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Preface

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“It is time to make good on the promise of public education. Our children need it, the public is demanding it, and indeed the world needs it to survive and thrive” (Fullan & Quinn, 2015, p. 1).

Now is the time to focus on coherence! But *how* do you build the much-needed coherence?

The book *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems* is all about regular school systems achieving remarkable results by focusing on the right things and staying with them. *The Taking Action Guide* is intended to help you become one of those successful systems that makes a difference for all students.

Incorporated in *The Taking Action Guide to Building Coherence in Schools, Districts, and Systems* are protocols for each chapter of the book *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems*. The protocols provide staff with common learning experiences and promote deep discussion, encourage critical thinking about the coherence in the organization, and, as a result, build capacity. The protocols serve as building blocks to develop ongoing and specific actions. Once participants understand the Coherence Framework in their context, they are able to analyze the level of coherence in the organization and to *take action* by developing a 100-Day Plan to foster greater coherence.

But first, before you start, read *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems*. Tools help you focus, but only if you have good ideas. Get some ideas from the book and then get to action and learn more.

Focus and coherence has never been more badly needed. Now is the time for action.

How to Use This Guide

The *Taking Action Guide to Building Coherence in Schools, Districts, and Systems* provides organizations with step-by-step experiences to build the knowledge and skills needed to foster greater coherence.

Getting Started

Selecting Participants

The context of your organization will determine whom you select, but the following have been successful in a range of organizations:

1. **Role-Alike Study Groups.** Provide a professional learning opportunity for a particular role to build capacity around coherence and the use of the right drivers (e.g., all school administrators, a district leadership team, state superintendents study group). A book study incorporating the protocols promotes powerful learning and dialogue and will lead to greater coherence.
2. **Vertical Coherence Team.** Organize a cross-role group composed of representatives of all levels of the organization. In school districts, this might include district staff, school administrators, union representatives, and others, while at state or provincial level, this might include state superintendents, key leaders of the DOE, association leaders, union leaders, and district leaders. Leaders who learn together are more likely to be committed to the tasks and to actualizing a plan of action. We strongly recommend that you keep the team consistent throughout the process, to move from analysis to action. This provides an opportunity to learn from the work as participants build upon prior learning, share differing perspectives, and engage in deep dialogue. Developing a trusting team is critical and is enhanced through the protocols and your choice of community builders.

Role of Participants

Participants have six key roles as part of the team:

- Represent a range of perspectives
- Communicate with stakeholder groups
- Share expertise

- Be transparent
- Participate fully
- Develop a draft plan for coherence

Sharing and then gaining participants' commitment to perform the roles is an important first step in the process. It is also helpful to review at the conclusion of each session the responsibilities of each member for the next meeting.

Role of Facilitator

Critical to the success of *The Taking Action Guide* is a facilitator who serves not only as a lead learner but also does the following:

- clarifies the purpose of the work together: analyzing district coherence, mastering the framework, and developing the 100-Day Plan to achieve greater coherence in the organization
- establishes a set of norms for working together
- organizes the sessions: dates, times, locations
- understands and implements the protocols for each session
- provides necessary resources
- encourages participation by all
- helps to resolve issues or conflicts
- records decisions
- communicates regularly with team members and other stakeholders

Format

To begin, all participants should read *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems*. Facilitators should select the most relevant protocols to meet the needs of their group and ensure adequate time for deep dialogue.

The sequence of and timing of sessions can range from a one- or two-hour study group for each chapter to full day or retreat sessions.

Using the Protocols

Protocols are provided for each chapter. Each protocol contributes to an assessment of the organization's current level of coherence using the Coherence Progressions and the 100-Day Plan to achieve greater coherence.

Each protocol provides

- a purpose,
- links to video and print resources,
- a description of the protocol,
- the directions for using the protocol, and
- the required advance organizers.

For each protocol, participants will read and discuss the specific chapter of the book as well as read additional appropriate articles or view videos. This common learning experience ensures the dialogue will be richer and more meaningful.

Each protocol is described in detail and includes powerful instructional strategies to encourage the interaction between colleagues. The infographics found at the end of each chapter in *Coherence* assist in capturing the concepts and are a means to summarize your decisions and actions as you progress through the book. As you proceed through the book and implement the protocols, there are many opportunities to connect to your organization's reality.

In the final section of *The Taking Action Guide*, three protocols serve as stepping stones to build coherence and require both individual and collective reflection and action.

The Taking Action Protocols are reflection and planning tools at the conclusion of each chapter; these allow participants to reflect individually and collectively during and between sessions.

The Coherence Progression Protocol is a diagnostic and planning tool. It provides a detailed guide for analyzing each of the four components of the Coherence Framework. The progression describes organizations at three levels of development: emerging, accelerating, and mastering. Using the progression, participants reflect on the current level of coherence in their school, district, or state and then plan steps that will lead to the next level of coherence.

The Coherence Planning Protocol provides an organizer for synthesizing the results developed by the Taking Action Protocols at the end of each chapter. This plan for increasing coherence includes specific actions for the next 100 days.

Most of us in education need greater coherence in our work. Use the Coherence Framework and *The Taking Action Guide* to take collection action. It is the time to develop shared coherence. This guide will help you do just that.