

# 2022

## Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Leadership



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# Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Leadership

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act articulates a collaborative and coordinated approach to leadership and systems building and for implementing the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). Exercising adaptive leadership—mobilizing others to solve complex problems jointly—is key to optimizing the federal funding on behalf of communities, children, and their families. CCDBG emphasizes the need for action with partners because child care is part of a larger ecosystem of early childhood funding, programs, services, and supports. Operating in this larger, complex network requires sharing leadership at multiple levels as part of the process of designing and delivering aligned action toward common goals for the early childhood system. Critical provisions of the law cannot be achieved by one agency or program alone. Full implementation of CCDF is realized through the activity of adaptive leadership which requires individual leaders to change their own behavior and how they relate to others so that they can influence both individuals and groups to help tackle the most pressing and daunting problems. This chapter provides a framework of adaptive leadership principles and competencies that aim to help state leaders build capacity to think more clearly and execute better in a constantly shifting environment so that they can energize others to make progress on both opportunities and challenges. Additionally, this chapter presents two brain-based models (SCARF and SEEDS) from the field of applied neuroscience that work to improve both our individual and shared leadership practices as well as our approaches for leading change.

*Heifetz is the founding director of the Center of Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, where he has taught for four decades. Linsky is also a professor at Harvard University. Both are known for their seminal work on how to build adaptive capacity in societies, government, businesses, and nonprofits. The Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) has enhanced Heifetz and Linsky's practice of adaptive leadership by simplifying it and making it more accessible and actionable. Ed O'Malley, President and CEO of KLC, has given us permission to use his leadership framework—key ideas, principles, competencies, and dimensions—to help states and territories mobilize others into purposeful action.*

## The Adaptive Leader

The adaptive leadership framework within this chapter—key ideas, principles, competencies, and dimensions—has been used with permission from the author of the book, *Your Leadership Edge*, Ed O'Malley.<sup>1</sup>

The current perception of leadership is much different from that in past years. The idea of one heroic individual single-handedly generating results by enforcing their will is considered outdated. Leadership is now considered a team sport. To this end, we are focusing this chapter on adaptive leadership, which is about mobilizing *with* others to tackle tough problems where there are no easy solutions. Exercising leadership is not always about seeing the next step but being willing to put your foot out with others and step together into new frontiers. The adaptive leadership concepts presented in this guide are

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“It may be that when we no longer know what to do we have come to our real work, and that when we no longer know which way to go we have come to our real journey. The mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings.”<sup>2</sup>

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—*The Real Work* by Wendell Berry

<sup>1</sup> O'Malley, E., & Cebula, A. (2015). *Your leadership edge: Lead anytime, anywhere*. Kansas Leadership Center Press.

<sup>2</sup> O'Malley, E., & Cebula, A. (2015). *Your leadership edge: Lead anytime, anywhere*. Kansas Leadership Center Press.

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originally based on the work of Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky—two of the foremost authorities on the practice and teaching of leadership. The Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) has enhanced Heifetz’s and Linsky’s practice of adaptive leadership by simplifying it and making it more accessible and actionable. The KLC framework is outlined below, including key leadership ideas, principles, competencies, and dimensions. Within this framework, KLC has woven other theories, such as transformational and servant leadership, further enriching the material.

## Adaptive Leadership

### Key Ideas

- Leadership and authority are different things.
- Leadership revolves around opportunities and challenges.
- Leadership and adaptive challenges go hand in hand.

### Principles

- Leadership is an activity, not a position.
- Anyone can do it, anytime and anywhere.
- It starts with you and must engage others.

## Adaptive Leadership Competencies

The book *Your Leadership Edge* frames the adaptive leadership concepts into four competencies: Diagnose Situation, Manage Self, Energize Others, and Intervene Skillfully. To bring these competencies alive and make them more actionable, the book enhances and enriches them with six dimensions each. The following competency framework has its lineage in the adaptive leadership concepts and turns the definition of leadership into purposeful action.

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Leadership Competencies <sup>3</sup> <i>From the book—Your Leadership Edge: Lead Anytime, Anywhere</i>	Dimensions	
1. Diagnose Situation	a) Distinguish Technical and Adaptive Work b) Understand Process Challenges c) Explore Tough Interpretations	d) Take the Temperature e) Identify Who Needs to Do the Work f) Test Multiple Interpretations and Points of View
2. Manage Self	a) Know Your Strengths, Vulnerabilities, and Triggers b) Get Used to Uncertainty and Conflict c) Choose Among Competing Values	d) Know the Story Others Tell About You e) Experiment Beyond Your Comfort Zone f) Take Care of Yourself
3. Energize Others	a) Engage Unusual Voices b) Start Where They Are c) Work Across Factions	d) Create a Trustworthy Process e) Speak to Loss f) Inspire a Collective Purpose
4. Intervene Skillfully	a) Make Conscious Choices b) Raise the Heat c) Speak from the Heart	d) Give the Work Back e) Act Experimentally f) Hold Purpose

To help you apply the concepts embedded in the competencies and dimensions, bring to mind a leadership challenge you are currently experiencing, one that requires you to work with others to make progress and that you care enough about that you are willing to change your behavior. Using a real-world scenario will help you take up the leadership concepts, bringing new behaviors to life and moving from learning to action.

## Competency 1: Diagnose Situation

If you are trying to make progress on a tough issue, understanding what you are getting into is critical. The biggest leadership mistake people make is misdiagnosing the situation. In the field of medicine, a huge amount of professional skill, talent, and energy are given to identifying the problem before treating it. But when it comes to organizational and political life, people often jump to action without taking the time to step back to clarify the nature of the problem from many different angles. Resist jumping into action by becoming a diagnostician. The following six dimensions of diagnostic skills will help you do just that.

### a. Distinguish Technical and Adaptive Work

Adaptive work tends to be a problem, issue, or opportunity that requires more learning and understanding about the situation. This is when your expertise is not enough, when a checklist or another technical tool won't make the problem go away. Addressing an adaptive challenge requires motivating people to change by engaging and challenging both their hearts and their minds. Technical problems are easy to recognize because you've seen them before. You either know the steps to solve them, or you can depend on someone else to make it happen. Neither type of challenge is better nor more important than the other. We all need to learn to address both technical and adaptive problems.

<sup>3</sup> O'Malley, E., & Cebula, A. (2015). *Your leadership edge: Lead anytime, anywhere*. Kansas Leadership Center Press.

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## Questions to Ask Yourself to Distinguish between Technical and Adaptive Work

- When considering your challenge, what concerns you the most? What makes progress difficult on this concern?
- What beliefs and values are at stake? What belief or value does the group hold dear?
- What behaviors created the problem? What attitudes are typical of the group?
- What values, behaviors, or attitudes might conflict with the work that needs to be done?
- Which aspects of the situation could you pay attention to that you may have overlooked?

## b. Understand Process Challenges

Adaptive challenges are often more about process than content. The details of an issue are relevant, but it is people who make the difference. People can make a situation better and they can also derail it. Process challenges are about how people work or don't work together. Leadership means thinking more about how you are going to engage others authentically than about marshaling the facts and making the best argument.

## Questions to Ask Yourself to Understand Process Challenges

- What makes leadership difficult on this issue?
- What processes have you tried?
- What's worked? What has not? What alternative processes exist? What new process might you experiment with?
- How are people avoiding the problem?
- If you had all the time in the world, how would you ease people into working better together?

## c. Explore Tough Interpretations

Exploring tough or uncomfortable interpretations means pushing beyond people's opinions and conclusions, especially the ones that come automatically, almost unconsciously. You may need to get more skeptical or keep an open mind. You may need to thoughtfully question the perspective of the person in authority. You may need to look at the situation from someone else's point of view. You may need to reexamine values and priorities. The key thing to remember about an interpretation, yours or someone else's, is that it is only a guess. Even your best guess might not be right. So, when you or your group is trying to frame an issue, it is important to name and hold on to multiple interpretations rather than gravitate toward the first one you hit that people like.

## Questions to Ask Yourself to Explore Tough Interpretations

- Thinking about the adaptive elements (values and behaviors) of the situation, what's going wrong?
- What needs to change?
- Who are the stakeholders? Who else? Anyone else?
- What work is being avoided? In what way?
- What scares you?
- What if nothing changes?
- What does this situation look like from the point of view of someone else in the group?
- What aspirations do others have?
- If you continue business as usual, can you make any progress?



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## d. Take the Temperature

Taking the temperature in a situation is about better understanding where the heat is high (conflict, pain, a lot of disequilibrium) or low (where people are bored or checked out). All of these signal the need for leadership.

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Take the Temperature

- What's the temperature in the situation? Is it high? Too low?
- How do you know?
- Where is there conflict?
- Where is the pain or urgency?
- Who's working hard to maintain the current temperature? What's that about?
- How are other people feeling?
- Who is behaving badly? What problem are they trying to solve by behaving badly?
- What values are in conflict?
- How is that conflict showing up?
- Who has a stake in maintaining the status quo?

## e. Identify Who Needs to Do the Work

Identifying who needs to do the work starts with the obvious notion that you must engage others to solve your adaptive challenge. As you think about your situation, who must do the work? Consider who is already involved and consider who is impacted by the situation but is not involved.

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Identify Who Needs to Do the Work

- Whose problem is it? Who else?
- Who or what is pressuring you to act?
- Who would be happy if you applied a quick technical fix?
- What story are the people with differing points of view telling about the adaptive challenge?
- What are they loyal to?
- What do they value?
- What do they stand to lose if change happens?
- What would success look like to each point of view?
- What are you afraid to let go of?
- In your happiest dreams, who would step up and get involved?

## f. Test Multiple Interpretations and Points of View

Testing multiple points of view means taking deliberate steps to learn about multiple perspectives on a given situation. Being able to hold multiple interpretations of your situation allows for there to be numerous truths and experiences, all of which contribute to a more complete picture of your adaptive challenge.

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Test Multiple Interpretations and Points of View

- What other stories have you heard about this problem? Conflicting? Slightly different?
- What do you know for sure?

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- What is still unknown?
- From your point of view, what needs to change?
- From your biggest adversary's point of view, what needs to change?
- How would your personal role model or a person you go to for wise counsel interpret this situation?
- Are there any interpretations you have been unwilling to entertain? If so, what are they?
- Thinking of unusual voices, who else needs to be at the table?
- What groups with a particular point of view exist?
- What group are you a part of?

## Competency 2: Manage Self

Exercising leadership requires knowing yourself well enough to choose when and how to intervene or do things differently. These qualities are key to making progress because human brains are not wired to enjoy change. Neuroscientific research has shown that our brains and nervous system prefer the way things are, no matter how complex, rather than face the unknown. Managing Self is a leadership competency because progress requires taking risks and stepping outside your comfort zone for the sake of something you care about.<sup>4</sup>

To deepen your self-knowledge—improving understanding of your actions, behaviors, decisionmaking processes, conversations, questions, and choices—turn to the latest in neuroscience, which has discovered new insights into the key drivers of adult learning and behavior. The biggest influencer of our actions and behavior is a complex dance between our brain, body, and nervous system. The field of neuroscience has made significant breakthroughs in understanding the origins of our behavior by looking deep into our brains with advanced neurotechnology. These new insights into our brain are now being applied in the real world through an interdisciplinary approach by neuroscientists and experts in leadership practice and change management. You will find two innovative brain-based models, SCARF and SEEDS, at the end of this chapter to better understand how to collaborate, influence others, and mitigate biases in your brain.

Listed below are six additional skills to help you manage yourself in a variety of situations and environments so that you can create positive change.

### a. Know Your Strengths, Vulnerabilities, and Triggers

With a realistic eye, can you identify your own strengths, vulnerabilities, and triggers? Knowing and understanding these, especially in relation to your challenge, will help you be more effective. Everyone has hot buttons that others can press that take us out of the game. Everyone is both a resource and a limitation. Get to know your strengths, vulnerabilities, and triggers, and learn to manage them.

#### Questions to Ask Yourself to Know Your Strengths, Vulnerabilities, and Triggers

- What are you good at? How do you know that?
- What leadership or personality assessments have you taken (for example, Myers Brigs, Strengths Finder, DiSC)?
- What is the best way to use your strengths in your particular leadership challenge or situation?
- What are your weaknesses? How are they showing up in your situation or challenge?

<sup>4</sup> O'Malley, E., & Cebula, A. (2015). *Your leadership edge: Lead anytime, anywhere*. Kansas Leadership Center Press.

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## b. Get Used to Uncertainty and Conflict

Adaptive challenges have no ready-made solutions, so by their very nature, they are ripe for uncertainty and conflict. If you care about making progress, facing uncertainty and conflict will be a natural part of the twists and turns on your path. Get to know your style for handling conflict and leading during uncertainty.

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Get Used to Uncertainty and Conflict

- What are you willing to put up with?
- What is impossible to tolerate?
- In your situation or challenges, who will be disappointed?

## c. Choose Among Competing Values

You are a complex human being with competing values and commitments that vie for your time and attention every day. Consider the push and pull between efficiency and inclusiveness or the notion of being liked and having to make the tough decisions based on hard realities. If you want to make progress on your adaptive challenges, you must choose among your own competing values. Take time to reflect on your priority values so you can assess risk and mitigate against potential losses in order to choose one value over the other.

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Choose Among Competing Values

- What competing values are at play in your situation/case? They may be your own or others'.
- What has held you back from intervening in the past?
- What risks have you been unwilling to take? Why?
- What would a big risk look like?

## d. Know the Story Others Tell About You

How you perceive yourself is one version of your story. But that isn't necessarily the story your co-workers or partners would tell. How are you understood? What is your formal authority? What is your informal authority? Are you considered an expert on certain issues? What is your reputation? What is the interpretation from others about your past performance and involvement? "When you put yourself out there, people will come at you personally, with both praise and pushback. But you are neither saint nor sinner: It is not about you. People react to your role. When a community or team is facing a tough situation, emotions run wild, and some of them will get directed at you."<sup>5</sup> Taking them personally won't get you anywhere. Learn to distinguish what is your stuff you need to work on in the stories others tell about you, and what is their stuff.

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Know the Story Others Tell About You

- What are others saying about you? How do you know?
- Describe your role in your case from the point of view of a trusted colleague.
- Describe your role in your case from the point of view of your biggest opponent.

<sup>5</sup> O'Malley, E., & Cebula, A. (2015). *Your leadership edge: Lead anytime, anywhere*. Kansas Leadership Center Press.



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## e. Experiment Beyond Your Comfort Zone

“To make progress on your leadership challenge, you sometimes have to intervene in ways, or take on roles, that feel uncomfortable or inconsistent with how you see yourself or how you want to be seen.”<sup>6</sup> When you engage in new experiences you have the possibility of gaining new perspectives. Be willing to get uncomfortable, that’s where the magic can happen.

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Experiment Beyond Your Comfort Zone

- What is it about this challenge that matters so much to you that you’re willing to work outside your comfort zone?
- What uncomfortable choice, action, or behavior might be useful in this situation?
- What holds you back from trying something different?
- What leadership styles or actions are uncomfortable for you?



## f. Take Care of Yourself

Every day, you make choices and strengthen habits that either deplete or develop your energy. The more energy-generating habits you create, the greater your ability to be present with and for your leadership behavior. Reflect on your daily and weekly habits. How do your habits impart physical energy? Intellectual energy? Emotional energy? Spiritual energy?

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Take Care Of Yourself

- How do you engage in self-care?
- When are you most energized?
- What do you need to say no to?
- How do you know when your energy is waning?
- What (places, people, practices) revitalizes you?
- Who will support you?

## Competency 3: Energize Others

This adaptive leadership competency pushes you to adopt a shared leadership approach as you address your challenge. Sharing leadership means you must reimagine how power is distributed so that communities most impacted are at the center of the work. Expand the circle of individuals who need to be included in exploring possible solutions to the challenge. Move beyond engaging just those who typically have influence on those closest to the problem and who are less often asked to share their perspective. As people who have diverse perspectives discuss the challenge, pay attention to who seems engaged in solving the problem and who resists the challenge and why that might be. Use these observations to help you see the contours of the factions, people who share common values and beliefs, on an issue. This will help you begin to map the various faction across the voices and give you valuable information about the ways the larger system of people will feel about the issue/problem, which is important to how you understand, explain, and work on your challenge. This will also help you see where there is common ground and possible new ways forward. Mobilizing all the voices toward a common purpose is not easy and tends to slow the work down. The following skills may help you navigate the process of engaging others and bring progress to your collective challenge.

<sup>6</sup> Kansas Leadership Center. (2019). *Manage self worksheet package*. <https://kansasleadershipcenter.org/store/worksheets-manage-self-package/>

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## a. Engage Unusual Voices

Every issue or challenge has explicit elements, things you can see, as well as implicit parts, those that are invisible to you that still impact the situation. Part of your job is to surface the hidden elements so that you are working on the whole problem, not just the parts that you can see. Engaging unusual voices will help you uncover and learn what you don't know and don't see or experience.

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Engage Unusual Voices

- Who are the usual voices you typically engage?
- Who are the voices connected to your issue but not currently engaged in problem solving?
- How will you build relationships and trust with the people who are typically not asked to voice their perspective?
- What is the best approach for engaging unusual voices so that you learn and understand their perspective?
- What can you do to prepare yourself and your group's usual voices to be challenged by perspectives not often heard or at the table?

## b. Start Where They Are

In the problem-solving process, you will inevitably be asking others to change. Everyone responds to change differently. It is helpful to be proactive in the process by tapping the brain trust of the various voices at the table. Seek to learn and understand people's values and experiences so that you meet people where they are. Don't ask others to meet you where you are. Learn from them. There is expertise and wisdom to unearth that can benefit your challenge.

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Start Where They Are

- What do the varying voices care about regarding your challenge?
- What is their history of experience in relation to this challenge?
- What do people stand to lose?
- What do people stand to gain?

## c. Work Across Factions

Working across factions means being willing to allow your thought processes to hold two opposing ideas in your mind at the same time without panicking. This is about avoiding oversimplifications and thinking in trade-offs. When you allow time for working with opposing ideas across factions, you are facing tension together, allowing for more creative solutions to emerge. We have all done this in our lives, thinking from a both/and mindset vs. either/or. We can do this in our thorniest of problems. But sometimes we just need to remind ourselves that we can do this, we have done this, and it is important to do this whenever possible.

Organizational scientists, psychologists, and neuroscientists call this way of thinking a "paradox mindset."<sup>7</sup> When we allow ourselves to explore opposing ideas, we are more able to see overlapping interests and build off them instead of focusing on disagreements. Let this way of thinking open your vision to a complex and multifaceted world that either/or thinking does not.

<sup>7</sup> Martin, R. 2007. *The opposable mind: How successful leaders win through integrative thinking*. Harvard Business School Press.

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## Questions to Ask Yourself to Work Across Factions

- What factions exist in relationship to your challenge?
- What are each faction's values and loyalties?
- What are their potential losses?
- What are the trade-offs being voiced?
- What additional complexities of the situation should you consider? What are you choosing to pay attention to? What are you choosing not to pay attention to?
- Who else might have an alternative view and/or contradictory data of the problem you are trying to solve? Can you interview them using active listening? What new data arises from the interview?
- What are the benefits of each opposing idea? Of those benefits, which would you prioritize?
- What happens when you put the benefits of each opposing idea together in one sentence?
- What is the relationship of the opposing ideas now? Are new connections made? Is there any new meaning being made?

## d. Create a Trustworthy Process

Working on adaptive challenges takes time and process. One of the key characteristics of an effective process is to ensure it is a trustworthy process. Here are a few tips to creating a trustworthy process.

### Tips for creating a trustworthy process:<sup>8</sup>

- **Design the process together.** Ask others, how should we work on this issue? What's important to you about how we work on this issue?
- **Shift the context.** Consider bringing people to a location that is different than their everyday environment or the expected meeting location. It helps people suspend judgment and be more curious about the process.
- **Help people understand the larger system.** Ask people from different factions to present for three minutes about their concern related to the issue at hand. Allow two minutes of questions. Schedule a few of these at each meeting.
- **Reinforce empathy for others.** Ask everyone to imagine someone who is not at the table. Then have them describe to the group how that person (or faction) might be impacted by what is being considered.
- **Tell your story.** Set aside time for people to share. Ask, "Why I do what I do?" or use some other prompt to elicit personal stories. Invite people to be open and vulnerable.
- **Create diversity and dialogue.** In small groups, ask participants to share something they have not fully expressed to the full group. For instance, ask individuals to talk about what peers could do to help them fully engage in the work, or ask them to share ideas about the kinds of conversation they would like to have in the large group.
- **Debrief meetings.** Use the last five minutes of a meeting to ask participants to identify how the group worked together, what went well, and what could be improved going forward.
- **Promote transparency and accountability.** List the purpose of the meeting on every meeting agenda and review it. Record commitments by creating a chart of "Who" will do "What" by "When." Revisit commitments at the start of each meeting, celebrating work completed and adapting action steps as needed.

<sup>8</sup> Kansas Leadership Center. (2019). *Engage others worksheet package*. [www.kansasleadershipcenter.org](http://www.kansasleadershipcenter.org)

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## e. **Speak to Loss**

As you mobilize others for problem solving and solution generating, speaking to loss will be a necessary part of the process. There can be both hope and despair when tackling tough challenges. Engaging people through messages from your heart allows others to hear your values as they relate to theirs. A connection can be built that communicates the values at stake and potential losses. Listening from the heart and understanding what others are feeling can help more people overcome the fear of the loss that comes with change.

### **Questions to Ask Yourself to Speak to Loss**

- What losses, perceived or real, are at stake with your challenge and for whom?
- How might you speak to those losses?

## f. **Inspire a Collective Purpose**

There are no reasons for groups to shoulder the difficult work of adaptive challenges if you do not have a compelling purpose to serve. Your collective purpose provides the inspiration and direction for your action. However, as you have probably experienced, your purpose can become eclipsed by everyday tasks and crises. To this end, try to connect your everyday life with the collective purpose by building in physical reminders (for example, an inspiring quote or poem) and using ordinary rituals (for example, lunches or meetings) to keep the collective purpose alive for yourself and others.

### **Questions to Ask Yourself to Inspire a Collective Purpose**

- What is the group's collective purpose?
- What about this purpose is attainable? Is there anything unattainable?
- How are you igniting imaginations around the collective purpose?
- What kinds of physical reminders are you using to keep your collective purpose alive in others?
- Which ordinary rituals can you use to keep the collective purpose alive for others?

## **Competency 4: Intervene Skillfully**

To make progress on your issue or challenge, your actions or interventions require skill. When you intervene or take action to help your group make progress, do so deliberately and purposefully. There will be conflict and competing values when you try to make change on an issue. You are disrupting the status quo. Shine a spotlight on the conflict or competing values so you can help your group work through it in a productive way. To move forward, people need to see, explore, and investigate what is specifically catalyzing the disequilibrium. The following skills will help you intervene skillfully, so you are more productive on your issue.

### a. **Make Conscious Choices**

As human beings, we make both conscious and unconscious decisions every day. Being aware and making choices deliberately allows you to lead strategically and with purpose. The tough part is that most adaptive challenges don't have clear choices; things are not black and white, they are mostly gray. This muddiness can make your decisions feel risky as you elevate one choice over another without the ability to be certain. Uncertainty can be anxiety producing. Connect back with your purpose and make sure you are considering a range of options before deliberately choosing.

### **Questions to Ask Yourself to Make Conscious Choices**

- What information, experience, or data have you considered as you weigh your options?
- What is the group's collective purpose and how does it connect with your range of options?

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- As you consider your range of options, what observations or interpretations are you making about each one?
- What in your environment or conditions on the ground are not allowing you to slow down enough to make conscious choices? What might you do to mitigate those conditions?

## b. Raise the Heat

Making progress on issues you care about may require you to raise the heat on yourself and others. To address adaptive challenges, you must help people through a period of disturbance as they sift through what is essential and what is expendable. Adaption tends to happen when you disrupt the status quo. This may cause disequilibrium as you experiment with possible solutions, creating frustration or panic or confusion in people about the process and/or what they stand to lose. If the heat is too hot, people tend to react from their fight, flight, or freeze responses. If the heat is too low, not much happens, progress stalls. Calibrating the heat and raising or lowering it is a skill you need when intervening skillfully.

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Raise the Heat

- What is the heat level on your issue or in your group work? Does the heat need to be raised?
- What are the tough questions no one is asking?
- What is your comfort level with raising the heat?
- What is the group's comfort level with raising the heat?
- What are the possible consequences and risks for raising the heat?
- What reactions do you see when the heat gets raised?
- What action might you take to intervene productively to these reactions?

## c. Speak from the Heart

Speaking from the heart means you are willing to express your values in a way that resonates and connects with others' values. Communicating this throws into relief the values you all share and encourages solidarity to stand up for what you all most care about. These are the reasons that make it worthwhile for people to suffer losses or frustration and still stay in the game of making progress.

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Speak from the Heart

- What about this challenge moves you or where do you feel moved by this issue?
- What do others care about? What's in their hearts?
- Where do you see overlap between what moves you and what others care about?
- Are there others speaking from the heart you could illuminate or raise up? Who is expressing values and generating responses? Who is expressing values that are being dismissed or ignored?
- When you speak from the heart, what words will resonate most with others? What demeanor most connects and communicates your values?

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## d. Give the Work Back

As leaders, something we can overlook is knowing when to give the work back to those closest to the problem. This means you must not only share leadership but share responsibility in defining the issue, generating solutions, and implementing those prioritized solutions. You must get people deeply involved in all phases of the process because tough challenges require many viewpoints. This is not about delegating from on high. This is about engaging important stakeholders of your issue, so you share the responsibility in problem solving, and others have a chance to make meaning from all they are hearing and seeing from varying perspectives. Make space for others to be responsible and to exercise leadership for solving tough challenges.

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Give the Work Back

- Where are people looking to you to lead so they don't have to take risks?
- Where do you feel overwhelmed in the issue?
- Who are the people that are most qualified, either by experience, proximity, or expertise, to be at the center of the work?

## e. Act Experimentally

Leading adaptive change requires an experimental mindset which involves risks and the possibility of failure. You need to give yourself permission to fail. Scientists have been developing and testing ideas for centuries. Failure is integral to their approach. Judge your action beyond the binary "it worked" or "it didn't work." Consider what you are learning as your experiment.

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Act Experimentally

- How are you defining success for your initiative? Does it need to be broadened?
- What are the expectations of the group working on your issue when it comes to success or failure?
- Who have you noticed that naturally experiments? How can you harness their capacity in helping the group to do more of that?

## f. Hold to Purpose

Knowing and articulating what your group stands for (values) and what you want to collectively achieve (outcomes) is your purpose. Staying disciplined to your core purpose is paramount to making progress on your issue or challenge. Distractions abound in the day-to-day fray of things. Sometimes it can feel like a shiny new issue shows up every week. Don't let it take you and your group off track. Stay disciplined to your purpose and let any emerging trends or issues inform your strategies and tactics, not your purpose. Holding on to your purpose is not just about the big picture, it is in the details of your daily activities (for example, meeting purpose, committee purpose, discussion purpose). Be purposeful at all levels.

### Questions to Ask Yourself to Hold to Purpose

- How are you keeping your purpose front and center? Where is your group's purpose articulated, noted, posted, promoted?
- How often does your group remind each other of your purpose?
- Do you have a ritual at each meeting to keep your purpose alive in people's heads and hearts?
- How are you holding to purpose in your day-to-day activities?



# Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Leadership

The above adaptive leadership framework conceptualizes the leader not as one who solves problems for people but rather as one who encourages others to join in problem solving cooperatively by sharing leadership, responsibility, and power. Leaders practicing adaptive leadership focus on how to help people adjust to changing problems and conditions. In these situations, adaptive leaders enable others to help solve problems by providing a safe space to process and adapt to changes in the system. The capacity to create an environment that embraces the diversity of views and takes advantage of such collective knowledge to benefit the system is the very nature of exercising adaptive leadership. In this process, leaders need to be aware of the context of the larger early childhood system to facilitate this. This means being able to see the big picture so that you can help yourself, partners, and the community to diagnose the situation so you solve the right problem, manage self in the change process, energize others so they are motivated to work on a common challenge, and intervene skillfully so that progress is made on this situation.

## Brain-Based Models to Improve Leadership Practices

Two cutting-edge, brain-based models were developed by David Rock in the last 10 years to help us improve our knowledge of who we are and how to influence others. We can do this by understanding our brains, which can enhance our abilities to leverage leadership interactions in new and effective ways. The science supporting these models comes from more than 150 neuroscientific studies. Rock has woven these studies into several models, summarizing the findings into frameworks—or conceptual containers—to help us see the discoveries more clearly, receive them more deeply, and assimilate the material more quickly. He shares this powerful material in this design format because, as it turns out, our brains love to learn with conceptual containers.

## Use the SCARF Model to Understand Our Individual Triggers and Collaborate and Influence Others<sup>9</sup>

We've known for a long time that our assumptions, emotions, world views, and paradigms influence our behavior. The latest research in neuroscience tells us that our neurobiology is what drives our behavior and defines how we, as leaders, make meaning, solve problems, and carry out tasks with others. Core neurobiological human processes play out every day in our actions, thoughts, feelings, and motivations.<sup>10</sup> Understanding our own neurobiology—how we are wired and the deeply social nature of the brain—can help us own the dynamics within us and modernize how we respond to the contemporary complexities of our field.<sup>11</sup>

Any of us who have had some success leading have had an analytic mindset about ourselves and situations. We have tried to understand what is going on inside of us—how we are changing over time and how we interact with others. To help leaders continue to gain clarity about themselves, Rock developed SCARF (status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, and fairness—explained below) to illuminate two key biological foundations that underpin how humans relate to each other and themselves. In Rock's own words, these key foundations are as follows: "Much of our motivation driving social behavior is governed by an overarching organizing principle of minimizing threat and maximizing reward; and social needs are treated in the brain in much of the same way as our need for food and water."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Rock, D. (2008). SCARF: A brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others. *Neuroleadership Journal*, 1, 1–9.

<sup>10</sup> Young, I. (2008). *Mental models: Aligning design strategy with human behavior*. Rosenfeld Media, LLC.

<sup>11</sup> Pillsbury, J. B. (2013). *Results based facilitation: Moving from talk to action*. Sherbrooke Consulting, Inc.

<sup>12</sup> Rock, D. (2008). SCARF: A brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others. *Neuroleadership Journal*, 1.

# Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Leadership

How these key foundations play out in our brain is in the approach-avoid response. A basic function of our brain is to distinguish when to approach or avoid something. This response has developed as an evolutionary response and has largely helped us—humans—stay alive. We are intrinsically motivated to move away from perceived threats and toward perceived rewards. Any positive emotion or reward generally creates action, whereas a negative emotion or punishment causes a threat stimulus—or activated networks—in our brain, which leads to avoidance.

The premise of the SCARF model is that the brain—as constructed over time—makes us behave in certain ways, which are to minimize threats and maximize rewards. Additionally, the drivers in the brain that take the threat and reward approach do so as if they were a primary need, such as food and water. Neuroscience research findings are helping us see in very tangible ways (for example, by using functional MRIs) that our social needs are on par with our need for food and water. This new science has big implications for the workplace—a highly social situation. In our interactions, our brain is busy classifying everything with a “reward” or “threat” feeling in our body, which then registers in our behavior. Our brains want to know, is something good for us or bad for us?

The SCARF model summarizes these two themes within a framework that captures the common factors that can activate a reward or threat response in social situations. You can apply and test this model in any situation in which people collaborate as part of a group. The SCARF model involves five domains of human social experience: status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, and fairness.

- Status is about where you are in relation to others around you.
- Certainty concerns being able to predict the future.
- Autonomy provides a sense of control over events.
- Relatedness is a sense of safety with others, of friend rather than foe.
- Fairness is a perception of impartial and just exchanges between people.

# Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Leadership

Table 1. Reward and Threat Responses in the SCARF Model

Five Domains of Human Social Experience (Drivers of Our Behavior)	How We Activate the Reward State in Others	Results of Reward State	How We Activate a Threat State in Others	Consequences of Threat States
<b>Status:</b> sense of our personal worth—where we are in relation to other people	Positive feedback, public acknowledgement allow staff to provide feedback to themselves in performance reviews	More cognitive resources available to us More insights More ideas for action Fewer perceptual errors	Critique, unsolicited advice	Reduced resources for our brain—less oxygen and glucose available for brain function Decreased cognition Reduced working memory, which impacts linear, conscious processing
<b>Certainty:</b> sense of what the future holds for us	Clear expectations, setting clear goals, realistic project schedules	A wider field of view—more open	Lack of transparency, dishonesty, unpredictability	Inhibits the brain from perceiving the subtler signals required for solving nonlinear problems involved in the insight or “aha!” experience
<b>Autonomy:</b> sense of control over our lives	Providing choices, delegation, self-responsibility, empowerment		Micromanagement, constant authoritative leadership	We generalize more easily, which increases the likelihood of erring on the safe side and shrinking from opportunities, as we perceive them to be more dangerous
<b>Relatedness:</b> sense of safety with others	Friendly gestures, foster socializing, mentoring programs		Fostering internal competition, prohibiting socializing in the workplace	Increased defensive reactions in interactions Small stressors are more likely to be perceived as large stressors
<b>Fairness:</b> sense of what is impartial and just	Transparent decisions, open communication, candidness, clear rules		Unequal treatment, unclear rules and guidelines, lack of communication	Reduces our range and field of view Err on the side of pessimism

The idea is to use this model to design interactions to minimize threats and maximize rewards in each of these five domains. In a second step, the objective is to activate a reward response to motivate people more effectively using internal rewards. When the brain and body register a social threat in these dimensions, they light up the networks of the brain that register the threat of physical pain, a finding that has substantial implications for leadership practices. The SCARF model improves people’s capacity to understand and modify their own and other people’s behavior in social situations like the workplace, allowing them to be more adaptive. This model is especially relevant for CCDF leaders and managers or anyone looking to influence others. The more we understand about the workings of our brain and body responses, the more we understand what is happening to us moment to moment, whether that is why we cannot think straight after a long day or what is going on with a relationship in our life. We have a new language for what’s happening. This adds to feelings of certainty and control. Thus, we can make different choices that we might not otherwise explore. To better understand which of the five SCARF domains are key drivers for you, there is a free online self-assessment that will provide insight into the importance each domain currently has in your life. Please see the Resources section of this guide for the self-assessment.

# Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Leadership

## Use the SEEDS Model™ to Understand and Manage Our Biases

Nobody makes decisions in a vacuum. Our brains are constantly taking mental shortcuts—for better or worse—to help us choose between options. These shortcuts are known as biases. In biological terms, bias is a typical part of being human. If you have a brain, you are biased. Biases help us get through the day without having to gather every bit of information for every decision we have to make, such as where to turn on the road to get home from work. The more expert we are at something, the more we can rely on our biases.<sup>13</sup>

Because our brains are constantly taking mental shortcuts, and because these biases are mostly invisible to us, we need to be concerned with how they individually and institutionally influence decisions and choices we make in our early childhood system. Experts on the study of race and ethnicity use the term implicit bias to describe the beliefs and societal messages we carry without awareness or conscious direction that are interwoven with our evolutionary biases. The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity defines implicit bias as follows:

The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Activated involuntarily, without awareness or intentional control. This can be either positive or negative. Everyone is susceptible.<sup>14</sup>

These biases can work toward our benefit (for example, survival, ease of life), and they can create harmful effects (for example, creating inequities and stopping us from considering a range of options) from our behavior and choices. It's not humanly possible to be aware of our unconscious brain activity in the moments that we are making choices or decisions. It is up to us as leaders to rethink our organizational processes that guide decisionmaking so that we can begin to mitigate our invisible biases. That way, we create a more equitable early childhood system.

## Further Equity

Working to further equity can help eliminate disparities that negatively affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to participating in quality early learning experiences. Creating equitable learning opportunities for young children is at the core of how we lead in our field in the 21st century. These opportunities help children thrive by recognizing and building on each child's unique set of individual and family strengths, cultural background, home language, abilities, and experiences.<sup>15</sup> Recent figures show that 45 percent of all young children from birth to age 4 in the United States are children of color, and the diversity of young children continues to grow. One in five young children today is learning a home language and English simultaneously. Designing an early childhood system that is responsive to the needs of all children is key to both these children's future and the nation's future.<sup>16</sup> However, we know that we have a lot of gaps in our systems (for example, cultural awareness gaps, access gaps, participation gaps, workforce diversity gaps). Closing all of these gaps requires explicit planning, including using the SEEDS Model™ (similarity, expedience, experience, distance, and safety biases) to mitigate bias in decisionmaking processes. Doing so requires constructing decisionmaking processes that include individuals who have different cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds to contribute their expertise to this learning. This may even mean adapting decisionmaking approaches to recognize that different cultures approach decisionmaking differently—in terms of consensual versus majority rule, time allotments for discussion and planning, and ways of establishing trust and a sense of shared experience across groups. Both process and product are important in both developing early childhood systems that respond to the diversity of the young child population and addressing structural inequities.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Lieberman, M. D., Rock, D., Grant Halvorson, H., & Cox, C. (2015). Breaking bias updated: The SEEDS model™. *NeuroLeadership Journal*, 6. [http://www.scn.ucla.edu/pdf/Lieberman\(2015\)Neuroleadership.pdf](http://www.scn.ucla.edu/pdf/Lieberman(2015)Neuroleadership.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Staats, C., Capatosto, K., Tenney, L., & Mamo, S. (2017). *The state of science. Implicit bias review*, p. 10. Kirwan Institute on Race and Ethnicity.

<sup>15</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2019). *Leading with equity: Early childhood leaders make it personal*. [https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/initiatives/equity\\_summit\\_final.pdf](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/initiatives/equity_summit_final.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> BUILD Initiative. *Building early childhood systems in a multi-ethnic society: An overview of BUILD's briefs on diversity and equity*.

<sup>17</sup> Lieberman, M. D., Rock, D., Grant Halvorson, H., & Cox, C. (2015). Breaking bias updated: The SEEDS model™. *NeuroLeadership Journal*, 6. [http://www.scn.ucla.edu/pdf/Lieberman\(2015\)Neuroleadership.pdf](http://www.scn.ucla.edu/pdf/Lieberman(2015)Neuroleadership.pdf)

# Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Leadership

“

“The challenging news from the science is that even well-intentioned individuals have biases that can impact their perceptions and behavior—producing discriminatory behavior. The good news from the science is that individuals, once educated on the science of implicit bias, can develop strategies and processes to intentionally impact those biases.”

”

— Cheryl Staats et al., *The State of Science: Implicit Bias Review*<sup>18</sup>

## What’s Happening in Our Brain Unconsciously?

From a neuroscience point of view, our brains make sense of the world by categorizing things. Additionally, our brains create stronger associations toward certain things than others. For example, similarity bias makes us think that “people like me are better than others,” and distance bias has people believing that “closer things are better than ones that are distant.”<sup>19</sup> Scientists have identified over 150 different types of biases—many that are unconscious. The challenge with our brains is that we can’t just take an unconscious thing and

make it conscious. It’s not possible to be aware of unconscious processes in the moments that we make choices or decisions. It’s a different way of processing things in your brain. People have known about these kinds of unconscious biases for a long time, and awareness of them hasn’t led to better decisionmaking. Awareness and education only go so far, but awareness can help you understand the ways you’ve been biased in the past and the ways that you might be again in the future.

## Knowing about Bias Isn’t Enough

Cognitive neuroscience has shown that knowing we have a bias isn’t enough. While raising awareness can help us realize that we might be biased, it does not enable us to recognize bias in our own thinking—we simply do not have conscious access to the inner workings of bias in the brain. We can’t entirely get rid of these biases, but we can mitigate the impact they have on the choices we make. We can do this by preparing, in advance, for decisions where a bias might come into play. For example, in decisions about choosing who to promote to a management role, we know that similarity bias—that people similar to us are better—comes into play. By looking at commonalities and how we’re similar to each candidate, we can mitigate that unconscious bias. The trick is that we must do this ahead of the decision, which means knowing what types of decisions might invoke unconscious biases. Changing the context surrounding the decision and preparing ahead of time for challenging decisions are critical. The most effective strategy for mitigating bias is focusing on changing processes, not just making individuals aware of biases.

“

“Neuroscience does not provide an excuse to continue to have and act on our biases. Instead, it reveals those biases and removes our ability to deny the biological tendencies of our unconscious mind.”

”

— Cheryl Staats et al., *The State of Science: Implicit Bias Review*<sup>20</sup>

To tackle the effects of unconscious bias, we really must have a systems approach—we need to look at the whole decisionmaking process used by our teams, organizations, and systems. We can set up systems and processes for gathering all the information we need, and we can ensure that certain steps are followed in our processes before making a decision. Individuals and teams can certainly work to mitigate bias, but the impact is much greater if an entire division, organization, or system is on board.

<sup>18</sup> Staats, C., Capatosto, K., Tenney, L., & Mamo, S. (2017). *The state of science. Implicit bias review*. Kirwan Institute on Race and Ethnicity.

<sup>19</sup> Lieberman, M. D., Rock, D., Grant Halvorson, H., & Cox, C. (2015). Breaking bias updated: The SEEDS model™. *NeuroLeadership Journal*, 6. [http://www.scn.ucla.edu/pdf/Lieberman\(2015\)Neuroleadership.pdf](http://www.scn.ucla.edu/pdf/Lieberman(2015)Neuroleadership.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Staats, C., Capatosto, K., Tenney, L., & Mamo, S. (2017). *The state of science. Implicit bias review*. Kirwan Institute on Race and Ethnicity.

# Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Leadership

## Breaking Bias: The SEEDS Model

The SEEDS model proposes an alternative solution to mitigating bias, derived from a brain-based perspective. The model identifies processes that can interrupt and redirect unconsciously biased thinking. Practice with this model can help guide your use of such processes. The SEEDS model simplifies the roughly 150 identified cognitive biases and recognizes five categories of bias, each of which responds to a different set of actions that will help mitigate the bias. Use the SEEDS model by following three steps, excerpted below:

- Accept that we are biased by virtue of our biology. People and systems are deeply biased and don't know it.
- Label the types of bias that are likely to occur in any system or might influence a particular decision, using the SEEDS model.
- Mitigate bias by using strategies that go directly to the core processes underpinning the bias.<sup>21</sup>

Table 1. Reward and Threat Responses in the SCARF Model

Five Categories of Bias	What It Looks Like	How to Mitigate the Bias
<b>Similarity:</b> People like me are better “The mirror” In-group and out-group bias	Involves more positively evaluating people who are similar to us or who share similar goals; perceiving people who are different from us more negatively; common in decisions about people	Find ways to acknowledge the similarities that exist between you and others; remove identifying and potentially biasing information from materials that go into the decisionmaking process
<b>Expedience:</b> If it feels familiar and easy it must be true “The time machine” Confirmation bias	Can occur in everyday decisions that involve complex calculations, analysis, evaluation, or identifying conclusions out of data	Slow down the process, mentally stop, and involve others in the decision
<b>Experience:</b> My perceptions are accurate “The know-it-all” False consensus effect	Can occur anytime we fail to see that things may not be the way they seem and in any situation in which we fail to appreciate other people's perspectives	Seek objective outside opinions from those not involved in the project or team; revisit ideas after a break; look at yourself and your message through other people's eyes
<b>Distance:</b> Closer is better than distant “The family circle”	Involves focusing on short-term (here and now) thinking rather than long-term investment	Take distance out of the equation; evaluate the outcomes or resources as if they were equally close to you in distance, time, or ownership
<b>Safety:</b> Bad is stronger than good “The protector” Loss aversion	Can occur any time we make decisions about the probability of risk or return	Imagine you are making the decision for someone else

<sup>21</sup> Lieberman, M. D., Rock, D., Grant Halvorson, H., & Cox, C. (2015). Breaking bias updated: The SEEDS model™. *NeuroLeadership Journal*, 6. [http://www.scn.ucla.edu/pdf/Lieberman\(2015\)Neuroleadership.pdf](http://www.scn.ucla.edu/pdf/Lieberman(2015)Neuroleadership.pdf)



## Why Is It So Hard to Accept That Our Actions, Behaviors, And Decisions Are Influenced by Bias?

Resistance to our own susceptibility to bias, paired with the unconscious nature of cognitive bias, creates a perfect storm in which bias is perpetuated and rarely recognized or adequately managed. So, why is it so hard to be unbiased? In part, it is because it feels good to be right, and it feels bad to be wrong. Being right activates the brain's reward circuitry. From our brain's perspective, being correct is associated with contentment and certainty. Being wrong activates the regions of the brain that are associated with processing pain and negative emotion (even when there are no material consequences of being wrong).<sup>22</sup>

## Resources

In the resource list below, icons are used to represent key resources that correspond to one or more of the five dimensions of the [Capacity Building Self-Assessment Tool](#). For example, if a resource is relevant to the Financial Resources dimension, a green piggybank icon will appear next to it.

### Podcast, Video, and Blog Resources



[Adaptive Leadership](#) (Eric Martin, 2017)

This video is a basic introduction to adaptive leadership, which is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive.



[Part 1: Brené Brown on Armored vs. Daring Leadership](#)

This podcast is Part 1 of a two-part series, where author Brené Brown shares the most common types of behaviors adults use when they are not showing up emotionally.

[Part 2: Brené Brown on Armored vs. Daring Leadership](#)

This is Part 2 of a two-part series on daring leadership, where Brené Brown shares specifics of four more behaviors adults use when they are in fear.

[Building Adult Capabilities to Improve Child Outcomes: A Theory of Change](#) (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University)

This is a 5-minute video that introduces the approach of building adult capabilities so that we can improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families. It describes the need to focus on strengthening skills of caregivers and strengthening communities that together form the environment of relationships essential to children's lifelong learning, health, and behavior.

[Cognitive Bias Podcast Series on Apple Podcasts](#) (David Dylan Thomas)

This podcast explores the world of things we do that don't make any rational sense, one bias at a time.

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<sup>22</sup> Lieberman, M. (2007). Social cognitive neuroscience: A review of core processes. *Annual Review of Psychology*. [http://www.scn.ucla.edu/pdf/Lieberman%20\(2006\)%20Ann%20Review.pdf](http://www.scn.ucla.edu/pdf/Lieberman%20(2006)%20Ann%20Review.pdf)

# Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Leadership

[#55 What We're Reading \(and Watching\) to Help Reflect on Race, Power and Privilege, Critical Value Past](#) (Urban Institute, June 2020)

On this episode, the Urban Institute offers its own reading (and watching) list. You'll hear from Urban staff about the books, movies, and documentaries they are reflecting on to contextualize anti-racism, structural racism, police brutality, and privilege.

## SCARF Resources

[SCARF: A Brain-Based Model for Collaborating with and Influencing Others](#) (David Rock, 2008)

This article examines threat and reward from a social neuroscience perspective.

[SCARF Model Influencing Others with Dr. David Rock](#) (David Rock, 2010)

This video introduces viewers to the SCARF model.

[SCARF Self Assessment](#) (Neuro Leadership Group, n.d.)

A free self-assessment that helps the user understand how each domain of the SCARF model influences his or her life.

## Bias Resources



[Bias Isn't Just a Police Problem, It's a Preschool Problem](#) (Cory Turner, 2016)

An NPR report shares information on a new study out of Yale that found that prekindergarten teachers, white and black alike, spend more time watching black boys expecting trouble.



[When Whites Just Don't Get It](#) (Nicholas Kristof, 2014)

Nicholas Kristof examines the status of race discrimination in modern America.



[Breaking Bias Updated: The SEEDS Model™](#) (Matthew Lieberman, David Rock, Heidi Grant Halvorson, and Christine Cox, 2015)

This article explains the SEEDS Model™ of cognitive bias and offers examples and solutions for mitigating bias in organizations.



[Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Equity](#) (State Capacity Building Center, 2022)

This guide is meant to be an introduction to key equity concepts. At a high level, this will allow the reader to explore what equity is and its importance to systems building. This chapter presents information on the history of equity as it relates to early childhood education, insights on how to embed equity into state-level organizations, and considerations for overcoming barriers in systems-level equity work. It also provides tools and resources for state and territory staff to dive deeper into these concepts and to support equity-driven systems change work.

# Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Leadership



[State of the Science: Implicit Bias Review](#) (Cheryl Staats, Kelly Capatosto, Lena Tenney, and Sarah Mamo, 2017)

This resource reviews scientific research on bias that was published in 2016.



[GARE: Communications Guide](#) (Ryan Curren, Julie Nelson, Dwayne S. Marsh, Simran Noor, and Nora Liu, 2016)

This manual offers guidance to local governments as they conduct research and develop their own racial equity plan.



[Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity](#) (Julie Nelson and Lisa Brooks, Updated December 2016)

This toolkit offers guidance for jurisdictions as they develop strategies that promote racial equity.



[Racial Equity Communications Guide](#) (Government Alliance on Race and Equity [GARE], Center for Social Inclusion, Living Cities, the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society, and Provoc, Updated May 2018)

This guide helps jurisdictions enhance their communication on racial equity work.



[Racial Equity: Getting to Results](#) (Erika Bernabei, Updated July 2017)

This guide helps jurisdictions as they use a racial equity lens and carry out a community process to support equity work.

## Systems Change and Change Management



[The Water of Systems Change](#) (John Kania, Mark Kramer, and Peter Senge 2018)

This article focuses on defining the concept of systems change, which includes a framework of six interdependent conditions that hold complex problems in place.



[The Water of Systems Change: Action Learning Exercise](#) (John Kania, David Garfunkel, and Hayling Price)

This is a worksheet with specific exercises to help groups working on systems change to explore and better understand the interdependent conditions that are responsible for their challenges.



[Diffusion of Innovations](#) (5th ed.) (Everett M. Rogers, 2003)

An influential classic about how innovations take hold and become institutionalized. This resource contains open-source material.

# Early Childhood Systems Building Resource Guide: Leadership



[\*The 8 Steps for Leading Change\*](#) (John Kotter, 2015)

This is a practical guide for leading and managing change and was created by a prominent thought leader.

[\*Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing: Understanding the Stages of Team Formation\*](#) (Mind Tools Content Team, n.d.)

Bruce Tuckman's model describes the stages of becoming a team—transitioning from a group of strangers to a united group with common goals.

*The State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) works with state and territory leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families. The SCBC is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.*

## **State Capacity Building Center, A Service of the Office of Child Care**

1902 Reston Metro Plaza  
Reston, VA 20190

Phone: 877-296-2401

Email: [CapacityBuildingCenter@ecetta.info](mailto:CapacityBuildingCenter@ecetta.info)

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