



FUSE RI

An Open Access Model of K-12
Blended Learning Implementation



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INTRODUCING FUSE RI: An Open Access Model of Blended Learning Implementation

Introduction

Launched in July 2014, *Fuse RI* is an open access model for supporting and expanding K-12 blended learning implementation in Rhode Island (RI). The project was conceived and is being implemented by the Highlander Institute, “a non-profit community of educators and professionals working to improve the educational experience of all learners.” Across the country, more and more educators are achieving higher levels of personalized instruction for students through the use of quality blended learning practices. In Rhode Island, the Highlander Institute is guiding the work of district educators using research, policy, and practice centered on blended learning and instructional personalization. The *Fuse RI* project seeks to expand, deepen, and sustain this work across Rhode Island.

As a non-profit organization, the Highlander Institute is committed to widely sharing resources and best practices that emerge from various project initiatives. The Highlander Institute encourages the replication of the *Fuse RI* model, and the dissemination of systems, training, and other resources that can support parallel efforts across states. The *Michigan Virtual Learning Research Institute (MVLRI)* is documenting and researching the *Fuse RI* project in a series of reports to engage thought leaders and practitioners in this effort. This initial report provides a general overview of the *Fuse RI* project.



Fuse RI

Overview

Fuse RI is a three-year project funded by [The Learning Accelerator](#) with a goal of developing a statewide system for sharing, implementing, evaluating, and scaling blended learning and instructional personalization across Rhode Island. The project consists of three key components that address critical gaps in district capacity:



1 Creating a District Competency Framework

In order to catalyze the complex shift toward blended and personalized learning, district administrators must create a new vision for teaching and learning and understand the district-level competencies, skills, and job functions that are required to realize that vision. The Highlander Institute has developed an initial version of these competencies as an underlying framework for *Fuse RI*. Spanning components that include Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, Technology, Professional Learning, and Budget and Community Partnerships, the framework offers districts context as they take stock of where they are, envision where they want to be, and develop an effective road map for getting there.

2 Developing a State Pipeline of Blended Learning Leaders

In the best examples of blended learning implementation, people are often the secret to success. In Rhode Island, the demand for tech-savvy administrators and teacher leaders with competencies and skills to fill existing gaps far outnumbers the current supply. The creation of the Fuse Fellowship was a strategic decision to cultivate early adopter educators into a cohort of experienced blended learning leaders for Rhode Island. The two-year Fellowship offers current in-service educators six months of training in the design, implementation, and support of blended learning initiatives. Fellows are then prepared for an 18-month engagement with a Fuse partner district as a change agent. In exchange for approximately 100 hours of their time each school year, Fuse Fellows receive a stipend, the opportunity to earn a Blended Learning certificate from Roger Williams University, and access to flex funds to support an innovative pilot or extended professional development within their own schools and districts.

3 Building Customized Resources to Support District Implementation

Once districts have developed their new vision and outlined a manageable action plan and timeline, they require customized guidance to support their success. Fuse Fellows - along with the Highlander Institute team - develop a series of tailored playlists that match districts with the resources (videos, documents, websites, or research) that address their most immediate needs. A playlist is a personalized sequence of resources that provide district administrators with exactly the information they need to build their knowledge and support the next steps of their implementation plans. Playlists allow participants to explore material at their own pace and often provide forums for asynchronous discussion. These playlists are connected to the District Competency Framework and will ultimately be designated for use in early, middle, and advanced implementation efforts. The Highlander Institute ultimately envisions the creation of a national resource hub that would encourage authors, bloggers, policymakers, and resource developers to tag and categorize their content by learning level (refers to the current status of a district team in terms of knowledge and implementation, also known as the district's "implementation stage") and send it to a searchable database. Administrative teams across the country could then easily develop relevant playlists to support implementation.

Goals

The tailored consulting services offered to Fuse partner districts by the Fuse Fellows complement this effort. Fellows analyze intake data (the combination of Fuse Fellow interviews with district leaders and self-reported survey data from the full district administrative team) from their district and develop Menus of Services aligned to district priorities as well as the Competency Framework to build momentum and support implementation over their 18-month engagement.

This system is designed to support the implementation of high-quality blended learning initiatives by building both statewide capacity and human capital. *Fuse RI* seeks to link and align districts across the state who share common implementation priorities. By coordinating efforts and facilitating ongoing learning and mentoring, the infrastructure designed through *Fuse RI* will have a lasting impact on districts throughout their journey of transformation. In addition to the three components above, supplementary goals include the ones shown along the side of this page.

Goals

Identify and showcase classroom, school, and district best practices across blended learning models and technology integration practices

Create state-wide professional learning communities for teachers, schools, and districts at various implementation levels

Create opportunities for district collaborations and statewide efficiencies around purchasing, piloting models, and implementation

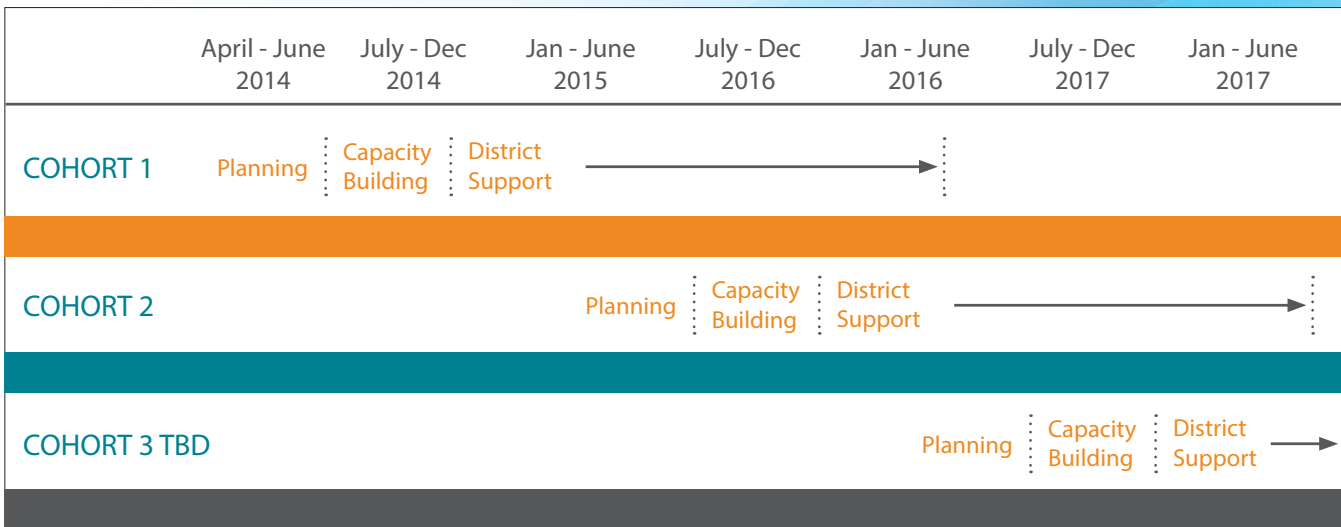
Support the development of next-generation statewide policies around procurement, data, and professional learning

Establish a series of scalable systems to support other states in their efforts to nurture systemic educational transformation

Project Phases

Fuse RI is a three-year project with three distinct phases that continue to cycle as the program expands to include more Fellows and districts. Organizational work for each cohort of Fuse Fellows and Fuse partner districts includes a planning phase, a capacity building phase, and a district support phase (Figure 1).

Figure 1.
Cycle for Supporting Fuse District Cohorts*



* Cohorts are 10-20 districts.

1 The Planning Phase

This phase includes preparation and creation of systems to bring Fuse Fellows and districts into the project. A short project concept [video](#) was launched in early spring 2014 to build curiosity about the initiative.

The Highlander Institute team also created a [Fuse RI website](#) to support Fellow recruitment and selection. Details of the two-year Fuse Fellowship and application process were determined and a set of Fellowship competencies were created. An initial scope and sequence of skills, missions, and deliverables was defined for Fellows over their first Fellowship year (Figure 2). The team selected an initial cohort of 30 Fuse Fellows from a candidate pool of over 60 educators.

Figure 2.
First Year Scope and Sequence for Fuse RI Fellows

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE										
	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June
FOCUS	Data collection; Curating online resources	Creating on-line content	Collecting and analyzing survey data from LEA stakeholders	Facilitating LEA meeting re: blended priorities	Designing Menu of Services and Custom Playlist based on LEA priorities	Adding value to partner district	Understanding tech infrastructure	Collaboration across the cohort	Menu of Services Completion	Year 1 Reflection
MISSION	Research, contact, and collect initial data from assign LEA	Create screencast explaining how to use a Google tool, app, or best practice of your choice	Create LEA profile; Prep for upcoming admin meeting	Convene and facilitate district administrator team meeting	Analyze data; create Menu of Services and custom playlist for LEA administration based on identified priorities	Solidify presence in LEA by selecting and implementing at least one item from the selected Menu of Services	Complete tech infrastructure playlist	Organize, attend, and document cross-district collaboration meetings	Fulfill the hours in the selected Menu of Services	Complete 360 assessment
F2F	Practice finding and vetting online screencasts on digital tools	Develop familiarity with Metryx as a tool for analyzing LEA data	Induction Ceremony	Prep for Menu of Services and custom playlist creation	Finalizing MOS and playlists; Prep to begin district work	Discussion of blended learning progression & personalized learning; strategies for documenting District Services	OSHEAN presentation, demonstration, Q&A	Feedback on draft walk-through tool; Personalized learning design exercise	Fellows Unconference	End of Year 1 Social Event
INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Conducts effective internet research · Demonstrates basic skills of data collection · Cultivates a Twitter presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Can create screencasts · Adopts new tech tools · Demonstrates basic skills in data analysis & use · Synthesizes information effectively · Communicates clearly in speech · Cultivates a Twitter presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Conducts effective internet research · Communicates clearly in writing · Provides regular communication · Cultivates a Twitter presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Understands LEA roles/org. charts · Can articulate a rationale for blended learning · Facilitates meetings effectively · Identifies needs · Develops rapport · Cultivates a Twitter presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Defines a scope of work · Synthesizes information effectively · Demonstrates basic skills of data analysis & use · Communicates clearly in writing · Provides regular communication · Cultivates a Twitter presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Designs and delivers blended professional learning · Develops rapport · Sets goals and works to meet them · Manages time/meets deadlines · Cultivates a Twitter presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Understands basics of network design · Understands local vs. cloud-based storage · Understands basics of bandwidth needs · Cultivates a Twitter presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Is willing to share with/learn from others · Makes time for/values collaboration · Synthesizes information effectively · Communicates clearly in writing · Cultivates a Twitter presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Is willing to share with/learn from others · Sets goals and works to meet them · Manages time/meets deadlines · Cultivates a Twitter presence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Self-assesses · Seeks feedback · Cultivates a Twitter presence

The blended summer training for the Fuse Fellows was developed. Fellows chose one of two 16-hour “boot camp” sessions to attend in July or August (See Appendix for boot camp curriculum.). The Highlander Institute team created a training syllabus and designed playlists, videos, and assessments for Fellows to complete at their own pace. Discussions, simulations, and performance assessments were planned at various intervals to allow Fellows to demonstrate their new knowledge and skills.

Outreach to districts was organized in May by the Highlander Institute team, who met face-to-face with superintendents from 35 of the 66 Rhode Island districts and charter schools. A protocol for sharing information about Fuse and soliciting information from districts was implemented. The team also investigated software platforms and applications required to support Cohort 1. The infrastructure needs included the capacity to:

- disseminate and manage Fellow “missions”
- track developing district relationships
- offer transparent communications (emails, calls, meetings)
- manage and accomplish tasks
- track developing Fellow and district competencies
- collaborate on the creation and sharing of tools and resources

Being mindful of cost, interoperability, replication, and ease of use, the team explored a variety of tools to meet these needs. The following three choices fell short of a comprehensive solution but formed a low-cost combination that allowed for adequate integration while meeting stated needs.

GoogleApps. The cloud-based Google platform stores shared Highlander Institute folders and supports asynchronous collaboration while being familiar to both Fuse Fellows and Fuse partner districts.

Insightly. The CRM (customer relationship management) system was chosen to manage communication points between Highlander Institute staff, Fellows, and partner districts and to organize projects and tasks. The system integrates well with the Google platform and offers Fellows a level of project management support.

Metryx. This internally built data tracking system was leveraged for tracking Fellow and district competencies.

2 The Capacity Building Phase

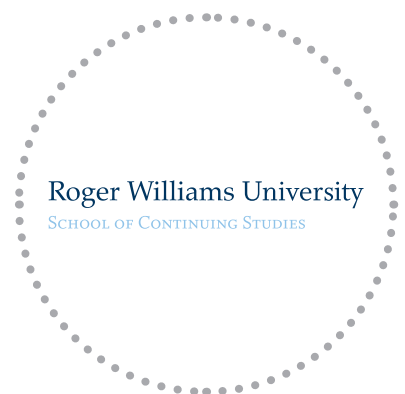
Between July and December of 2014, the Highlander Institute team developed the capacity of Fellows, recruited and selected partner districts, and created a process for district self-assessment. The content for boot camp sessions was accessible online throughout and beyond each training session. In order to move on from boot camp, Fellows had to successfully complete nine missions. (Twenty-seven Fellows successfully completed this work) All of the missions could be accomplished within the 14 hours of on-site training, but Fellows who preferred to engage in discussions or broaden their learning on site were able to complete missions remotely on their own time. Feedback from participants was positive.

Image 1. Tweet from Shawn Rubin featuring Fuse RI Fellows training



Simultaneously, the Highlander Institute team cultivated a relationship with Roger Williams University (RWU) School of Education to collaborate on the creation of a blended learning certificate aligned with the Fuse Fellowship. The certificate is organized into four modules based around the phases of the Fuse Fellow program. They include readiness data collection, data analysis and initial support implementation, district supports and coaching, and reflection and extension of programming to scale. Each module includes mastery-based objectives and deliverables that are measured by Highlander Institute staff. This new partnership with RWU has the ability to grow and support blended learning coaching on multiple levels that are currently under consideration, including supporting the RWU education department and graduate programs, and scaling to other organizations and cohorts.

The District Competency Framework was drafted at the end of August 2014 as an organizing tagging structure to support the district level shift to blended learning¹. The Highlander Institute



created this framework by pulling together district suggestions and guidance from national leaders such as the Alliance for Education, Consortium on School Networking (CoSN), and International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), as well as blended learning researchers from organizations such as the Christensen Institute, The Learning Accelerator, and Getting Smart. The Highlander Institute created a massive database of district level elements and grouped topics into themes. Leveraging the organizing structure of the Alliance for Education's Project 24 (P24) framework for digital learning, the Highlander Institute team divided themes into areas that are tagged to more granular topics and observation points. This tool became the foundation for Fuse partner district surveys and self-assessments, the identification of district priorities, and the process of measuring district progress/mastery. Highlander Institute continues to revise the Framework based on best practices observed in Rhode Island schools and districts.

Superintendents and district leaders who participated in face-to-face meetings in May were encouraged to apply to be part of the first cohort of Fuse partner districts. The application and review processes were created by the Highlander Institute team and implemented by Fellows. Each Fellow was assigned a district to "vet" and scheduled a meeting with district administrators to provide additional information about the project and collect specific district information.

By the end of October, 14 Cohort 1 Fuse partner districts² were selected, and a team of two to three Fellows was assigned to each. A district self-assessment survey was disseminated by the Highlander Institute team to all Cohort 1 district administrators in November. Resulting data was synthesized into a slide deck for each district by the Highlander Institute team, and Fellows were encouraged to add or revise slides based on their growing knowledge of their partner district. Fellows facilitated district administrative team meetings in December, sharing the data and gathering additional information on district systems, interests, and needs.

3 The District Support Phase

In January, Fellows created two deliverables for their partner districts. The first was a playlist³ of tailored resources for district administrators to support continuous learning and discussion. Resources were curated by both the Highlander Institute team and Fellows, with an eye toward the specific needs of each partner district, and posted for use by the district administrative teams. The second was a Menu of District Services⁴ outlining potential project work and timeframes. Fellows presented a scope of work

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1. District Competencies: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4vre_8Lv-tIUy2ZBc3FDMTRPYms/view
 2. Cohort 1 Districts: Blackstone Academy Charter School; North Kingstown; Bristol/Warren; North Providence; Central Falls; North Smithfield; Chariho; South Kingstown; Foster/Glocester and Glocester; Paul Cuffee Charter School; Johnston; Warwick; and Newport.
 3. Sample Playlist: https://www.blendspace.com/lessons/_IXCDHSt-jLX9Kw/chariho-district-playlist
 4. Menu of District Services: https://docs.google.com/document/d/19Epn1QX5-qBlvFu4kl-YpaHvrw_hKx1qlurer_md5PRQ/edit

that included research, professional learning, program evaluation, strategic planning, pilot design and support, device/software rollout and support, and public relations, depending upon district needs. Administrators were asked to select a total of 50-75 hours of project work from the Menu, depending on the number of Fellows working within their district. Menu selections were due by the end of January; Fuse project work began in earnest in February. A few examples of current project work across Fuse partner districts include the following:

- Program Evaluation of 1:1 Initiative: Assess progress at the high school to inform continued efforts and planning for middle and elementary school projects.
- Personalized Learning Pilot: Design, support, and evaluate a personalized learning platform in a single course at the high school.
- Stakeholder Data Collection: Support the evaluation of teacher comfort, skill, and level of tech use in classrooms. Discuss data collected and identify next steps.
- High School Technology Needs Assessment: Evaluate current areas of strength and need. Prioritize needs and provide resources to inform district planning.
- Professional Learning: Design, develop, and implement a district-wide unconference⁵ in collaboration with the District Technology Team.
- Program Specific Research Task: Research flexible scheduling for middle and high school and offer up examples of implementation plans executed by similar districts. Plan a site visit or another opportunity to connect with a mentor school.

Finishing up the Spring and Next Steps

In April 2015, project work included cross-district check-ins between Fellows conducting similar work in different places. In May 2015, Fellows engaged in classroom walkthroughs⁶ across the Cohort 1 districts using a blended learning classroom rubric tagged to the competency framework. These combined sets of data, in addition to quantitative and qualitative results from tailored project work, will form the basis of Year 2 planning between Fellows and their partner districts in September 2015. The resulting scope of work will be more robust; implementation will restart in the fall of 2016.

5. EdCamp pioneered the use of unconferences in education settings (http://edcamp.org/?page_id=592). Basically, an unconference is a participant-driven meeting. This type of professional development is gaining popularity among teachers. The format intentionally avoids aspects of a conventional conference, such as predetermined sessions, fees, and top-down organization.

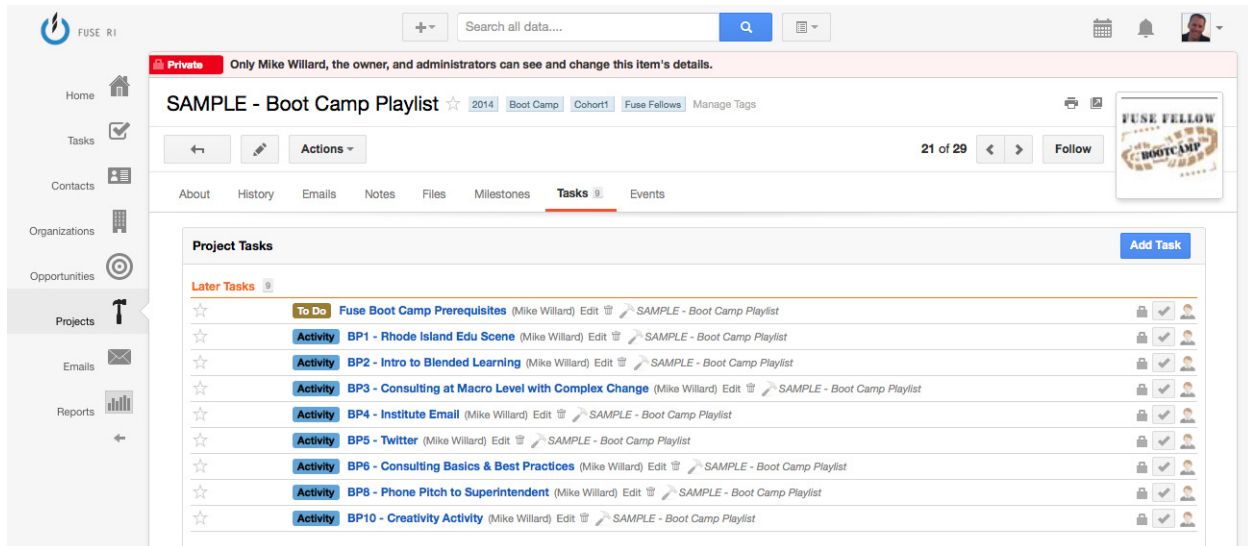
6. Highlander Institute Classroom Walkthrough Rubric: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9r_YA5pZ8kUMkJiaWNOMXNMRXM/view?usp=sharing

Appendix 1 Boot Camp Curriculum

Boot Camp Curriculum

Fuse Boot Camp Prerequisites

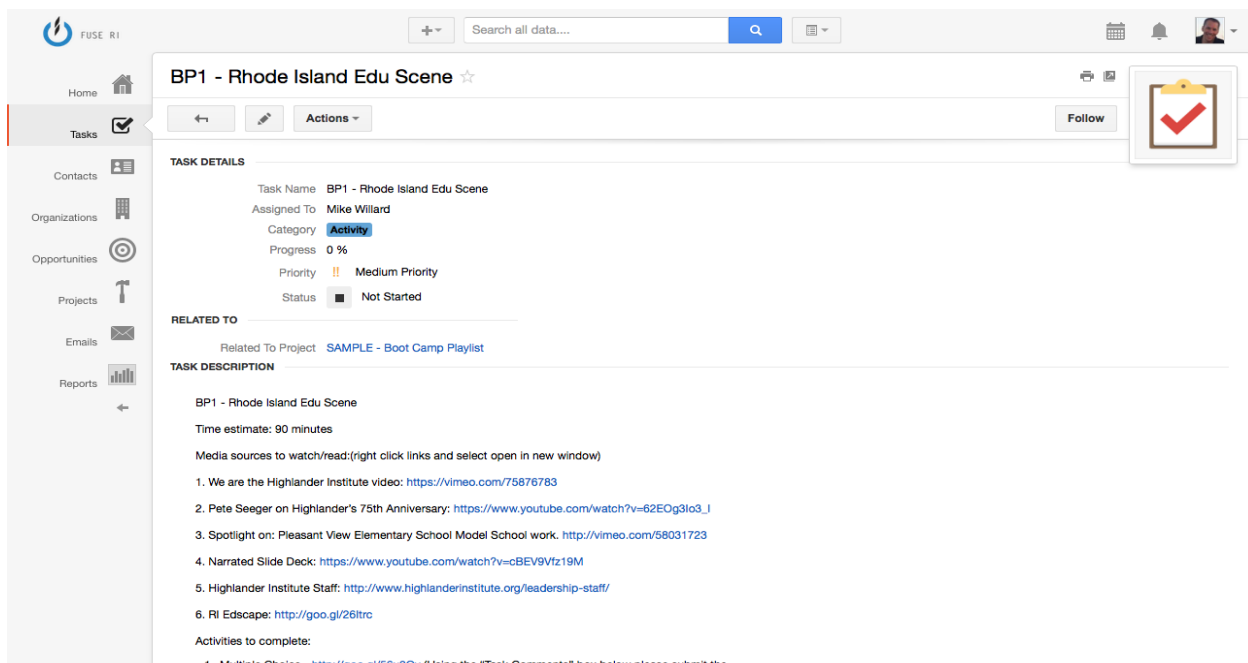
1. Sign up for Signup Simulators
2. Complete Pre-Assessment (Reflection)
3. Review the Two-Day Boot Camp Schedule



BP1 - Rhode Island Edu Scene

Media sources to watch/read:

1. *We are the Highlander Institute* video
2. Pete Seeger on Highlander's 75th Anniversary
3. Spotlight on: Pleasant View Elementary School Model School work.
4. Highlander Institute Staff
5. RI Edscape



Activities to complete:

1. Multiple Choice
(Using the “Task Comments” box below, please submit the following two responses.)
2. Short Answer
In celebration of the Highlander Folk School’s 75th Anniversary, Pete Seeger said “_____.” Connect this notion to the Highlander Institute’s mission and the work you are about to embark on with *Fuse RI*.
3. Project
 - using Rhode Island Department of Education’s (RIDE) website as a starting point, pick any (one) traditional public school district and any (one) independent charter school.
 - compare the two districts on five data points of your choosing (examples could include organization, student body demographics, size, mission, curriculum, geographic catchment area, etc.), and
 - take screenshots to show your work.

BP2 - Blended Learning

Media sources to watch/read:

1. *Intro to Blended Learning* video
2. Blended Learning Models
3. Blended Learning Vocabulary

Activities to complete:

1. Complete this multiple choice assessment.

For the following questions, please use the “Task Comments” box below to submit your answers.

2. Put yourself in the shoes of a school superintendent. What are some counter arguments to blended learning that you might have in the back of your mind that would prohibit you from embracing the Fuse RI project or blended learning in your district? Write a 300-word response from the point of view of a district superintendent citing at least one reason why you don’t believe that blended learning is right for your district. Explain your thinking and back up your position as best you can.

If you need some anti-Personalized Learning inspiration, this article from Benjamin Riley should get you started.

3. Share your definition of Blended Learning in your own words. You can use a stock definition, but we want to hear your level of comfort and ease in explaining the core concept of blended learning within a 30-second Pitch. Record your “definition” using *Croak.It* (<http://croak.it>). Here is a short video on what *Croak.It* is and how to use it on an iPhone or iPad.

BP3 - Consulting at Macro Level with Complex Change

Media sources to watch/read

- Reading & Graphics in this document
- Reading: The Dance Floor and the Balcony
- Reading: Managing Complex Change - Updated
- Reading: Managing Complex Change in Piloting 1:1

Activities to complete:

1. View this page for more details
Complete Assessment
2. Join a group discussion and share your example. Present this story of school change (in approximately 5 - 7 minutes) during the time you are scheduled for Cathy's discussion.

BP4 - Institute Email

Media sources to watch/read:

1. Institute Email Etiquette
2. Institute Gmail Setup

Activities to complete:

1. Write a mock email to the Superintendent of your assigned district thanking him/her for meeting with you this morning. Use the email format specified in "Institute Gmail Setup" video.

BP5 - Twitter

Media sources to watch/read:

1. Grab Institute-supplied iPad and go through the TweechMe App. (More information on how to download this app to a personal device can be found here: <http://crescerance.com/tweechme>)
2. Twitter Taxonomy

Activities to complete:

1. Twitter Basics Assessment
2. With your Twitter account, follow all *Fuse RI* members:
3. Send out at least 5 -10 tweets during the training session with [#FuseRI](#). Be sure to include a variety of content, including links, media, conversations, etc.

BP6 - Consulting Basics & Best Practices

Getting in the Door: Consulting with RI Districts

In your role as a Fuse Fellow, you will be consulting with one or more RI Local Educational Agencies (LEA) on the status of blended learning in their district or school and where they would like to go in terms of technology integration and blended and personalized learning. Many districts are very enthusiastic about their work in this area and will be thrilled to have your help. Others may be uncertain, hesitant, or even self-conscious. Working with districts all along this spectrum will require you to build relationships, earn their trust, and prove your value.

Though you undoubtedly have many of these skills under your belt already and will develop your own unique consulting style, here are a few resources on basics and best practices to keep in mind as you step into the world of educational consulting.

Media Sources to watch/read:

1. Do's & Don'ts of District Work
2. Asking Good Questions
3. Interviewing
4. Building Rapport
5. Note Taking

BP7 - Peer Interview Rubric and Summary

Media sources to watch/read:

1. Peer Interview Rubric and Summary

Activities to complete:

1. Make a copy of this doc with your last name in the file name.
2. Find a partner that you did not know before Boot Camp.
3. Your task is to interview your partner about his/her first job.
4. You will need to submit at least seven questions for review as part of this assignment. You can write some questions ahead of time or add in questions as you think of them during your interview.
5. You will have seven minutes to interview your partner. You can deviate from the list above to ask follow-up questions.
6. Switch to interview someone else.
7. In 300 words or less, write up a summary of what you learned about your partner's first job in the space below.
8. When it's ready, share the doc and copy and post the link (with the filename Interview Assignment_YourLastName) in the "Task Comments" box below.

BP8 - Phone Pitch to Superintendent

Activities to complete:

1. Leave a message for a Superintendent to schedule a meeting about the *Fuse RI* project. Be sure to do the following things during your 30-second "pitch":
 - a. Introduce yourself (both in your current role as an educator and as a *Fuse RI* Fellow) and share something of interest about you that will begin to build rapport with your district leader.
 - b. Explain why you're calling (give your best pitch about the *Fuse RI* project and why it's something he/she should care about).
 - c. Clarify what you want from him/her (get detailed about the action steps you need).

Record your "pitch" using *Croak.It* (<http://croak.it/about>). Here is a short video on what *Croak.It* is and how to use it on an iPhone or iPad.

When you're satisfied with your message, post your name and the link to your recording in the "Task Comments" box below.

BP9 - District Case Review

Media sources to watch/read:

1. VideoNot.es Tutorial
2. District Case Review

Activities to complete:

1. Create account with Videonot.es by linking your Google Account.
2. Open District Case Review video within the Videonot.es application.
3. While video is playing, interject timely questions that could allow the conversation to go deeper to gather more details.
4. Share the completed doc within the Videonot.es application and copy the link into the note box below.

BP10 - Creativity Activity

Creativity Activity!

Because the world of blended learning is evolving rapidly, your role as Fellows will require you to be creative and develop a level of comfort with ambiguity. While some educators view creativity and creation with excitement, we understand that some educators are not as comfortable with this type of work.

We believe that these skills are important for blended learning coaching and consulting. Often the right approach is not always apparent and a degree of creativity and comfort with ambiguity is necessary.

For this activity you will have one hour to “Make Something” using one of the following iPad apps (My Create, Doink, or MoveNote). You will find these apps already loaded on the iPads in the bottom home row.

Your task is to do the following:

1. Familiarize yourself with the three apps. Decide which of the apps would work best for completing the project or which app you would most like to explore. We do not care which app you pick; and if you choose to try multiple ones, that is fine as well.
2. Use at least one of the apps to teach us something that you learned this summer. We know that our Fuse Fellows are lifelong learners so there must be at least one thing that you’ve learned this summer that you can teach us. Whether it’s how to shuck a clam, how to grill tilapia, or how to boogie board, we want to learn from you!

Use your app to create a tutorial or tell us a story about what you learned. There are no requirements other than to share your new nugget of knowledge with us, and the apps are your creative medium to do so!

3. You may work by yourself, with a partner or in a small group. Our hope is that everyone completes at least one finished media creation (individually or as part of a team); but if you are not able to finish, this is not a problem.
4. Once you’ve created your video, you will need to share your result with us by posting your finished URL to the Playlist Item titled, “Creativity Activity.” Each of these apps will create videos. Some of the videos will save on your camera roll requiring you to upload them to YouTube in order to share a URL, while some of them produce their own URL automatically.



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