

Learning Forward

What Matters Now Network  
(WMNN)

Formative Evaluation Memo

Claire Morgan

Dan Mello

August 2019

WestEd — a nonpartisan, nonprofit research, development, and service agency — works with education and other communities throughout the United States and abroad to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. WestEd has more than a dozen offices nationwide, from Massachusetts, Vermont and Georgia, to Illinois, Arizona and California, with headquarters in San Francisco. For more information about WestEd, visit [WestEd.org](https://www.wested.org); call [415.565.3000](tel:415.565.3000) or, toll-free, (877) 4-WestEd; or write: WestEd / 730 Harrison Street / San Francisco, CA 94107-1242.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The What Matters Now Network (WMNN), launched in 2017, is a networked improvement community (NIC) facilitated by Learning Forward and funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. WMNN brings together three state coalitions (Maryland, Ohio, and Rhode Island) to utilize improvement science processes at the practitioner level to work toward a shared vision of promoting teacher access to high-quality job-embedded professional learning (JEPL) focused on identifying and implementing high-quality curriculum and instructional materials (HQCIM). WestEd is conducting a formative evaluation of the initial work of WMNN to examine Network mechanisms, processes, and progress toward Network and state coalition goals. The interview, focus group, survey, and artifact-review data examined for the first phase of the formative evaluation show that state coalitions are progressing toward their intermediate aims.

Results reported across state coalitions included:

- Increased focus, purpose, and impact of the collaborative process of teacher-based teams
- Increased educator efficacy in using student data to inform instructional strategies
- Increased educator efficacy in assessing the quality of instructional materials
- Collaborative development and successful use of tools to guide educators in assessing student data and curricular materials and formulating strategies to meet student needs
- Embedding improvement science practices, including peer-based reflection and iterative testing of protocols and practices, in school processes

Participant suggestions for further developing and enhancing the WMNN work included strategically working toward Network scale-up and sustainability, enhancing cross-state collaboration around common challenges, and exploring in more depth how improvement science processes can inform the identification and implementation of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials.

## Background

The What Matters Now Network (WMNN), launched in 2017, is a networked improvement community (NIC) facilitated by Learning Forward and funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. WMNN brings together three state coalitions (Maryland, Ohio, and Rhode Island) made up of educators at the school, district, and state levels to use improvement science processes to work toward a shared vision of promoting teacher access to high-quality job-embedded professional learning (JEPL) focused on identifying and implementing high-quality curriculum and instructional materials (HQCIM).

The Network has developed a driver diagram with identified intermediate and long-term aims and associated primary and secondary drivers. Each state coalition has similarly developed a driver diagram articulating aims and drivers related to its state-specific HQCIM content area (See Appendix B). Specifically, Maryland is focusing on increasing teacher capacity to identify and implement NGSS-aligned professional learning and instructional resources; Ohio is focusing on using collaborative learning teams to strengthen teacher practices for PK-3 literacy outcomes; and Rhode Island is focusing on increasing teacher engagement in high-quality job-embedded professional learning grounded in the school context and the use of HQCIM. The Network aims to promote practitioner-driven local and state policy.

Following intensive initial professional development in improvement science processes, provided by the Center for Public Research and Leadership (CPRL), the state coalitions began implementation in their two participating districts of a series of school-level cycles of continuous learning related to their aims, with coaching and support provided by a university or government collaborative partner and by Learning Forward. The inquiry (Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)) cycles are carried out by school-level educator teams, with guidance from the collaborative partner and the state department of education partners. Coalition leadership teams (constituting the Network “Hub”) meet virtually and in-person, both in their state teams and as a Network Hub, to discuss progress and address challenges. Opportunities for cross-state learning take place during Hub calls and at in-person cross-state multistakeholder convenings.

## Purpose

WestEd is conducting a formative evaluation of the initial work of the WMNN. The purposes of the evaluation include:

- To understand the role and importance of the leadership and facilitation of the Network in supporting the WMNN work
- To examine progress toward the Network’s aims and factors enabling or hindering progress
- To collect information around each state coalition’s progress toward its aims and factors enabling or hindering progress

## Evaluation questions and data sources

The evaluation is organized around three levels prioritized by Learning Forward: Network support, Network aim progress, and participant results. The evaluation is examining WMNN's progress in each of these areas as it moves toward meeting its Network and state-specific aims related to changes in professional learning and teacher practice. The following questions guide the evaluation.

### Network support

- To what extent and in what ways does the Network structure and operation facilitate the work of state coalitions?
  - To what extent and in what ways does Network leadership and operational structure foster shared purpose, collaboration, accountability, capacity building, professional knowledge creation and sharing, and common language and inquiry approaches?
  - To what extent and in what ways does Learning Forward support coalitions in using improvement science methods to strengthen the implementation of job-embedded PL grounded in the use of HQCIM?
  - What is the role of the coalition collaborative partners in supporting the coalitions' work?

### Network aim progress

- To what extent and in what ways is the Network progressing toward its intermediate aim of teachers in Network schools accessing and engaging in effective JEPL grounded in the use of HQCIM?

### Participant results

- To what extent and in what ways are state coalitions making progress toward achieving their intermediate aims?
  - To what extent and in what ways is the Maryland coalition:
    - Building teacher knowledge of NGSS and NGSS-aligned HQCIM?
    - Facilitating educator engagement in PL addressing HQCIM?
  - To what extent and in what ways is the Ohio coalition:
    - Using collaborative learning teams to strengthen teacher capacity to improve literacy outcomes for PK-3 children?
    - In teacher-based teams, analyzing progress-monitoring data to guide identification and implementation of evidence-based literacy practices?
  - To what extent and in what ways is the Rhode Island coalition:
    - Engaging teachers in high-quality JEPL grounded in the use of HQCIM?

- Effectively messaging the work of the coalition to stakeholders?
- To what extent and in what ways do the structures and operations of each state coalition facilitate progress toward its aims?
- What are the successes and challenges encountered by state coalitions in pursuing their aims?
- To what extent and in what ways does each state coalition learn about and use improvement science methods to iteratively test improvements for strengthening professional learning and teacher practices?

### **Evaluation methods**

The following methods were used to address the evaluation questions:

- In-person observation and data gathering at December 2018 and February 2019 WMNN cross-state convenings
- Virtual observation of biweekly WMNN Hub calls
- Review of state coalition Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) reports and other WMNN artifacts housed in the WMNN online community
- Interviews with 17 WMNN members, including collaborative partners, state department of education staff, and district and school administrators and teachers

### **Evaluation findings**

Information from the data sources listed above was synthesized and triangulated to produce findings in the three overarching evaluation areas of network support, network aim progress, and participant results.

## Network support

### *Support provided by Learning Forward*

Feedback from WMNN participants obtained in interviews and at cross-state convenings indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the support provided by Learning Forward in implementing the work of the state coalitions. This positive feedback was echoed nearly universally across stakeholder types (including collaborative partners, state department of education staff, and district and school administrators and teachers).<sup>1</sup> Specifically, participants noted the following ways that Learning Forward supports the work:

- Serving as “critical friends” and thought partners to challenge and push forward the thinking
- Convening stakeholders to learn from one another
- Sharing relevant research, best practices, and other resources
- Providing guidance as experts in the field
- Bringing in the Center for Public Research & Leadership (CPRL) to provide support
- Scaffolding the content around improvement science that is new to some participants
- Maintaining open lines of communication
- Supporting Network participants to advocate for themselves in areas such as funding and legislation
- Ensuring that all voices are heard
- Responding to feedback
- Keeping the work prioritized, on-task, and goal-focused

*“[Learning Forward staff person] is a good critical friend. When we are going off on something, he steps in and says, ‘Did you think about this? What about this? Can we consider . . .?’ in a way that doesn’t offend people.”*

*“The resources provided and format of the agendas are directly related to our initiative’s aim and reflective work.”*

*“It has happened so many times that if we need help with something, [Learning Forward staff] will say, ‘I know how to find that. I will get that to you.’ They are awesome.”*

---

<sup>1</sup> Diverging views were shared by two Network participants. One mentioned that expected deliverables were not provided or were provided late, and the other expressed frustration with a perceived role of “carrying out directives”, rather than helping to shape the work.

### *Additional support needed*

Needs for additional support shared by participants coalesced around the following key areas.

*Sustainability coaching.* Network participants expressed the need for prompt and ongoing support related to working toward sustaining and scaling the WMNN work. Specifically, participants requested thought partnership, coaching, resources, and other support around embedding structures and processes and obtaining ongoing funding, stakeholder buy-in, and resources to ensure the continuation of the WMNN work beyond current funding.

As a critical component of planning for sustainability and scale-up, participants emphasized the need for support with mediating conversations about the WMNN work with state agencies, regional entities, and other stakeholders. Participants agreed that potential for sustaining the work is strong because of the value demonstrated to decision-makers thus far, nascent influence on state policy, and the spread of elements of the work to other districts, and emphasized the need for strategically building on this momentum.

*Enhanced cross-state learning.* Network participants appreciated the opportunities for cross-state learning and collaboration afforded by the Network structure—particularly the cross-state convenings—and would like to engage in more deep and relevant discussions around common problems. Participants shared that since each state has different contexts and processes, such an approach would involve less “reporting out” of each state’s work, and instead would involve finding ways to uncover and address shared challenges, perhaps guided by a driver diagram focused on cross-state learning. For example, participants mentioned a need to uncover underlying assumptions in each state about what constitutes high-quality curricular materials and what that means for cross-state collaboration and the work of the Network.

*Stronger depth of content around HQCIM.* Related to the above need to address states’ shared and diverging assumptions and approaches related to HQCIM, some participants expressed a need for more professional guidance from Learning Forward around what constitutes HQCIM. In particular, participants mentioned that further support around JEPL linking improvement science processes to curriculum selection, implementation, and modification would be helpful.

### *Support of collaborative partner*

The work of each state coalition is supported by a university or government-based education advocate from that state recruited by Learning Forward. Collaborative partners work closely with the state department of education coalition members to facilitate the work of their coalition. In addition to providing leadership to keep the work on track and guide school stakeholders in deciding next steps, they also provide “behind the scenes” support—organizing and providing agendas and logistical support for calls and convenings. Further, collaborative partners offer professional expertise to support coalitions in examining current practices and determining how they can be strengthened.

District and school stakeholders shared that the collaborative partners, in partnership with the state department of education members, implement the PDSA templates and collect, analyze, and present the data, including completing the WMNN quarterly reports. Collaborative partners and other stakeholders also noted that the collaborative partners support state coalition work by:

- Acting as the hub of information and resources for carrying out the work
- Managing the work
- Delineating responsibilities
- Providing opportunities for cross-district collaboration and learning
- Providing timely feedback to questions
- Checking in and following up on action items to keep the process moving and to ensure accountability
- Bringing coalition members together and supporting community of practice
- Acting as a strategic thought partner with state department of education stakeholders

#### *Network structure and operation*

In interviews, WMNN participants demonstrated a solid understanding of the goals, structure, and operations of the Network. The structure of the Network was described as:

- Learning Forward propelling the work, ensuring involvement of partners, and asking challenging questions
- State department of education stakeholders providing oversight and input on the focus of the work and who is involved, and ensuring alignment with state efforts
- The collaborative partner organizing, facilitating, and communicating about the work<sup>2</sup>
- District stakeholders, as well as administrators and instructional leaders at the participating schools, overseeing the work at the local level
- Teachers carrying out the PDSA cycles in participating schools

*“They have been amazing. They have provided us some of the anchoring facilitation points, reminders, interjections that have been really helpful.”*

---

<sup>2</sup> At least one of the coalitions also has data support from an outside organization, facilitated by the collaborative partner.

Interview participants further described the Network operation as regular meetings to share successes and challenges, check PDSA cycle progress, and create common goals to move forward. Interview participants stressed the importance of external support from Learning Forward and the collaborative partners to keep the work on track and moving forward. At the same time, participants shared that district and school-based teams drive the PDSA cycles and that teacher voice and decision-making has been key to the work.

*“I learned so much at the dinner—conversations, discourse, challenges we all battle. Sometimes those conversations are as important and it is challenging to dig down during the meeting.”*

### *Collaboration and shared learning*

The majority of WMNN participants whose voices are represented in the evaluation data shared that it has been helpful during convenings to learn from other states, districts, and schools about their similar successes and challenges; gain practical ideas and resources from other coalitions; and collaborate around strategies. Some stakeholders also mentioned participating in cross-state collaboration in the field, while others shared that collaboration did not take place outside of convenings, due to different structures and different problems of practice.

Some stakeholders shared that the cross-state convenings and Hub calls are useful in that they refocus attention on the work, but that cross-state learning is minimal because of different approaches and priorities across entities. A few stakeholders shared that the kickoff meeting and initiation of the Network were somewhat disorganized and overwhelming, but that subsequent cross-state convenings have been helpful.

*“I really like the meetings a lot; they are great. It is really refreshing to hear that we are not the only state with a similar problem. It has been really useful to share materials and ideas.”*

Appendix A contains a summary of feedback from the most recent cross-state convening. The majority of survey respondents found the meeting relevant and useful. Some respondents shared that the meeting was too long and dense.

### Participant voice

All but one of the WMNN stakeholders interviewed agreed that they have voice and input in the Network and that their ideas and feedback are considered. They emphasized that one of the most positive aspects of the Network is that stakeholders from different levels of leadership and practice come together to share on equal footing and all voices are heard. Even when everyone doesn't agree, communication is strong and productive.

*“Teacher voice has been at the forefront of the process. I know my voice matters. Everyone values the input I bring. I look forward to going and engaging with state leaders. Everyone has valued the opinion and perspective of teachers.”*

### Network aim progress

Stakeholder interviews and coalition reports revealed the following ways the Network is progressing toward its aim of teachers in Network schools accessing and engaging in effective JEPL grounded in the use of HQCIM:

- Embedding improvement science practices, including peer-based reflection and iterative testing of protocols and practices, in school processes
- Testing processes in order to provide recommended best practices from the state for districts
- Showing policymakers the deep connections among curriculum, professional learning, and continuous improvement
- Promoting use of data to improve instruction
- Showing states where school systems are regarding HQCIM
- Providing structure to practice in a safe space through PDSA cycles
- Introducing new strategies for JEPL that schools are implementing
- Developing tools to use in collaborative structure in teacher meetings
- Creating coherence around teachers' effective use of different instructional strategies
- Building teacher capacity to assess and implement HQCIM
- Progress in providing students with HQCIM
- Providing a coherent process for analyzing instructional data that is framed district-wide, rather than previous ad hoc efforts

While stakeholders generally felt it was too soon for the work of the Network to impact state policy changes, they mentioned the following areas of alignment with and implications for state policy.

### *Maryland*

- The WMNN project is well-aligned with long-term school improvement initiatives in the state.
- WMNN work is giving the state insight into obstacles and areas of strength to replicate and scale up.
- WMNN work has implications for the way professional development is delivered to science coordinators in the state.
- The improvement issues surfaced by WMNN work have informed the root cause analysis project conducted by the University of Maryland and the Maryland Department of Education.

### *Ohio*

- The Ohio improvement process (OIP) is built around collaborative learning teams but is used mostly for compliance. The WMNN work will inform this broader improvement work across the state—providing a better idea of how to embed collaborative structures, conversations, and support teams at district and school levels to more effectively implement OIP while improving content and instructional knowledge.
  - OIP will become more effective by incorporating the improvement science approach of WMNN to develop tools for teachers to use statewide.
  - The WMNN work has given validation and practicality to a process that was only being used for compliance. A recent reboot of OIP incorporated some WMNN work.
- The decision-making framework developed through WMNN work could become part of policy at the state level.
- WMNN work will bolster the state strategic plan for raising literacy achievement.

### Rhode Island

- The WMNN project is elevating the discourse around how policy in different areas, such as curriculum, professional learning, and continuous improvement impact one another.
- HQCIM is a big priority in the state and scaffolding provided through the Network initiative is what is needed for that effort.
- WMNN is well-aligned with the curriculum and instructional priorities of the state.
- RI has policy changes in mind for professional learning standards in the state and they are using WMNN to pilot these changes to iron out any rough spots before implementing the policy.
- PDSA cycles are helping to add structure to other state initiatives that are using Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to critically examine practice.
- The work aligns very well with new professional learning standards and requirements in the state regarding teachers collaborating around instruction and curriculum.

### Participant results

Overall, the interview, focus group, survey, and artifact review data show that participants are seeing results from the WMNN work and are progressing toward their intermediate coalition aims. Participants emphasized that it is too early to show definitive impact on students, but they are seeing shifts in leading indicators. Results reported across state coalitions include increased focus, purpose, and impact in the collaborative process of teacher-based teams; increased educator efficacy in using student data to inform instructional strategies and assess the quality of instructional materials; and the collaborative development and successful use of tools to guide educators in assessing student data and curricular materials and formulating strategies to meet student needs. Specific results reported by each state coalition are listed below.

### Maryland

- Teachers are thinking about their materials differently and redesigning and rethinking the way they conduct their own professional learning communities.
- Teachers are no longer taking the materials they have for granted and are becoming more sophisticated in their analysis of them.
- Teachers' comfort level and knowledge of NGSS and NGSS-aligned HQCIM have increased and they are asking for more opportunities to learn—such as peer observations.
- The pre/post-surveys show there has been improvement in teacher knowledge and perception.



*“We have definitely seen progress in building teacher awareness and confidence in NGSS.”*

- Teachers are facilitating NGSS-aligned lessons and are infusing crosscutting concepts into lessons.
- Teachers are more engaged and invested in the PLC process now that they have a purpose driving their PLCs that were previously unfocused.
- Administrators are more invested in ensuring that educators have the professional development they need to be successful.

### Ohio

- Tools teachers are using through WMNN work have improved their understanding of instructional strategies for literacy.
- Teacher-based teams are examining their data and determining next steps and needs for high-quality curricular materials.
- Teacher team meetings are happening all over the state, but they are unfocused and have not been effective. WMNN work has refocused these meetings so that they have a clear purpose, and teachers are bringing data and talking about strategies.
- Teachers have gotten much better at analyzing assessment data and can identify root causes and appropriate intervention strategies much more quickly.
- Great growth in teachers' collaborative practice has been observed that was not there before the WMNN initiative.
- The tools that have been developed through WMNN work have simplified the process for collaborative conversations.
- Teachers are held more accountable in teacher-based teams.
- Student phonics scores have improved.

*“Anecdotally, this is the first time teacher-based teams have felt effective because they have a tool that says, ‘Here’s your data, here is where you need to go next.’ They are recognizing they have gaps in high-quality materials—they go to look for resources to address student needs and see they don’t exist.”*

### Rhode Island

- Teachers are using student work protocol to make instructional decisions.
- Educators have significantly shifted their mindsets around the importance of looking at student data and the value of the collaborative process.
- Educators and district leaders exhibit ownership of WMNN work.

*“We have data in RI that show direct changes in teacher actions and teacher dispositions from this work.”*

- The rate of next steps/actions taken by teachers as a result of examining student data has increased.
- A new type of JEPL across districts has been adopted in a large-scale and positive way.

#### Participant use of improvement science

Participants agreed that the improvement science processes they are using are valuable for testing change ideas and bringing stakeholders together to discuss results and next steps. WMNN participants shared that the PDSA work is at the nascent level, with small amounts of data being collected, but that there is potential for embedding and scaling the processes across schools. Participants shared the following reflections about the improvement science work.

- Support of Learning Forward is important for help in thinking through measurement issues.
- Coalition members appreciate the concept of improvement science and are willing to engage in PDSA cycles, but the process is driven by the collaborative partner and state department of education. A next step would be to ensure that improvement science processes are embedded in the work of educators.
- Teachers are learning and using the PDSA process; now it needs to be scaled across other teams and schools.
- Collaborative partners and state department of education partners are hands-on with helping formulate change ideas and PDSA cycle processes, which are then executed by local educators.
- The CPRL support helped participants understand each of the steps of the PDSA cycle.

*“While the teachers in our school are using PDSA cycles to make instructional next steps, as a coalition, we are using our PDSA cycle to explore what decisions we, as teacher leaders, can make to facilitate this process and foster mindsets and dispositions among staff.”*

*“We have thought a lot about the core principles of a good improvement science community. We make sure that all voices are at the table in co-equal ways. We are using a deeper, disciplined inquiry process to address issues.”*

#### Participant successes and challenges

WMNN participants shared successes and challenges they have encountered in the work so far. Common successes across state coalitions included stronger, more focused professional learning community and teacher-based team meetings and collaboration; district and state

*“It has been a real success to build this partnership with the group of folks working together—high officials and teachers working on shared problem with co-equal relationships.”*

leadership seeking and listening to teacher voice; and increased teacher knowledge and skill around improvement science, data-informed instruction, and HQCIM.

Common challenges reported across state coalitions included time and logistics to get stakeholders to the table; addressing the priorities of diverse stakeholders; and getting buy-in from all teachers. Specific successes and challenges of each state coalition are presented below.

### *Maryland*

#### Successes

- Bringing together different stakeholders to work in partnership around a shared problem
- Very high level of buy-in by middle school teachers
- Collaborative development of tools that are meeting identified needs
- Collaboration and mutual respect among teachers; teachers placing higher priority on what it means to be a professional learning community
- Teachers having been given a voice; the Department of Education listening and addressing issues
- Increased teacher confidence in NGSS-aligned instruction; teachers acting as resident experts in their school community

#### Challenges

- Human capacity—goals and ambitions exceeding funding
- Time for all the players to commit to the work, including obtaining subs
- Getting buy-in from teachers that haven't attended the state coalition meetings
- Helping teachers understand that the work will improve practice and outcomes for students

### *Ohio*

#### Successes

- Integration of OIP structures with greater content knowledge of literacy instruction
- WMNN work making connections across literacy work and school improvement work; OH literacy lead using WMNN work with Striving Leaders districts
- WMNN work informing grants being written at the DOE
- Applicability of WMNN learnings to other areas, such as math and PBIS

#### Challenges

- Time, scheduling, and prioritizing, considering all that coalition members have on their plates
- Obtaining data from all participating teachers; changing the mindsets of teachers
- Developing a systematic approach that meets the diverse needs of urban, suburban, and rural schools
- Competing agendas of participants
- Collaborative partner not having a background in literacy/science of learning
- Ensuring that the model has a tight enough framework and flexibility for scale-up; knowing the best way to share the model with other districts
- Data-collection approach not always purposeful and practical for teachers

*"We have made amazing progress toward our goals, and even if the work stopped tomorrow, we would have a lot to show."*

*"OIP has been in place for underperforming schools for 15–20 years but has just been compliance for districts. Those districts that have used it as part of WMNN have said for the first time they see the connection between OIP and actual collaboration among teachers and improvement in student growth."*

### *Rhode Island*

#### Successes

- Functional collaboration among stakeholders that carry different weights of power, showing that this type of collaboration with different power dynamics can be very productive
- Coalition members feeling able to step up when their expertise is called upon and step back when they are relying upon others
- Increasingly stronger coalition meetings that are more focused and productive, with more open dialogue around professional learning
- Data-gathering and analysis skills and knowledge gained by coalition members
- Alignment of PDSA cycles with the assessment schedule to facilitate review of assessment data; teachers increasingly looking at student data

*"Instead of just meeting for updates, we have a goal in mind. Teachers aren't waiting for administrators but are keeping each other accountable."*

#### Challenges

- Follow-through and depth of engagement when everyone has so much on their plates
- Addressing the varying goals and priorities of coalition members

- Districts working on very different things and in very different places in terms of curriculum and instructional materials
- Confusion during the first few months of the initiative, with different organizations giving different messages and lack of clarity around focus

### Participant suggestions

WMNN participants shared the following suggestions for improving the Network operation and effectiveness:

- Develop a driver diagram around effective cross-state learning and collaboration.
- Allow flexibility around modifying PDSA timelines.
- Expand work to more schools and examine outcomes in different types of schools with different demographics.
- Use data more frequently in meetings; pull out more data to respond to; show comparisons among PDSA cycle outcomes; ensure that teachers see the data.
- Give more teachers the opportunity to attend the state coalition meetings in order to increase buy-in and excitement.
- Provide support to coalitions for thinking through sustainability and scale-up.
- Provide support to coalitions around thinking through how districts can become the leaders of the work.
- Ensure that the work is embedded in other efforts so that it is connected, continuous, and relevant, and is not such a big lift for local stakeholders.
- Ensure that the data collection is in service to school stakeholders rather than the priorities of Learning Forward, and that the data collection is directly relevant and useful to schools.
- Provide support around determining the most-needed data for each PDSA cycle, and how those data can be obtained in the least burdensome ways.
- Start to use measures that will look at whether the work is impacting student achievement.
- Provide guidance around issues of absence of variability, scale-up/sample size, measurement, and ongoing guidance around improvement science processes to ensure they are being followed correctly.

*“Teachers feel very supported. I can’t underscore that enough. Not just by the district, but by a professional organization that wants to get it right, and through the state (because sometimes people can have a negative view of a state agency), but this is about support, not accountability.”*

- Allow time in cross-state convenings to explore issues in more depth, rather than having such packed agendas.
- Create a shared warehouse of resources, such as research and articles, curriculum resources shared by Carnegie, Learning Forward resources, and the work of the state coalitions.
- Ensure that guidance from the collaborative partners and departments of education is less theoretical and more practical and relevant to local needs.
- Develop a common reflection tool to synthesize efforts across the states.

### Reflections and considerations

Overall, feedback on WMNN collected across states and stakeholders was highly positive. The WMNN participants whose voices are represented in the evaluation data are highly engaged in the work and see its value for their schools, districts, and states. Participants feel they are progressing well toward their state aims and see alignment of the WMNN work with existing state goals and initiatives, as well as potential implications for informing state policy. Stakeholders are very appreciative of the leadership and support of Learning Forward, the collaborative partners, and the state department of education participants.

Emerging evaluation findings indicate that participation in the WMN Network has led to more focused and purposeful use of collaborative professional learning time by educators, as well as increased efficacy in assessing student data and instructional strategies and materials. Network educators are using tools developed through WMNN work to structure professional learning and to inform instructional decisions. For example, the Student Work Protocol developed in Rhode Island is being used to examine the effectiveness of instructional strategies used with different subgroups. In Maryland, educators are using WMNN tools to assess the alignment of science curriculum with NGSS. Teacher-based teams in Ohio are using protocols developed through WMNN to identify, implement, and assess promising literacy strategies, curricula, and instructional materials, informed by student data. Further, evaluation findings indicate that WMNN work is promoting teacher voice and has implications for practitioner-driven policy.

Moving forward, WMNN leadership may wish to consider collecting feedback from additional teachers who are involved in the on-the-ground work of the PLCs and PDSA cycles to ensure that the voices of all stakeholders are heard and responded to. Drawing from the feedback and suggestions for improvement provided by stakeholders, WMNN leadership may wish to explore ways to enhance cross-state learning and collaboration. In addition, WMNN leadership might examine the balance between providing theoretical vs. practical, actionable information that is directly relevant to local needs, as well as take steps to ensure that data collection, management, and presentation is directly relevant to coalition members, including teachers. Finally, WMNN leadership should prioritize providing further guidance to coalition members around how best to scale up and sustain the work that has begun, including recommendations for increasing local ownership,

embedding and routinizing inquiry cycles, and messaging the work to other districts/schools and policymakers.

## APPENDIX A

### February 2019 Cross-State Convening Exit Ticket Results

#### Introduction

This report details results from the “exit ticket” questionnaire completed by WMNN participants at the February 2019 Cross-State Convening. Participants responded to questions about their satisfaction with various aspects of the meeting, as well as to questions regarding their perceptions of results from WMNN work, efficacy around improvement science, and the support of Learning Forward and collaborative partners.

#### Practical ideas gained in meeting

Participants were asked whether they were leaving the meeting with ideas that they would implement. Almost all participants responded that they strongly agreed or agreed (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Level of Respondent Agreement That They Gained Ideas to Implement

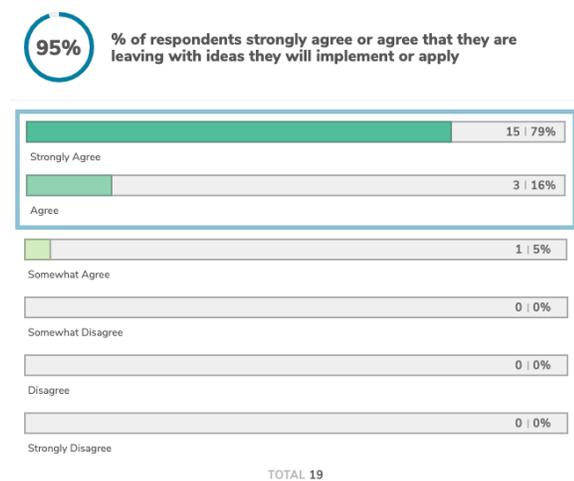


Figure 1.1 Maryland

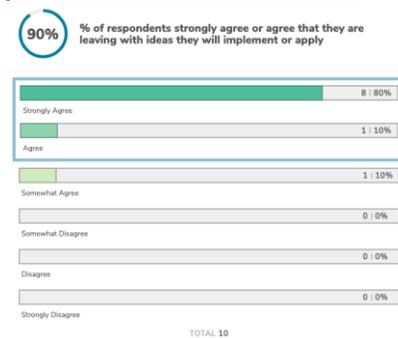


Figure 1.2 Ohio

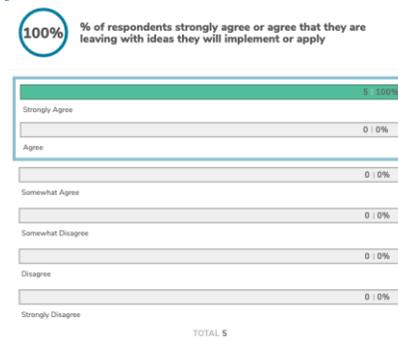
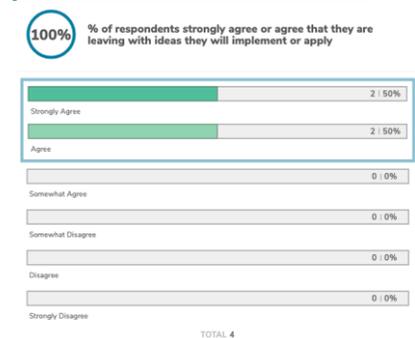


Figure 1.3 Rhode Island



## Utility of meeting for better engagement with curriculum

Participants were asked whether the meeting would help them better engage with and implement their curriculum. A majority of participants (84 percent) indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed (Figure 2). Figure 2.3 Rhode Island indicates that half of the four participants from Rhode Island agreed or strongly agreed. One participant from Rhode Island somewhat agreed and another disagreed.

Figure 2: Level of Respondent Agreement That the Coalition Meeting Will Help Them Better Engage With Curriculum

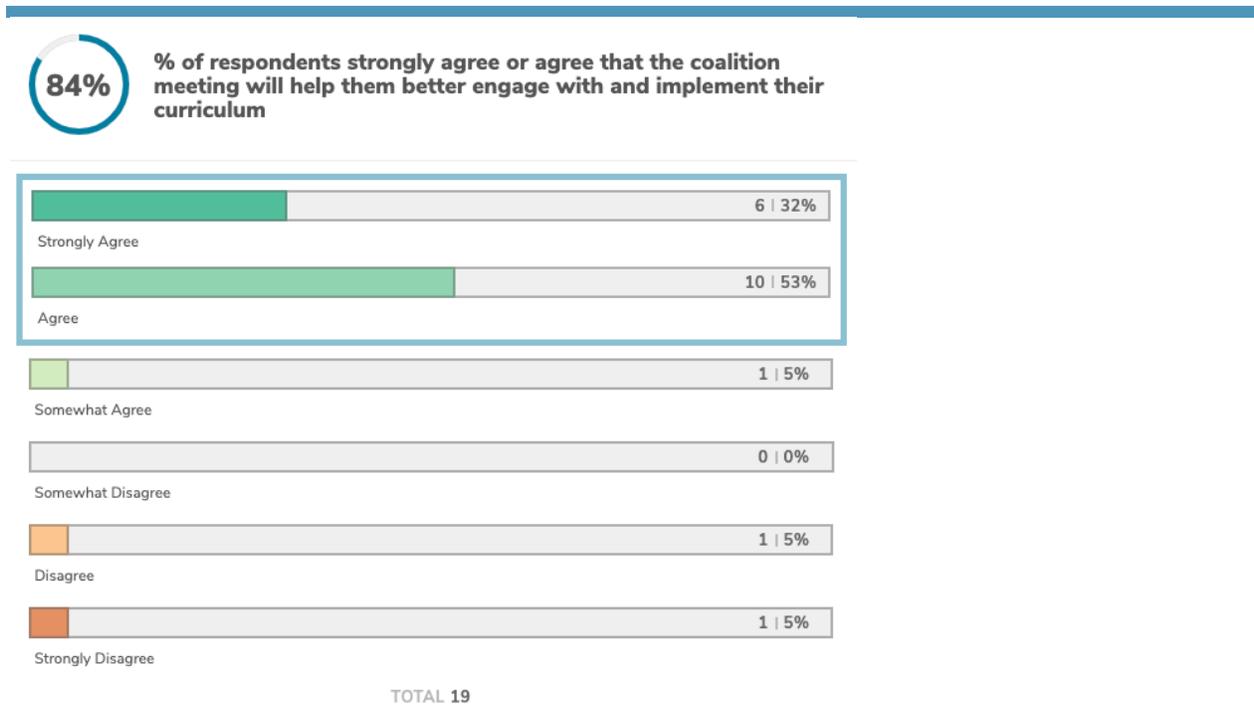


Figure 2.1 Maryland

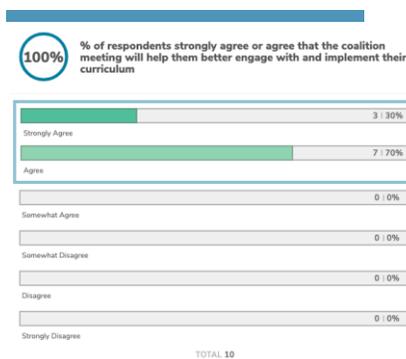


Figure 2.2 Ohio

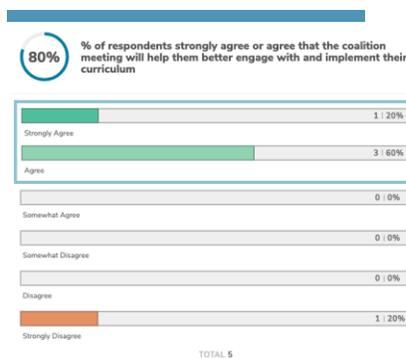
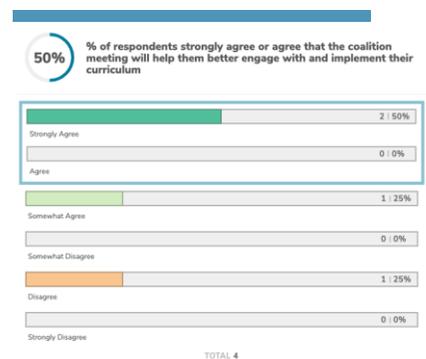


Figure 2.3 Rhode Island



### Relevance of meeting

Participants were asked to rate the relevance of the meeting (1 = not at all; 5 = extremely relevant). Overall, participants reported that they found the meeting very relevant to their day-to-day-practice, their curriculum, providing input to leadership, and to their content. In total, nine participants responded. Table 1 shows the average values of all responses by state to each of the prompts.

Table 1. Cross-State Meeting Relevance

	DATA COUNT	All	Rhode Island	Maryland	Ohio
<b>Cross-State Meeting Relevance</b>	9	4.5	4.3	4.6	5.0
How relevant was the meeting to your day-to-day practice?		4.3	3.8	4.8	5.0
How relevant was the meeting to the curriculum you most frequently use?		4.4	4.5	4.3	5.0
How relevant was the meeting to your ability to provide input to state and district leaders?		4.6	4.5	4.5	5.0
How relevant was the meeting to the content that you work with?		4.7	4.5	4.8	5.0

### Impact on likelihood of better engaging with curriculum, seeking or implementing JEPL, and sharing with colleagues

Table 2 shows that participants generally agreed that the meeting would help them engage with their curriculum (5.10) and seek out or implement job-embedded professional learning (5.2), and that they were excited to share what they learned in the convening with their colleagues who aren't members of the coalition (5.7).

Table 2. Cross-State Meeting Reflection

	DATA COUNT	All	Rhode Island	Maryland	Ohio
<b>Cross-State Meeting Reflection</b>	9	5.3	5.1	5.4	6.0
The coalition meeting will help me better engage with and implement my curriculum.		5.1	4.5	5.5	6.0
The coalition meeting will help me better seek out or implement job-embedded professional learning.		5.2	5.3	5.0	6.0
I am excited to share what we worked on today with my colleagues who are not members of the coalition.		5.7	5.5	5.8	6.0

## Meeting satisfaction

Participants were asked to rate their agreement on their satisfaction with various aspects of the meeting (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree). Table 3 shows that participants agreed that they had ample opportunities for reflection and dialogue with their peers (5.6), that they experienced a sense of community at the conference (5.7), and that they are leaving with ideas that they will apply (5.8). In all, ratings for agreement were above 5 (agree).

Table 3. Cross-State Meeting Satisfaction

	DATA COUNT	All	Rhode Island	Maryland	Ohio
<b>Cross-State Meeting Satisfaction</b> ⓘ		5.7	5.3	5.9	6.0
I had ample opportunities for reflection and dialogue with my peers.		5.6	5.3	5.8	6.0
I experienced a sense of community at the conference.		5.7	5.3	6.0	6.0
I am leaving with ideas I will implement or apply.		5.8	5.5	6.0	6.0

### Most effective aspects of the meeting

Participants were asked what they found most effective about the meeting. Open-ended responses are displayed in Table 4. A predominant theme in the responses was the opportunity to interact and collaborate with peers and other state teams. Regarding the content of the meeting, a few respondents indicated that they found the data discussion most effective.

Table 4. Most Effective Aspects of the Meeting, Open-Ended Responses

<b>What did you find most effective about this meeting?</b>	<i>The collaboration with other state teams.</i>
<i>I thought Nick Morgan's presentation on data was very well done and helpful in providing more context for the work. Having team time on day one was also very helpful.</i>	<i>The combination of concentrated team time AND really content-rich WG sessions. Nicely curated from start to end!</i>
<i>I really enjoyed the data analysis discussion and the work through the research articles. It was a refreshing twist &amp; addition to the State based coalition work we are doing. The work within those sessions gave me ideas to take back to my district and ideas for ways to enhance our collaborative work &amp; learning.</i>	<i>This was my first coalition meeting. I thought it was a great balance of getting to work together with my own coalition and meet/discuss with other coalition members. I appreciated receiving the text resources. I also enjoyed when we split into groups by teacher, district level, state level, etc to talk about the big and little "Ps". Connecting with other states to see where they are and that we all have struggles and strengths was powerful.</i>
<i>The collaboration and reflecting data on how to move forward in the next phase.</i>	<i>Time to talk and collaborate with colleagues</i>
<i>Cross-state exchanges</i>	<i>The chance to connect across states was helpful. The framing and digging deeper into the measurements was particularly helpful for the work we're doing in state.</i>
<i>The transition from theory to practice. Love it.</i>	<i>It was helpful to have time to talk with my coalition members about where this might land for 2020.</i>
<i>Great, scaffolded information</i>	<i>Planning and increasing our buildings focus</i>
<i>I found that the idea of having teachers learn and share in professional learning communities is one of the most powerful tools to transform a culture and academic achievement in a building.</i>	<i>The opportunity to dialogue as a local coalition both "before" and "after" the Cross State activities. Through these activities, I believe that stakeholders in Maryland gained better perspective which impacted the development of our next PLC format/ activities.</i>
<i>Really liked the problem based discussion groups. Wish we would have done two rounds of it. The state work was very productive as well.</i>	<i>I am walking away knowing the value of embedded professional development.</i>

### Least effective aspects of the meeting

Participants were asked what they found least effective about the meeting. Open-ended responses are displayed in Table 5. Many respondents indicated that the days were “long”—too much content packed into long hours. They indicated that reducing the amount of content, including more time for interaction and movement, or lengthening the meeting while including breaks would have been helpful. Regarding the content of the meeting, two respondents indicated that it was a challenge to plan PDSA cycles so far in advance or that stronger guidance for planning would have been more effective.

Table 5. Least Effective Aspects of the Meeting, Open-Ended Responses

<p><b>What did you find least effective about this meeting?</b></p>	<p><i>The time for day one was not effective. Learning Forward represents the standard for professional learning experiences. A ten-hour day is not an effective professional learning practice for adult learners.</i></p>
<p><i>Honestly maybe would have like more time, not much like 5 more minutes, for each coalition to share out. Maybe because this was my first cross state coalition, felt like I was playing catch up with knowing what the other states have been doing.</i></p>	<p><i>The first day was too long and by the time we got to the final session on Aims and Measures, it was hard to stay engaged (and NOT because of the quality of Nick's facilitation)</i></p>
<p><i>It would have been helpful to have more time on day 2 to solidify plans as an Ohio coalition, rather than the additional cross-state activities focused on stakeholder engagement.</i></p>	<p><i>Alot of time was spent sitting and listening. More opportunities to move and interact would have made the time more manageable. This includes more/longer breaks. For a classroom teacher, the normal schedule is 7hrs. The 10hrs of meetings on day 1 were a little too much to fully engage with and internalize the content.</i></p>
<p><i>It was very difficult to try and map out our trajectory plan to June 2020. I can appreciate working toward a goal with the end in mind but there was some challenge planning out our next 5-6 PDA cycles based upon where we are today &amp; how much things have been tweaked over our conversations the past two days..</i></p>	<p><i>PDSA plans wander substantially from primer descriptions (which are clear and helpful)</i></p>
<p><i>It's always tricky: We packed a LOT into the couple days. Everyone seemed fried at the end. I wonder if a longer meeting with more breaks (or a less ambitious agenda) would have let us more deeply process and internalize the work we were doing together?</i></p>	<p><i>The role-alike conversation was not as helpful as I hoped it would be. Not much actionable conversation.</i></p>
<p><i>The start and end times of day one were too long. Should have ended no later than 5pm</i></p>	<p><i>The data session was informative, but too lengthy.</i>  <i>I know we need job embedded professional development. How do we get it?</i></p>

### Coalition impact, improvement science efficacy, support of Learning Forward and collaborative partner

Participants were asked to rate their agreement on various aspects of the WMNN initiative (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree). Results are displayed in Table 6. Participants agreed that they had seen teacher/school changes as a result of the work in their state coalition so far (4.8), that they understood how to use improvement science methods (5.1), and that Learning Forward and their state coalition’s collaborative partner provide the necessary support to their state coalition.

Table 6. Coalition Impact, Improvement Science Efficacy, and Coalition Support

	All	Rhode Island	Ohio	Maryland
DATA COUNT	9	4	1	4
<b>Cross-State Meeting - Coalition Support and Impact</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.5</b>
I have seen teacher/school changes as a result of the work of my state coalition so far.	4.8	4.5	4.0	5.3
I understand how to use improvement science methods (driver diagrams, PDSA cycles, etc).	5.1	5.0	5.0	5.3
Learning Forward provides the necessary support to my state coalition.	5.6	5.3	6.0	5.8
My state coalition's collaborative partner provides the support needed to move forward the coalition work.	5.6	5.3	6.0	5.8

### Changes in state as a result of the coalition work

Participants were asked what changes they have seen as a result of the work with their state coalition so far. Open-ended responses are displayed in Table 7. Some respondents indicated that it was still too early to see measurable results. Others indicated that they have seen changes in collaboration and instruction. In particular, one respondent noted changes in the use of data and student work to drive instructional decisions and collaborative conversations.

Table 7. Changes in State as a Result of the Coalition Work, Open-ended Responses

<b>I have seen teachers/school changes as a result of the work of my state coalition so far.</b>
<i>Our data gathering process is still a bit rudimentary but it has been effective in seeing growth with our teachers.</i>
<i>The work has translated into school building collaboration &amp; instruction. Teachers have more interest in initiative activities &amp; the overall objective/ aim being addressed.</i>
<i>I have seen my teachers become leaders in the department and begin to take an active stance on working together in a Professional Learning Community.</i>
<i>Beginning to</i>
<i>Our student work protocol process is gaining momentum.</i>
<i>Haven't yet seen the impact we had hoped, but changes we have made should help.</i>
<i>We have seen a shift in the frequency of teachers using student work to make instructional decisions.</i>
<i>We have data in RI that show direct changes in teacher actions and teacher dispositions from this work.</i>
<i>Participant changes: of course. As to the rest, we are collecting data. The TBT context is unique across the coalition.</i>
<i>So far in my school, I feel the resistance of my colleagues and participated the reflections just for the sake of completion but now that our administrator is aware of the goals of this program, I am positive that my colleagues will change their perspective about it and with the school's support from top to bottom , collaboration will increase for a common goal.</i>
<i>I've been looking with a more critical work during my roles as an instructional leader. I've also been fostering collaborative relationships to build on work in my building with other buildings &amp; leaders. I've also moved to shorter term goal setting and personal analysis &amp; evaluation of the results/impact of our processes in lieu of only the data that comes out of it (supplying intervention services across my building).</i>
<i>The conversation on the part of our school partners suggests that their involvement in the WMN work is influencing their thinking and work. At a minimum, they're identifying gaps in the TBT meeting process as a result. It's hard to say whether teacher/school changes are a result of school involvement in the literacy pilot or in WMN specifically.</i>
<i>Teacher attitudes and commitment to the work is shown through their discussions.</i>
<i>My teacher's conversations are more centered around data and instructional strategies and they are staying more focused due to an accountability tool we created as part of our PDSA cycle measurement. They are seeking more high quality</i>
<i>Given our early predictions, that teacher knowledge of NGSS-aligned lessons would increase, we saw evidence through their input that coming together through their collaborative planning time to analyze their lessons is improving their grounding in NGSS. Providing our teachers with a NGSS Lesson Checklist and exemplar lesson were springboards for more accelerated teacher learning.</i>

### Improvement science efficacy

Participants were asked to provide details about their efficacy with improvement science methods. Open-ended responses are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8. Improvement Science Efficacy, Open-ended Responses

<b>I understand how to use improvement science methods (driver diagrams, PDSA cycles, etc.)</b>
<i>I definitely have a better understanding of the significance of each component and see its usefulness.</i>
<i>The methods clarified the PDSA cycles and driver diagrams to help me have a clearer picture of implementing NGSS aligned lessons and units.</i>
<i>In progress</i>
<i>Strongly agree</i>
<i>Once we put this into practice, it became clear.</i>
<i>I feel like I'm generally functional but also not an expert in any or all of these. I feel like I have the theory down but how it manifests in different situations, in practice, is still where I'd like more learning.</i>
<i>The fundamentals are clearing. The nuances are more art than science. Still learning.</i>
<i>It's a clear path for me of the process that guides me to achieve my aim or goals in 3 years.</i>
<i>I'm not as confident as I would like to be but I've been able to grasp the main concepts and continue to learn more every time we continue another PDSA cycle. I'm beginning to implement the initial phases into my school based leadership work.</i>
<i>We have more clarity in the use of the methods and tools this year.</i>
<i>i do.</i>
<i>The driver diagrams are helpful for keeping us with the big picture/end result in mind. I really enjoyed seeing the three states diagrams. The PDSA cycles helps narrow our focus so we can look at our actions to see if they are directly affecting the results we want. PDSA are quick and if we aren't getting the results we need we can tweak actions before the next cycle.</i>
<i>Segun and I are involved in other Improvement Science initiatives, including our own doctoral and graduate programs, which are contributing to our growing knowledge base in the tools of improvement science. The What Matters Now network has been the first PDSA cycles we have helped to lead in Maryland, from which we are learning much!</i>

### Support of collaborative partner

Participants were asked to provide details about the support of their state coalition’s collaborative partner. Results are displayed in Table 9. Respondents responded enthusiastically about their collaborative partners. They indicated many factors that were positive, including their contributions to moving the projects forward by providing momentum, logistics such as scheduling meetings and finding accommodations, and enabling the respondents to engage in the work.

Table 9. Support of Collaborative Partner, Open-ended Responses

<b>My state coalition’s collaborative partner provides the support needed to move forward the coalition work.</b>
<i>University of Maryland partners are phenomenal. Their choice to facilitate discussion, add valued input/perspective and engage all stakeholders in meaningful activities is awesome.</i>
<i>The support was provided for us to meet, engage and have several supports in linking school-based, district, university and state personnel.</i>
<i>Allows us to work provides data reflection</i>
<i>Provides a platform and process</i>
<i>We work as a team sharing ideas, collecting data, and planning next steps.</i>
<i>Maintains the momentum</i>
<i>Good. But also could do more to connect efforts across districts and streamline efforts for educators on the ground.</i>
<i>State partner is clear and well organized.</i>
<i>The coalition goal will just be a “big picture” and cannot be a reality without the support of the state coalition. The state collaborative partners were so engaged and so supportive by providing us teachers some specific professional trainings that we need in implementing the NGSS curriculum to attain our goals.</i>
<i>There is a great amount of structure, organization, coordination, and support through the process of getting our work done:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>1. Scheduling meetings</i></li> <li><i>2. Site Selection &amp; accommodations</i></li> <li><i>3. Provision of resources, materials, and time</i></li> </ol>
<i>The school systems (teachers, admin, etc) are doing amazing work!</i>
<i>Our collaborative partner stays engaged in our conversations and seeks to understand what we want to accomplish and helps us bring that into realistic pieces as work through the PDSA cycles.</i>
<i>Our MSDE colleagues are enthusiastic and committed, and have jumped in to assist with data synthesis and tool development. Our two district partners are similarly committed.</i>

### Support of Learning Forward

Finally, participants were asked to provide details on the support of Learning Forward. Results are displayed in Table 10. Respondents were almost entirely positive about their enthusiasm for working with Learning Forward and the supports Learning Forward provides. In particular, respondents indicated that Learning Forward’s perspective was a valuable contribution to discussions. Among other supports, respondents valued the research, professional development, and opportunity to convene with structures, protocols, and processes in place.

Table 10. Support of Learning Forward, Open-Ended Responses

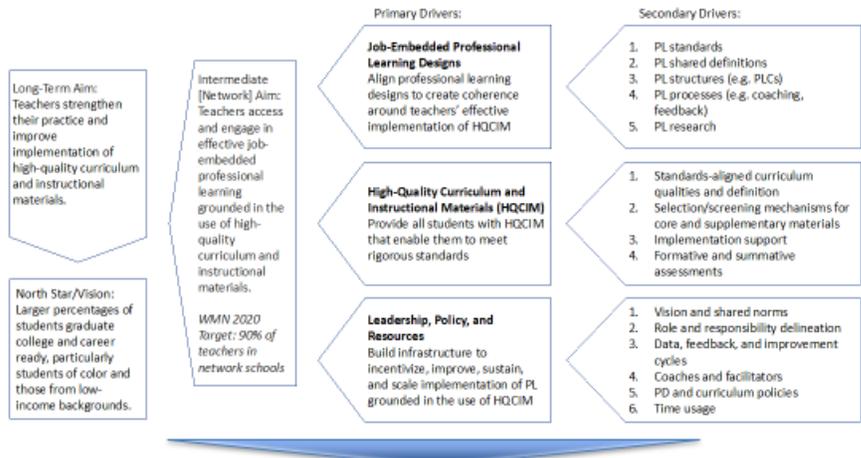
<b>Learning Forward provides the necessary support to my state coalition</b>
<i>You guys are great!!</i>
<i>Melinda's perspective is a valuable component of our discussion. The resources provided and format of the agenda(s) are directly related to our Initiative's AIM and reflective work.</i>
<i>Provided professional articles that aligned to our learning goals and provided specific strategies for implementation.</i>
<i>Research</i>
<i>Pd</i>
<i>Opportunity</i>
<i>I'm excited to talk more about the intersection of Learning Forward's professional learning model and the type of professional learning that I associate with high-quality curriculum implementation.</i>
<i>structures, protocols, processes, research</i>
<i>Good. As we move into the second phase of the work in RI, I imagine the supports we'll need from Learning Forward will change. But so far, we haven't felt like we've needed deep supports (unless we haven't been asking the right questions?).</i>
<i>late insertion of curriculum materials is a problem across the coalition--a reliable non-negotiable precedes participant agreement</i>
<i>The Learning Forward provides support my state coalition by offering professional development, some instructional support for teachers, and created reflection and measuring tools to asses us in achieving our goals.</i>
<i>1) In-person, virtual, and email support on our work through our current &amp; past PDSA cycles. From clarification to challenging our work I feel supported throughout our work.</i>
<i>LF does provide support but it would be nice to have more lead time with our liaison prior to meetings to ensure that we're on the same page.</i>
<i>LF provides expertise and resources</i>

# APPENDIX B

## WMNN Driver Diagrams

### What Matters Now Network Driver Diagram

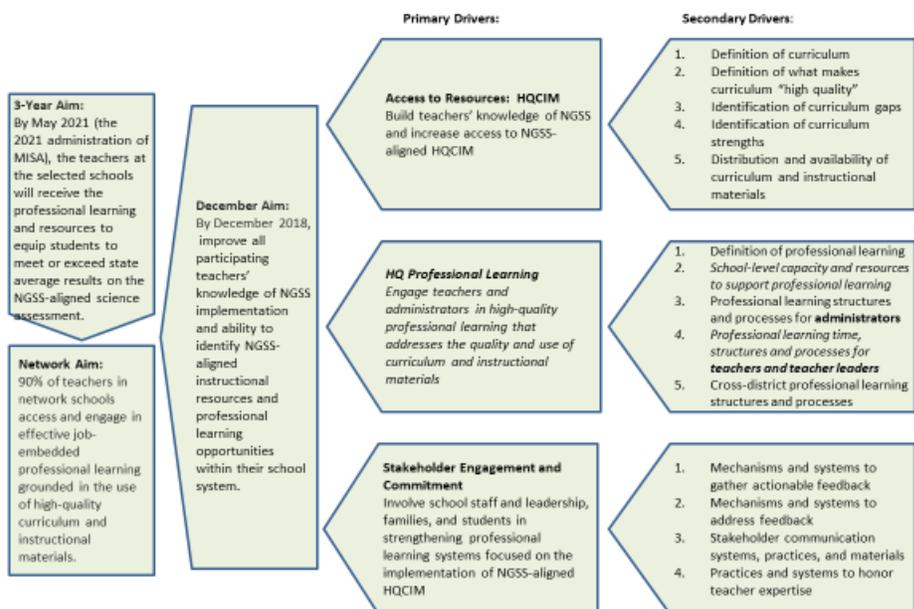
How do we put in place job-embedded professional learning (PL) grounded in the use of high-quality curriculum and instructional materials (HQCIM) to lead to improved and equitable student outcomes?



The driver diagram organizes the overall logic of the network's goals and drivers to test changes that drive scalable results.

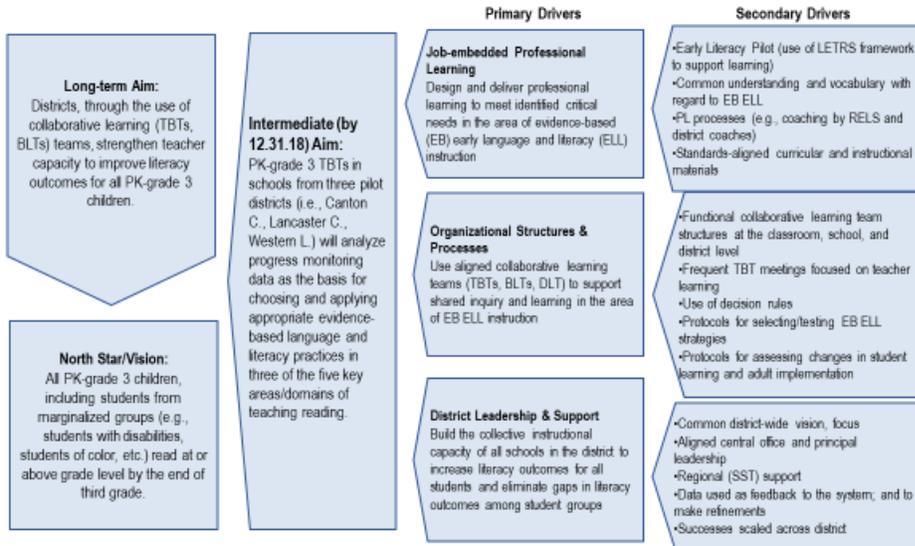
2

### State Driver Diagram: Maryland

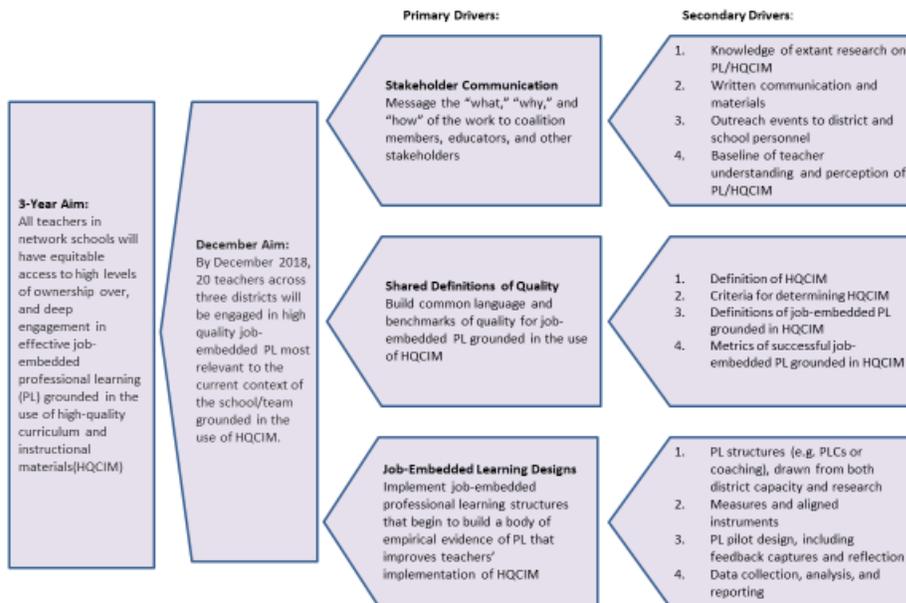


# State Driver Diagram: Ohio

Educators have varied understanding and limited implementation of evidence-based language and literacy practices for PK-grade 3, based on use of their own data.



# State Driver Diagram: Rhode Island



**Learning Forward Driver Diagram:** How will Learning Forward support the WMN Network in strengthening and scaling the implementation of job-embedded PL grounded in the use of HQCIM?

