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Thank you for your request to our REL Reference Desk regarding evidence-based practices for forming and convening a panel of experts to implement an education policy change. Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the ten regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research based education questions.

The information below represents the most rigorous research available. Researchers consider the type of methodology and give priority to research reports that employ well described and thorough methods. The resources were also selected based on the date of the publication with a preference for research from the last ten years. Additional criteria for inclusion include the source and funder of the resource.

**Question:** *What are the evidence-based practices for forming and convening a panel of experts to implement an education policy change?*

**Key words and search strings used in the search:** *education policy adoption; school leadership AND policy implementation; implementing policy change in schools; successful educational change; Educational policy AND implementation system; participation in educational reform; Education policy reform*

**Search databases and websites:**

1. ERIC: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>
2. JSTOR: <http://www.jstor.org/action/showAdvancedSearch>
3. Google Scholar: [www.google.com/scholar](http://www.google.com/scholar)
4. Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Resources: <http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/>
5. What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

**Results:**

Based on the database searches described above, there were no causal studies on this topic. Below are some related articles and resources to guide your search for information pertinent to your question.

**Citations Retrieved: (NOTE: Abstracts and executive summaries are copied directly from the reports when possible to ensure accuracy):**

Beabout, B. R., (2014). Principles of leading change: an inductive analysis from post-Katrina New Orleans. *Policy Futures in Education*, 12(8), 1048-1063. doi: 10.2304/pfie.2014.12.8.1048

**Abstract/Summary:** Despite over forty years of research on theories of educational change, little is known of the change theories-in-use of school-based administrators, often tasked with

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implementing externally imposed reform mandates. Capitalizing on the unique case of post-Katrina schooling, this qualitative study examines the ways in which ten principals spoke about leading change in their schools. In a city where the district has been almost wholly decentralized, these principals are not implementing changes decided upon by superiors, but have significant autonomy in their choice of change goals and change processes. Despite rarely finding unitary theories of change in the words of New Orleans' school leaders, six "principles" of leading change were identified: "collaboration," "community connections," "generating public support," "meeting student needs," "setting goals and meeting them," and "improving instruction." Conclusions are drawn about leading change at the school-site level, and implications for leader preparation and support are also included.

Björk, L. G., Browne-Ferrigno, T. & Kowalski, T. J. (2014). The superintendent and educational reform in the United States of America. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 13(4), 444-465 doi: 10.1080/15700763.2014.945656

**Abstract/Summary:** During the last two decades the intensity and complexity of educational reform in the United States of America have heightened interest among policymakers, practitioners, and professors in large-scale, systemic change. As a consequence, superintendents are being viewed as pivotal actors in the complex algorithm for managing districts and leading policy implementation efforts. The challenges--both perceived and real--have provided grist for national debates on superintendent roles, expectations, and effectiveness as school system leaders. This article presents an analysis of discursive stages in the evolution of the American superintendency in response to external and internal change forces within school systems.

Brady, M. P., Hazelkorn, M. L., & Mucholz, J. L. (2014). Policy and systems change: Planning for unintended consequences. *Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues, and Ideas*, 87(3), 102-109. doi: 10.1080/00098655.2014.891882

**Abstract/Summary:** Planning for policy implementation is as important as the implementation itself. A policy's intent can be subverted by the way the policy is implemented, or when unanticipated outcomes take precedence over the true intent. This article presents three cases of specific instances of unintended outcomes from policy implementation and presents a model to assist educational reformers in minimizing the impact of unintended negative consequences. The article provides policy makers with a means to predict the full array of outcomes--both intended and unintended--when promoting educational reforms that affect the implementation of new practices and policies.

Cobb, C., Donaldson, M., Lemons, R., & Mayer, A. (2010). *High leverage policy framework: A New England secondary school consortium resource*. Center for Education Policy Analysis. Retrieved from [http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-PLP\\_HLP\\_Framework.pdf](http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-PLP_HLP_Framework.pdf)

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**Abstract/Summary:** Drawing from the fields of education policy, school redesign, organizational change, leadership development, and program evaluation, the New England Secondary School Consortium's "High Leverage Policy Framework" is a detailed exploration of education policy from rationale to development to implementation. By taking into account the larger social and political "ecosystem" in which policy is formed, written, and implemented, this tool provides policy makers and educators with a step-by-step framework they can use to identify and develop effective, high-impact policies in their states, districts, and schools. Using a common definition of high-leverage policy--i.e., policies that not only increase educational equity, aspirations, achievement, and attainment for all students, but that also generate positive change throughout the educational system--the "Framework" is a first step toward a more holistic view of education policy, and more thoughtful and sustainable guidelines for learning in the 21st century. The "Framework" draws upon research on policy formulation, implementation, and efficacy, and it is intended to serve as a guide for policy makers and educational leaders working to enact transformative change in public schools. (Contains 2 figures.)

Connor, J., & Azino, K. (2014). Orchestrating effective change: How youth organizing influences education policy. *American Journal of Education*, 120(2), 173-203. doi: 10.1086/674371

**Abstract/Summary:** Although research demonstrating the effectiveness of youth organizing for educational reform has expanded rapidly in the last two decades, the field remains substantially under-theorized. This article outlines a theoretical framework, based on 30 interviews with leading figures in education reform that illuminates how a youth organizing group has achieved significant influence in the Philadelphia School District. The framework identifies three broad dimensions of effective youth organizing work and highlights 11 sets of paired strategies that have been useful in building the group's power and efficacy. The framework showcases the complexity and artistry of sustained, successful youth organizing.

Evans, L., Thornton, B., & Usinger, J. (2012). Theoretical frameworks to guide school improvement. *NASSP Bulletin*, 96(2), 154-171. doi: 10.1177/0192636512444714

**Abstract/Summary:** A firm grounding in change theory can provide educational leaders with an opportunity to orchestrate meaningful organizational improvements. This article provides an opportunity for practicing leaders to review four major theories of organizational change--continuous improvement, two approaches to organizational learning, and appreciative inquiry. These four theories were selected because of their emergence within the field of education,

possible adaptability to school systems, and potential to support organizational change. Such theories can provide clear guidelines for successful organizational transformation, promote effective change management, and facilitate operative decision making. (Contains 5 figures.)

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Mette, I. M., & Scribner, J. P. (2014). Turnaround, transformation, or transactional leadership: An ethical dilemma in school reform. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 17(4), 3-18. doi: 10.1177/1555458914549665

**Abstract/Summary:** This case was written for school leaders, specifically building-level principals and central office administrators attempting to implement school turnaround reform efforts. Often, leaders who embark on this type of organizational change work in intense environments that produce high levels of pressure to demonstrate improvement in student achievement. Educators studying this case should examine the impact on ethical leadership when implementing rapid reform efforts, particularly the pressure on school leaders at the district and building levels to employ a transactional rather than transformational approach to leadership as they respond to the pressures of turnaround school policy.

Quint, J. (2006). Meeting five critical challenges of high school reform: Lessons from research on three reform models. Washington DC: MDRC. Retrieved from <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/428/overview.html>

**Abstract/Summary:** High school reform has moved to the top of the education policy agenda, commanding the attention of the federal government, governors, urban school superintendents, philanthropists, and the general public. All are alarmed by stubbornly high dropout rates, by the low academic achievement of many high school students, and by the large numbers of high school graduates who are required to take remedial classes in college. These trends disproportionately affect urban and certain rural areas and minority groups: The most troubled high schools are concentrated in about 50 large cities and 15 primarily southern and southwestern states, and the majority of their students tend to be African-American or Hispanic. This is the first in a series of reports for policymakers, practitioners, and others who must make hard choices about how to change high schools. It discusses three comprehensive initiatives evaluated by MDRC -- Career Academies, First Things First, and Talent Development -- that have grappled with the challenges of improving low-performing urban and rural schools. Together, these three interventions are being implemented in more than 2,500 high schools across the country, and various components of these models are being used in thousands more schools. The overall message of this synthesis is that "structural changes" to improve personalization and "instructional improvement" are the twin pillars of high school reform. Whether districts and schools adopt a comprehensive reform initiative like the ones MDRC studied or put together the elements of a comprehensive intervention on their own, much has been learned about what is needed--and what seems to work. What remains is to make sure that practitioners have the support they need to put that learning into practice. (Contains 5 tables, 4 figures, and 45 endnotes.)

Russell, J. L., Meridith, J., Childs, J., Stein, M. K., & Prine, D. W. (2015). Designing inter-organizational networks to implement education reform: An analysis of state race to the

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top applications. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 37(1), 92-112, doi:  
10.3102/0162373714527341

**Abstract/Summary:** This study sought to understand the opportunities and challenges associated with the implementation of state designed Race to the Top (RttT) funded reform networks. Drawing on a conceptual framework developed from the networked governance literature, we analyzed the 12 state RttT grantees' applications. Our analysis revealed that states designed large implementation networks with potential to bring a wide range of resources to bear on reform efforts, particularly through participation of numerous non-system actors. However, coordinating large and diverse networks places state education agencies (SEAs) in a new and challenging role. The extent to which networks extend state capacity to support educational improvement or further complicate the work of SEAs remains an open question. We propose a model including a set of theoretical propositions to guide future research.

#### **Referrals**

##### **Organizations:**

- Consortium for Policy Research in Education: <http://www.cpre.org/>

##### **Federally Funded Resources:**

- Institute of Education Sciences (IES), public search engine available at: <http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/>
- What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

#### **Disclaimer:**

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