

**Video Transcript**  
***Rethinking the Scale-up Challenge***  
**Multi-Tiered System of Supports: Unit 4 — Slide 4**

For decades, education reformers in the United States have worked to find ways to better help students develop the knowledge and skills needed for the world of work, lifelong learning, and civic responsibility in the twenty-first century. In the process, numerous research-based initiatives have been developed to solve both big and small problems of practice. These initiatives run the gamut from specific interventions for struggling early readers, to programs to support whole subgroups of students, to whole scale high school reform efforts, and beyond. As states adopt a research-based initiatives and try to support local districts as they implement them we often are asked, how could we scale at multiple initiatives in a way that result in a coherent system PK–12 education without overwhelming the system?

To respond to this question we draw on the National Implementation Research Networks' program to build implementation capacity and West Wind Education Policy's program for systemic equity leadership, to help states rethink their strategies toward deep, meaningful, systemic change. In an attempt to improve outcomes for all students, state departments of education often adopt a smorgasbord of research-based initiatives and offer them up to local districts for implementation. In response, some districts choose to taste a little bit of everything without getting the full benefit of anything, ending up overstuffed and struggling to digest everything they sampled. Other districts sample one thing for a short time and then go back for something else, often before the benefits of the first initiative are realized. Still others claim they are implementing everything, when really they are engaged in business as usual under different names. A very few manage to put together a well-balanced meal, implementing select initiatives under a coherent vision for teaching and learning that they are capable of supporting. The first three outcomes are unhealthy and frustrating at both the local and state levels. Fortunately, they are not necessary.

We actually know a lot about implementation, organizational change, and transformation. We know that states can deliberately and systematically develop and make effective use of an implementation infrastructure. An implementation infrastructure includes aligned initiatives. We cannot continue to see initiatives as discrete an insular programs, rather we must see them as a system of interconnected strategies for improvement. Key questions that states must answer are: How do the initiatives align to a common vision for education? How did the initiatives aligned to each other? Are there natural synergies among the initiatives? Are there tensions? Are there gaps were fundamental components have been left out? Answering these questions will help us sharpen the vision and will ensure that we are working toward common goals.

Second, an infrastructure includes implementation capacity. Ultimately, effective teachers will draw on this work as they blend multiple instructional strategies together to address the needs of their students. They will bring everything they

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know about teaching and learning to bear on their instructional decision making, moment to moment. However, on the path to that point, it is neither efficient nor effective to ask individual teachers in the system to be the ones to initially figure out how to braid the multiple initiatives together in the classroom. Rather, we need to build teams of educators who understand the initiatives, the research on implementation, and improvement cycles to do this work for us.

Third, a new infrastructure requires a new type of leadership. You have no doubt heard the assertion that people resist change. As Ronald Heifetz suggests however, it is not change per se that people resist. Why would “new and improved” be such an effective marketing strategy if people fundamentally resist change? Instead, people resist such things as loss, incompetence, and disloyalty.

As we work with states to align their systems and develop implementation capacity, we also work on developing a new kind of leadership. Leadership that helps people work through the loss they feel when making a change; leadership that anticipates feelings of incompetence and helps people regain confidence; leadership that encourages those in the system to understand their loyalties and to take calculated risks toward improvement. West Wind Education Policy’s framework for systemic equity leadership suggest that we attend to the hearts and minds of those we are asking to change, and that we begin with our own. With this infrastructure in mind, aligned initiatives, implementation capacity, and a new type of leadership, states are capable of an entirely new way of thinking about the scale up of research-based initiatives. As a way to start states should:

- determine how the initiatives the line to the overall vision for education
- determine how the initiatives aligned to each other;
- develop the capacity to implement multiple initiatives in a coherent and cohesive manner that supports, rather than overwhelms the system and individuals within the system; and
- develop a new kind of leadership that anticipates and responds to resistance by attending to both technical challenges and to hearts and minds.

If we focus on alignment, implementation capacity, and leadership we can anticipate the bumps and smooth out the road to change. For more information about the work of Westwind Education Policy, please visit our Web site at [www.westwinded.com](http://www.westwinded.com). For more information about the work of the National Implementation Research Network, or their work at the State Implementation and Scaling up Evidence-based Practices Center, please visit their Web site at [www.scalingup.org](http://www.scalingup.org).