teacher Quality	US Department of Education
Sandra	Park	Senior Associate, Director-Building a Teaching Effectiveness Network	Carnegie Foundation
Theodore	Quinn	SVP, Strategy & Research	Teach For America
Sarah	Rosenberg	Policy Analyst	Center for American Progress
Liz	Ross	Manager for State Chapters and Programs	AACTE
James	Shelton	Deputy Secretary	US Department of Education



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Elena	Silva	Senior Associate	Carnegie Foundation
Jack	Smith	Chief Academic Officer	Maryland State Department of Education
Stephen	Smith	Director	Ameson Foundation
Sarah	Sparks	Assistant Editor	Education Week
Peter	Stein	Chief Business Officer	TeachBoost
Corey	Sullivan	Engagement Manager	Education Delivery Institute
Holly	Szafarek	Project Manager	Carnegie Foundation
Sola	Takahashi	Associate, Improvement Analytics and Measurement Development	The Carnegie Foundation
Christina	Theokas	Director of Research	Education Trust
Thomas	Toch	Senior Partner	Carnegie Foundation
Lori	Van Houten	Senior Program Associate	REL West at WestEd
Nancy	Waymack	Managing Director, District Policy	National Council on Teacher Quality
Taylor	White	Associate	Carnegie Foundation

## APPENDIX C: PANELIST BIOGRAPHIES



**Michael Cohen**, a nationally-recognized leader in education policy and standards-based reform, became President of Achieve in 2003. He has held several key roles in education during the past 20+ years, including Director of Education Policy at the National Governors Association (1985-90) and Director of Planning and Policy Development at the National Association of State Boards of Education (1983-1985). During the Clinton Administration he served as Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, Special Assistant to President Clinton for Education Policy, and Senior Advisor to US Secretary of Education Richard Riley. Created in 1996 by the nation’s governors and corporate leaders, Achieve is an independent, bipartisan, non-profit education reform organization based in Washington, DC that helps states raise academic standards and graduation requirements, improve assessments and strengthen accountability so all students graduate ready for college, work and citizenship. Under Mike’s leadership, Achieve launched the American Diploma Project Network, formed the Partnership for the Assessment of College and Career Readiness (PARCC) – one of two multi-state consortia developing common assessments – and helped develop the Common Core State Standards.



**Karen Cornetto** joined the AISD DRE in 2006 and has focused her research on contributions to teacher retention and the experiences and effectiveness of early career teachers, working closely with the Office of Educator Quality and the AISD Reach program. In addition, her team develops, administers, and reports results of district wide surveys of students, staff, and parents and performs ad hoc data and analysis requests for district administrators. Karen completed her doctorate at the University of Texas at Austin in 2001 with a focus on interpersonal communication and quantitative research methods. Prior to joining DRE, Karen was a professor in the Department of Communication Sciences at the University of Connecticut. Her academic research focused on a wide range of topics including communication technology use in personal and work relationships, health communication in adolescent relationships, and the causes and consequences of work-related stress.



**Daniel Girard** has been the Akins High School principal since the 2007-2008 school year. He graduated from the University of North Florida, in Jacksonville, with a B.A. in mathematics education and later from Florida Atlantic University, in Boca Raton, with an M.Ed. in Educational Administration. Mr. Girard was a mathematics teacher in West Palm Beach, Florida for ten years before going into administration. Previously, Mr. Girard was a principal in El Paso, Texas. Mr. Girard’s two children are graduates of Akins High School (2009) and his wife is a Language Arts curriculum specialist who works with all high schools in AISD. Mr. Girard was born and raised in Ottawa, Canada and speaks French fluently.



**Josefina (Josie) Hughes** is a Professional Learning Specialist in the Austin Independent School District. She began her career as a bilingual elementary teacher in 1995 and has dedicated herself to the improvement of teaching practice in the areas of bilingual education and instructional technology. Josie has served as an instructional coach, district level mentor for novice teachers, and instructor of pre-service teachers. Prior to her current position she

was the Instructional Systems Training Coordinator for Austin ISD. Josie holds a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies and a Master of Education in Elementary Education.



**Brad Jupp** is a Senior Program Advisor in the Office of Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. In that role he supports the development and implementation of policy on teacher and leader effectiveness. He came to the United States Department of Education from Denver Public School, where over 24 years he served as a teacher, union leader and senior administrator. Brad spent 19 years as a middle school language arts teacher, including four years in his dream job at the DPS Alternative Middle School.



**David Kauffman** is the principal of Lance Corporal Nicholas S. Perez Elementary School in Austin, Texas. He was a founding member of the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, a multi-year research project addressing critical questions regarding the future of our nation's teaching force. David is co-author of Finders and Keepers: Helping New Teachers Survive and Thrive in Our Schools (Jossey-Bass, 2004) and several published articles focused on new teachers. He was a Teach For America corps member and taught in inner-city Houston, Texas. He holds a bachelor's degree from Stanford University and a master's degree and doctorate from Harvard University. David lives in Austin with his wife and their three children, all of whom are current or former students at his school.



**Bethany Little** is a Managing Partner at America Achieves, leading a number of the organization's most critical priorities, including our fellowships and support for state and local superintendents. Before joining America Achieves, Bethany served as Chief Education Counsel to the Chairman of the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee. As the top staffer in the U.S. Senate responsible for education policy, Bethany led legislative efforts on early childhood programs, elementary and secondary education, higher education, and workforce training. Her other national policy experience includes work as an education advisor to President Clinton and Vice President Gore on the White House Domestic Policy Council, in the U.S. Department of Education and as a legislative aide to Senator Patty Murray (D-WA). Bethany has also served as an advocate for disadvantaged children as the Vice President for Policy and Advocacy at the Alliance for Excellent Education and the Director of Government Relations for the Children's Defense Fund.



## Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

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51 Vista Lane  
Stanford, California 94305  
650-566-5100

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