

**Final Report of the Evaluation of the Hawai`i State
Teacher Fellows Program, Year One**

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Executive Summary

The Hope Street Group Hawai`i State Teacher Fellows program is designed to enable teachers and coaches to “serve as spokespeople for positive change in their profession through connecting with other teachers, and local and national policymakers” (Hope Street Group, 2015). Launched in 2013-14 in Kentucky, Hope Street Group (HSG) expanded its State Teacher Fellows (STF) program to Hawai`i in 2014-15. By providing training, tools, and resources to a cadre of teacher fellows and by empowering those fellows to serve as ambassadors between the teaching profession and state policymakers, HSG hopes to transform the role of teachers in state education policy. Through participation in the program, fellows are prepared to provide feedback based on data collected from their peers, inform decisions based on data and evidence, and advocate on behalf of their profession.

HSG partnered with both the Hawai`i Department of Education (HIDOE) and the Hawai`i State Teachers Association (HSTA), which counts every Hawai`i teacher in its ranks. HSG also partnered with the Harold K.L. Castle Foundation, the Hawai`i Community Foundation and the McNerny Foundation, who provided both fiscal support and thought partnership. HSG provided 17 STFs with two day-long and one multi-day, in-person training meetings, which were designed to address issues ranging from dealing with the media to conducting focus groups to using social networks to building relationships with policy makers. Hope Street Group provided fellows training in and access to a myriad of virtual tools including a Virtual Engagement Platform (VEP)—an online resourced designed to consolidate a user’s virtual fellowship experience. Additionally, fellows held monthly phone calls with their HI STF Director, who guided them in the work of the fellowship. HSG expected fellows to leverage all of these tools, trainings, and resources to support their work, specifically in the creation of individual professional learning networks (PLNs)—large groups of professional peers and administrators. Fellows then solicited input and gathered data from their PLNs in order to inform the two formal policy reports that were then submitted to the HIDOE. As part of a memorandum of understanding between the HIDOE and HSG, the HIDOE will act on several of the recommendations embedded within those reports as part of their own agenda.

Hope Street Group commissioned Policy Studies Associates (PSA) to conduct an evaluation of the Hawai`i State Teacher Fellows program. This report focuses on the experiences and accomplishments of the fellows in their first year, as well as stakeholder partners’ expectations and goals for the program. This report is organized around the following five major findings:

- Fellows value Hope Street Group’s in-person, role-playing training sessions, and the arrival of a new STF Director helped energize and reorient fellows in their work.

- Fellows prefer in person and personal strategies (such as email or telephone) for building and growing their PLNs.
- Fellows are familiar with diverse tools for communicating with other fellows and PLN members, but prioritize in-person or personal methods over social media.
- Fellows see themselves as teacher leaders with knowledge of state policy and look forward to expanding their sphere of influence on state policy next year.
- Partners expect that HSG will help formalize a mechanism for communicating teachers' voices to policy leaders. While that process is not yet fully realized, partners are pleased with this first year's work.

Fellows repeatedly reported that although they had been trained in the use of virtual and social media tools, the culture of Hawai'i called for in-person and personal modes of communication, including phone calls and emails. This observation emerges in all aspects of the program's implementation: fellows reported finding their in-person training to be the most useful, and believed that in-person or personal modes of communication were most effective for building their PLNs as well as enticing PLN members to participate. Similarly, fellows expressed hoping for more in-person interactions with policymakers, believing that those kinds of meetings would be most effective in making change in Hawai'i.

The findings of this evaluation demonstrate that the Hawai'i fellows have been successful in establishing themselves as vehicles for teachers' voices and advocates for their profession. The vast majority of fellows will continue for a second year, and those choosing to opt-out are leaving the classroom altogether and thus no longer well-matched for a teacher fellowship. With these successes in mind, we make five recommendations for building on the accomplishments of the first year.

- Communicate the vision and timeline of the program to fellows early and often.
- Create opportunities to assess fellow's cultural contexts and training needs in order ensure that training, tools and resources align to fellows' work.
- Streamline communication procedures to ensure complete and efficient information exchange.
- Expand opportunities for in-person interactions for fellows to interact with one another and policymakers.
- Deepen credibility among teachers in the state by supporting the HODOE in implementing additional concrete actions as recommended by the fellows' work.

HSG has already begun to address these recommendations. After the arrival of a new State Director midyear, fellows were offered an opportunity to reflect on their work to date and plan for the year ahead. Additionally, as fellows have reported their discomfort with the use of social media tools and other virtual tools, HSG is housing more and more material on Google, a platform with which fellows are more comfortable. By thinking strategically around how to adopt a few changes to the program, HSG has the potential to achieve continued success in teacher leadership in Hawai'i.

Introduction

The Hope Street Group Hawai'i State Teacher Fellows program is designed to enable teachers to “serve as spokespeople for positive change in their profession through connecting with other teachers, and local and national policymakers” (Hope Street Group, 2015). Launched in 2013-14 in Kentucky, Hope Street Group (HSG) expanded its State Teacher Fellows (STF) program to Hawai'i in 2014-15. By providing training, tools, and resources to a cadre of carefully selected teacher fellows and by empowering those fellows to serve as ambassadors between the teaching profession and state policymakers, HSG hopes to transform both state education policy and the teaching profession. Through participation in the program, fellows are prepared to provide feedback based on data collected from their peers, inform decisions based on data and evidence, and advocate on behalf of their profession.

Leveraging insight from its first year in Kentucky, HSG selected Hawai'i as the next state in which to launch a teacher fellows program. Because the state of Hawai'i lacks traditional local education authorities or districts, the Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE) is able to provide many more direct services to local schools than other state departments of education. As a result, state policy decisions in Hawai'i uniquely impact the work of classroom teachers, setting the stage for HSG's STF program to have particular import for transforming teachers' role in state policymaking.

HSG partnered with both the HIDOE and the Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA), which counts every Hawai'i teacher in its ranks. HSG also partnered with the Harold K.L. Castle Foundation, the Hawai'i Community Foundation and the McNerny Foundation, who provided both fiscal support and thought partnership. HSG arrived on the political scene in Hawai'i after two contentious years of battles between the HSTA and HIDOE around the design and implementation of an Educator Effectiveness System (EES)—a turbulent time that left many teachers feeling disenfranchised and alienated from the policy process. This environment served as the backdrop for the fellows' first challenge: establishing credibility among teachers so that teachers will be willing to share their concerns and ideas.

HSG selected seventeen teachers to be fellows, representing thirteen complex areas (Exhibit 1).¹ Four of the fellows were male, and thirteen female. Their jobs and years of experience varied, with a mix of new, mid-career, and veteran teachers, and several professionals who are not currently working in classrooms but are providing instructional support. Years of teaching experience ranged from two to 34 years, with the median years of experience of eight years. In addition to content area teachers, fellows' titles at their schools included curriculum coordinator, early learning specialist, and resource teacher.

¹ “All [schools in Hawai'i] are rolled into what's known as a Complex: a high school and the elementary and middle schools that feed into it. Anywhere from two to four Complexes are grouped into a Complex Area, which has its own Complex Area Superintendent (CAS) and support staff. The CAS reports to the Deputy Superintendent in the state office.”

<http://www.Hawaiipublicschools.org/ConnectWithUs/Organization/OfficesAndBranches/Pages/Complex-Area-directory.aspx>

Exhibit 1: Distribution of Fellows across Complex Areas and Districts in Hawai`i

District and Complex Area	Number of Fellows
Kauai District: Kapaa-Kauai-Waimea Complex	1
Windward District: Castle-Kahuku Complex	1
Winward District: Kailua-Kalaheo	0
Central District: Leilehua-Mililani-Waiialua Complex	1
Central District: Aiea-Moanalua-Radford Complex	3
Honolulu District: Kaimuki-McKinley-Roosevelt Complex	1
Honolulu District: Farrington-Kaiser-Kalani	0
Leeward District: Pearl City-Waipahu Complex	2
Leeward District: Nanakuli-Waianae	0
Leeward District: Campbell-Kapolei Complex	2
Maui District: Baldwin-Kekaoulike-Maui Complex	2
Maui District: Hana-Lahainaluna-Lanai-Molokai Complex	2
Hawai`i District: Honokaa-Kealakehe-Kohala-Konwaena Complex	1
Hawai`i District: Hilo-Waiakea	0
Hawai`i District: Kau-Keaau-Pahoa Complex	1

Exhibit reads: The highest concentration of fellows is in the Central District of Honolulu, where three fellows work in the Aiea-Moanalua-Radford Complex.

Sources: Hope Street Group and State of Hawai`i Office of Planning.

HSG provided STFs with two multi-day, in-person training meetings, which were designed to address issues ranging from dealing with the media to conducting focus groups to using social networks. HSG provided training in and access to a myriad of virtual tools including a Virtual Engagement Platform (VEP) that was designed to consolidate a user’s virtual fellowship experience. Fellows participated in monthly group calls that focused on topics of wide interest with guest speakers or internal business. Additionally, fellows held monthly phone calls with their HI STF Director, who guided them in the work of the fellowship. HSG expected fellows to leverage all of these tools, trainings, and resources to support their work, specifically in the creation of individual professional learning networks (PLNs)—large groups of professional peers and administrators. Fellows then solicited input and gathered data from their PLNs in order to inform the two formal policy reports that were then submitted to the HIDEOE. As part of a memorandum of understanding between the HIDEOE and HSG, the HIDEOE will act on several of the recommendations embedded within those reports as part of its own agenda.

Hope Street Group commissioned Policy Studies Associates (PSA) to conduct an evaluation of the Hawai`i State Teacher Fellows program. This report focuses on the experiences and accomplishments of the fellows in their first year, as well as stakeholder partners’ expectations and goals for the program.

The report is organized around five major findings. Following the presentation of each of the findings in conjunction with supporting evidence, the report makes several recommendations aligned with the findings. After the recommendations, appendices detail the evaluation's methodology² and frequency data from the survey of fellows.

Findings

Fellows valued Hope Street Group's in-person, role-playing training sessions, and the arrival of a new STF Director helped energize and reorient fellows in their work.

In this section, we discuss the value of fellows' training experiences, focusing attention on how the two in-person trainings helped prepare and support fellows throughout their work. This section also focuses on one of the fellows' primary training challenges: the fellows expressed that they did not have clear expectations of the program's goals. We conclude by explaining that although the program's change in local leadership to a new HI STF Director midyear interrupted consistent communication and activities initially, the new Director ultimately served to support fellows in the second half of the year by adding direction and clarity to the fellows' experience.

The fellows highly valued the in-person and telephone trainings offered by HSG. The program offered two formal in-person training sessions, and the HI STF Director held monthly and ad hoc group phone calls. With few exceptions, fellows praised the in-person and telephone training they received throughout the year. The fellows' perceptions and the value they placed on the trainings coincided with their broader appreciation of in-person meetings as an important tool or resource: of 15 fellows who responded to the evaluation survey, 10 ranked in-person meetings as the most important tool or resource in influencing state policy (see survey frequencies in Appendix B).

Interviews revealed strong consistency among fellows as to which elements of the training were most useful, and which elements did not resonate for their work. All fellows strongly valued the focus group training. This training, which required fellows to role-play as both facilitators and participants in a focus group, allowed them a chance to broaden their own facilitation skills as well as reflect on others' work. Because the focus group is one of the primary ways in which fellows collect data on teacher voice, competence in conducting a focus group is particularly important. One of the fellows shared,

They had us do practice focus groups with each other so that we could get a handle on the point of the focus group, our role as a focus group facilitator, and get comfortable with the questions because they had come up with... a set of questions, so we had to stick to those, but they had us practice those dry runs.... Practicing it there the way they had us practicing it was helpful. Yeah, [I] definitely did things in the practice that I was like, "Okay, don't do that," or whatever. It helped.

² PSA conducted two rounds of interviews with fellows and program partners in Fall 2014 and Spring 2015. In Spring 2015, PSA conducted a survey of fellows, and analyzed extant social media data. For more information about methods, see Appendix A.

Another fellow agreed,

I really felt that the practicing with our peers in the focus groups scenarios were helpful in that everybody ... took on the role as a teacher at a school. [We practiced] some things that might happen in a focus group. Not everybody's going to agree with what you're asking or what other people are saying, but how you can still guide and facilitate the conversation? I thought that was good, just that practice.... Tips that other teachers had, the trainers and how they gave suggestions. I thought that was good. My focus group actually went pretty well and I got a lot of feedback.

As a result, fellows reported that they were able to practically envision their role as facilitator. This strategy helped fellows feel well-prepared to take on the responsibilities associated with leading and facilitating focus groups. A third fellow explained,

Then in the role-play for the focus group, we took turns so I got to see everybody else's performance as well. It was very, very powerful... Because I saw how [the other fellows] handled certain situations. I would run through my mind "Wow, how would I handle that?" Then I would watch them, and often it would be different, and I'd say OK, and I could add what they did to mine, or reject theirs, or reject mine. It was really good experience.

The media and communications training also elicited positive feedback, though several fellows were concerned about the utility of investing in a training on how to excel at television interviews, as the fellows did not anticipate doing many television interviews. The training, which required fellows to record a mock, impromptu interview with a fake reporter and then critique the video alongside their new colleagues, elicited a strong response from fellows throughout the interviews. One fellow remarked on her appreciation for the process, "The media training one was great. Being able to look at yourself on video and being taught to have that three-point discussion, three-point plan when you walk in ... I thought that was really useful." She added,

The media training was very useful – although it was painful because it's horrible looking at yourself on a huge screen—but teaching us to think on our feet, to take control of conversation in a situation like that, because we do get, occasionally, chances to talk to people. If you get a very short opportunity to talk to people, especially if it's going to be recorded, you need to make your point. I thought everybody liked that training a lot, as painful as it was to look at yourself on video.

Another fellow agreed,

I liked the first training that we did, that really stands out in my mind, was our being trained to do television interviews. That was such an ice breaker because it was so challenging to do, and there we were. We didn't even really know each other that well, and we were doing it. I thought it served a dual purpose there.... It made me feel all the emotions that I would feel in the real situation, the nerves, the excitement. It also helped

me to see what was going to be difficult for me, what was going to be challenging, so that I could prepare for it. I also had the opportunity to watch others, so in the TV interview we watched everybody's video and learned a lot from them.

Another fellow agreed, though she found the experience highly stressful. For her, the benefit of the role playing was countered by her performance anxiety. She described,

We had a half-day media training by a local media training company. They came in and we did mock interviews. It was very stressful.... [The trainers] said, "Okay, we're going to pass out a question to you." It was kind of on the little controversial topic. There were four different questions for the 15 of us that were there. Then they just said, "Here's your question, you have 5 minutes to look it over and then we're going to pull you outside and interview you on that question." That in itself wasn't so bad but then they said, "And then we're going to watch it in front of everyone and critique it," which was very stressful because we haven't met each other before.... I was feeling very insecure because... my past experience [with media has] never been so great. I've always been fumbly and anxious. Then knowing that, [this is] the first time I'm meeting my fellows so you want to make a good impression. You want to make it like 'I'm here for a reason just like you.' ... Then you critique each other. It's just awkward. You don't know each other. My heart was pounding. I felt sick. I actually was probably the most stressed I've been in a long time. At the end of it, I did feel really, really good about it. I felt like we had all learned a lot about ourselves as interviewees and about how to ... some skills and tips.

Only one fellow disagreed with the praise, noting that the work of the fellows does not incorporate enough television or radio interviews on the day-to-day to necessitate the investment of time and resources. He observed, "We don't do interviews. People aren't calling us up and asking to be on TV. If they are calling us, they're asking us to write things.... We very rarely have to do that skill, yet we spent a half a day on it."

Though feedback about the training remained mostly positive, one component of the formal in-person training was less successful. During the third convening in February, the fellows interacted with two trainers from the National Network of State Teachers of the Year, who did a half-day training on teacher leadership. For a variety of reasons, the fellows found this component of the work to be the least helpful part of the training. First, the fellows had just completed a full day of collaborative work, in which many of them felt inspired and ready to work together to create an action plan for the second half of the year. This teacher leadership training, though well-intentioned, was too formal to harness the potential energy of the fellows. One of the fellows explained that after the trainers came into the room, the atmosphere "changed from people being collaborative and talking about substantive things to 'hey, let's explain some theory' ... I'm all about the theory stuff. I love theory research, and people should cite things, but the way they set it up was not a way that teachers are very receptive to."

Other fellows agreed, noting that its timing at the end of a long two-day convening did not help. Another fellow explained,

I felt like [the trainers who developed the teacher leadership standards] really didn't help me as much. It was towards the end of the leadership one and I was like, "Well, we already did a two-day training." We could have squeezed this in in 30 minutes and just been more effective in this way. It wasn't directly helping our cause or to gain momentum where we needed to gain at that specific point in time.

Another fellow observed,

We had these presenters come in that talked to us about where teacher leaders are heading and ... I guess the different criteria for becoming an effective teacher leader. I felt it might have come at a different place. It could have been presented either earlier in our workshop time schedule just because I think at that point [in the convening], we already had an ... understanding so it was almost as if they were repeating information that we got. And, because we had presenters that I think were from the East Coast versus Hawai'i that the social barrier was also interesting... because in Hawai'i we like to "talk story." That's how we get a lot of our information, but the presenters were strict to business and they were presenting at us with the information and providing, just because of the time crunch, providing very limited opportunities for us to [connect with our peers].

Though fellows were overwhelmingly pleased with the in-person training they received, several fellows noted they entered the program and training disoriented and unsure of the program's direction, a feeling that lasted throughout the first part of the year. On the end-of-year STF survey, two fellows noted they were not sure what to expect coming into the program; one called it a "rough start." Many felt that the first in-person training could have better identified a road map, so that the fellows could locate their work within the overall plan of the program. One fellow explained his difficulties in not knowing what would be expected of him after completing a task:

I just don't know what the greater—the big picture—plan is beyond ... data gathering. After we get the report, after we turn it in to the DOE, depending on how they take it, I've heard there's going to be a second round of surveys. But beyond surveys, beyond data gathering, what's the greater vision? What's the next plan? I think that would be helpful [for me to know] in just looking at being able to assess what leadership is needed from me, and in what ways I should grow or push myself so I can be ready for those obstacles or those challenges. And I say obstacles and challenges in the good way. I joined this program to be pushed as a professional. I just, in that development, would like to see what's coming so I can better prepare myself.

Another fellow agreed,

I think, for me, probably the main thing would have been just an overview of the year, the calendar year, for us... I think if we would have had that plotted out in a calendar, even the month, or three months out, if we didn't have the year mapped out yet... I know we talked about a lot of the things that were going to happen in the roll-out, but to have that timeline... Maybe we could have helped shuffle around some of those dates [to make

them more convenient for us]. Just to have, I think, an overview of what's coming down the pipeline kind of thing.

The arrival of the new HI STF Director halfway through the year helped to mitigate some of that confusion about timeline and purpose. As one of her first acts as State Director, the new HI STF Director ran the fellows' second convening, introducing herself to the fellows and enabling a reboot of their work by providing them with a revised overview of the program and its purpose. As part of that meeting, the first agenda item was a debriefing on the fellows' work to date, as well as a review of the fall 2014 report and overview of the spring data collection timeline. That re-orientation to the work of the program, followed by the new HI STF Director's consistent in-person and virtual support after the meeting, enabled the fellows to recommit to their work. One fellow observed,

The change in directors really slowed our momentum down mid-year. We were just kind of twiddling our thumbs and saying, "Okay, what next?" I think it affected the momentum of our pilot year. [After the new HI STF Director arrived,] you could tell there was an urgency. She had a list of things to do. She had a vision. We had the marks of doing it.

Another fellow concurred, noting how the arrival of the new HI STF Director helped re-energize the fellows into doing their work with the larger vision in mind,

I really like the way [the new HI STF Director helped us organize into committees]. We split up into groups to say what we're going to tackle next. She was like, "Okay, how are you going to do that? What is your big goal and what are the steps you're going to take as a group to get there?" I really appreciated that she has her vision but she also knew what are the next logical steps to make you achieve your goal. She appointed a fellow to be in charge of [keeping track of those steps]. That fellow is emailing us and trying to arrange dates. I really appreciated how [the HI STF Director] could see the big picture and then break it down into little steps too.

Indeed, the new HI STF Director's support was critical beyond the initial in-person convening. Nine of fifteen STF survey respondents ranked her advice as one of the top three resources most useful to them in advocating for and influencing state policy (see survey frequencies in Appendix B). Fellows reported interacting with her at least monthly, with the majority (8) reporting that they interacted with her 2-3 times per month; two fellows reported speaking to her 3-5 times per week, three said 1-2 times per week, and two said less than 2-3 times per month. When asked about her value over the course of the second half of the fellowship, one fellow observed, "Because she was a program coordinator or a project coordinator, she's able to strategically, through our conversation, pick out what is stray thought and then carried us to restructure the way that the whole teaching group is working. I think that the way she envisions [the program] now is actually more aligned with... what Hope Street Group hopes to present." The same fellow continued,

Having the regular phone calls with [the new HI STF Director], both as a group, and individually, ... knowing that if there's something we needed or wanting to have a sit

down and talk about something, any challenges we had, having access to her.... has made a lot of difference for everybody. The moral support and the encouragement that comes from having someone within the state, especially for the younger ... some of the younger, less experienced teachers, it gave them a little more security. Knowing that [she] was there. Even though we're all on different islands. I don't know how often she got to the other islands, or different kinds of events, I think there was some travel for her. Having that connection was important.

As one fellow summarized, "The beginning was unclear, but I feel that we have been listened to, we have been able to have our say in some of the direction of HSG in the state."

Fellows prefer in person and personal strategies (such as email or telephone) for building and growing their PLNs.

A central focus of the STF program is establishing and growing a professional learning network (PLN) of educators, administrators, and others who can collectively advocate for and influence state policies on education. This work is central to HSG's theory of change, and is the primary vehicle by which fellows are able to engage and represent their peers through teacher leadership. In this section, we describe the general characteristics of fellows' PLNs across Hawai'i, as well as discuss how fellows leveraged personal communication strategies such as in-person conversations and emails to expand and engage their networks.

By their own estimates, a majority of STFs established PLNs of 100 or fewer people in their first year of the fellowship (Exhibit 2 below). Their email list sizes ranged from 19 contacts to 81, with an average list size of 69 contacts.

Most fellows formed a PLN that brought together peers within their complex area³ and within Hawai'i, mainly consisting of other teachers (Exhibit 3). As such, when asked about the geographical reach of their PLN, more than half of fellows (8) who responded to the survey described their PLN as mostly local; five estimated their geographical reach to be across the state, and two across multiple states (See Q3 survey frequencies in Appendix B). One fellow described the process of considering what kind of individuals to attempt to include,

Currently, I have 90 individuals. So the process of building my PLN has been basically looking at my existing networks and seeing how I can grow them and seeing how I can mobilize them. So I was focused a lot on my school and talking to people at my staff, my co-workers who are also in the same context of school as I am, and who I know at a more personal level have had different frustrations, different experiences with Common Core implementation. My other major network is Teach for America alumni and current Teach for America corps members. So just being able to have different point people who are able to be present or ... looking at how I can utilize and empower different people I already know to be leaders in their communities when it comes to communicating these types of needed data or these opportunities to share voice.

³ Recall here that Hawai'i lacks traditional districts, and is instead organized into complex areas—collections of 2-4 complexes, each made up of a high school and its lower feeder schools.

Exhibit 2: Fellows' Estimated Professional Learning Network Size (N=15)

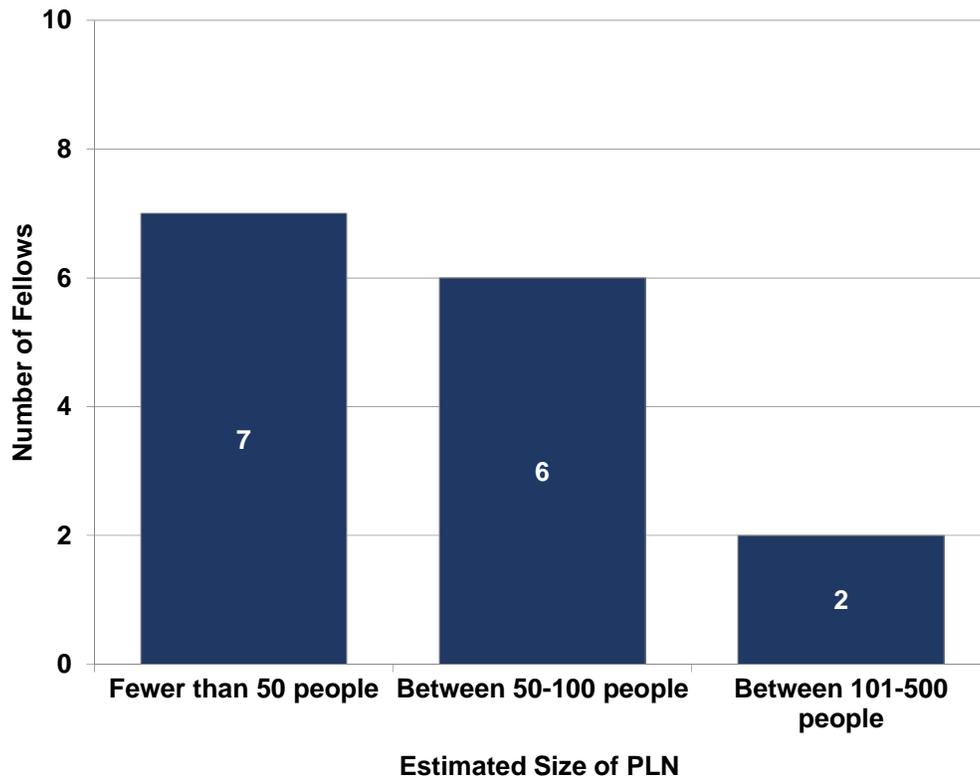


Exhibit reads: Seven Fellows estimated fewer than 50 people comprise their PLNs.
Source: STF survey, spring 2015.

For the most part, fellows reported reaching out to try to get individuals to agree to participate in their PLNs either in-person or by individual email invitations. This discrete, one-to-one contact was a commonly-cited mechanism for fellows trying to entice individuals to sign on to the project, appealing to the small-community values of many school complex areas throughout Hawai'i. Explained one fellow, "Mostly it was emailing my really close teacher friends and asking them for emails of friends that wouldn't mind taking an email from me. I knew it [would work if I] wasn't removed—I was a friend of a friend." Another fellow agreed,

I went through friends. Then I went through my friends' friend networks. I would email my friends and say, "Hey, do you know anybody who might be interested in doing this?" Then, I would get their email from that person. Then I would [ask], mostly approaching it as a favor to be honest. Blindly going up to people didn't seem to work as much. If I asked as a favor of teacher friends, if they knew me, they would more likely introduce me to people that they knew are teachers. It just kind of snowballed from there.

Another fellow agreed and elaborated on her methods and tools to recruit individuals to participate in her focus group, one of the primary PLN activities,

Email, text messages and in person. Our campus is really small, like you could probably walk around it in a good ten minutes. It was just a matter of catching people at our staff

meetings, or even just during general breaks as part of conversation and say, “Hey, don't forget to come to my focus group.” I think I was lucky.

Exhibit 3: Members of Fellows’ Professional Learning Networks (N=15)

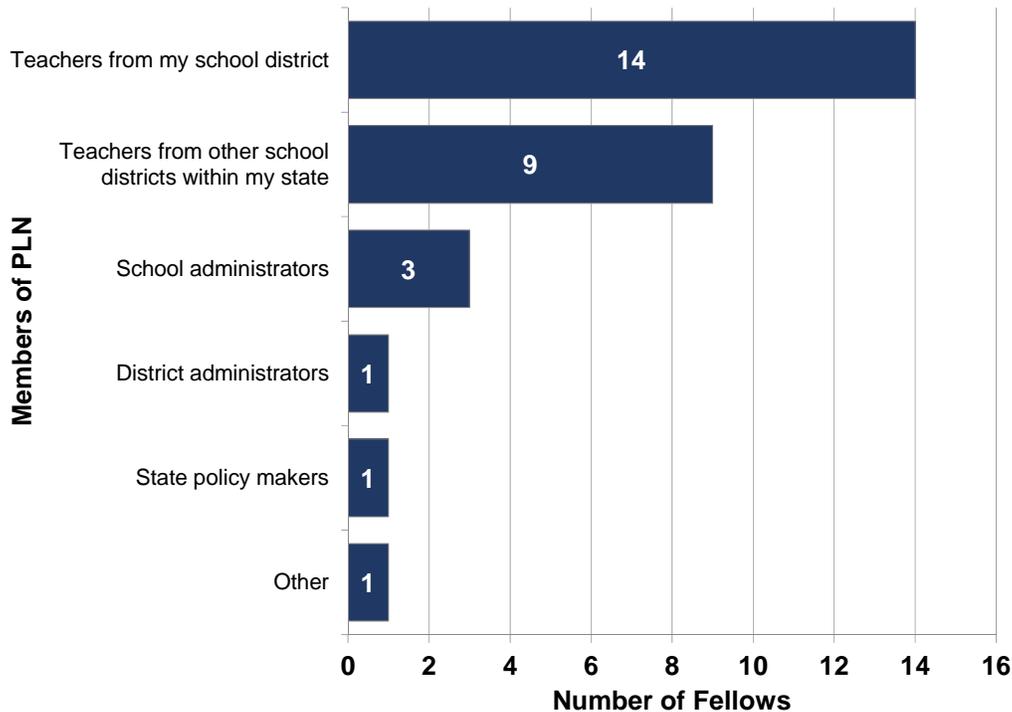


Exhibit reads: Fourteen fellows’ PLNs include teachers from their school district.
Source: Spring 2015 STF survey question 4.

And yet another fellow concurred,

So for my school site, it was a mixture of sending emails, one-on-ones, conversations for people who I could talk to and find time to, that would get kids down. And I’m also making announcements at our faculty meetings. For more targeted people outside of my school, it came through phone calls. If I was able to see them, I do that too.

A fourth fellow described the process in greater detail, noting a later development in communication opportunities,

First I talked to my most immediate colleagues, the people that I share an office with and work together with most closely. Then I branched out, I go to schools as a part of my job, so I would contact school-based people from each school that I knew. Initially, it was just by talking to people. If I happened to be in a meeting I would get permission to just do this little announcement. I would do that, and then I would maybe pass around a little sign-up sheet. Then towards the end when we found we can use Lotus Notes, then I started sending invitations by Lotus Notes. That got a little less personal.

That last remark highlights one of the initial challenges fellows experienced while attempting to grow their PLNs: initially, they were not allowed to use their official school emails (i.e., “Lotus Notes”) for work related to being fellows, so they were obliged to use personal emails. Eventually, fellows understood that the block was lifted, and fellows turned to Lotus Notes as an effective way to reach out to their PLNs. Shared one fellow,

In the state of Hawai`i, we’re not allowed to use our work email for non-work issues. We’re only supposed to be using Lotus, that’s what they call it, to talk about school stuff, to communicate with other people about school, but in a very direct way, “What are you doing fifth period? The meeting is at this time.” People, at least at my school, in my experience, they will complain very vocally about misuse of those kinds of things. I knew that I could just go on Lotus and click all teachers and I could email everybody, “Hey, join this group, here’s this information,” but I also knew that I would be pissing people off if I did that and skirting the state of Hawai`i’s use rule.

The fellows leveraged their PLNs to collect data on issues that matter most to educators and administrators across the state. This data gathering mechanism both informed fellows’ individual understandings of how education policy impacts professionals around the state while also providing the information necessary to produce their biannual policy reports and recommendations. Asked which issues are most important to their PLNs, fellows most frequently mentioned Common Core implementation and related testing (10), teacher evaluation—specifically, the Education Effectiveness System (7), and professional development (6) (see survey frequencies in Appendix B).

But when asked how often fellows are soliciting input from their PLNs, only a few leveraged those relationships beyond the formal expectations of the program. In general, most fellows relied on input from their PLNs from one of the biannual data gatherings, communicating with them in person in the form of a focus group or by survey collection (see Q5 frequency table in Appendix B; specifically, use of “in-person meetings” and “SurveyMonkey”). When asked why, fellows provided some insight into other challenges that they faced while trying to build their PLNs, including how to classify informal interactions, or anxiety about approaching colleagues. In the absence of formal guidance from HSG in the first half of the year, several fellows reported uncertainty as to how to incorporate information gathered informally in their work in schools. Shared one fellow,

I’m seeing these people every single day. How do you say, “Hey, we’re having a PLN conversation right now,” as opposed to, “Hey, we’re just talking, because we talk every single day about stuff, and we already talked about, or we like to talk about insert topic right here.” I really struggled for how do I distinguish this, because I’m getting teacher feedback all the time, and that’s something I wanted to do. Is that Hope Street Group’s role, or is that just that's what a teacher leader should do?

This lack of certainty caused others to feel shy about approaching colleagues. Agreed one colleague,

It hindered my building up of my PLN. I started it a little late. I was a little uncomfortable talking to people, because I didn't quite know what I was saying. What I wound up saying was, "At some point I'll contact you, there's going to be a survey, and if you do want, there's going to be focus groups." I wasn't 100% ... I wished I could give them a date and that kind of thing, and I couldn't. That was a little difficult. Once we had the information [about how to formally communicate] then it was a lot easier.

Further, several fellows noted that the formality actually served as an obstacle to getting more (and potentially better) data. Just as the fellows wanted less structured and more informal, collaborative time in the training, so too did they want to be able to utilize and explain their informal interactions with their PLNs. Shared one fellow, "It feels like we're doing the things that [HSG is] saying we need to do ... We could just be having focus groups whenever and just talking about these things and hashing out solutions with anybody, just sort of setting up a regular talk story, not even call it a focus group."

But perhaps the largest roadblock for fellows engaging their PLNs was a shared sense that Hawai'i's teachers simply do not want to participate in providing feedback to the HDOE. Because HSG launched the STF program in the year following the tumultuous battle over the Educator Effectiveness System, fellows believed their first hurdle was to overcome their peers' skepticism that their contributions would be valued or utilized. That challenge defined the first segment of the data collection process, as fellows struggled to convince their colleagues that this process would work and their investment of time and energy would prove important. One fellow explained that teachers' reluctance to participate in the process

comes from... a distrust in the system, a distrust in how things have been handled in the past... couple of years where no one's listening to them and feeling like it's too little too late. [Teachers are] like why are they asking [about Common Core] now? We've done Common Core for the last three, four years. Why now are they asking...? We needed their support years ago. That's part of it too, frustration.

That sentiment was echoed by a number of fellows, who felt they struggled to engage their PLNs—to get attendance at focus groups, to complete the survey—because teachers were wary of the value of the process. Another fellow shared, "I think teachers have been burned a lot lately through a lot of different things. Unfortunately, they weren't seeing [the focus groups] as being their opportunity to share, which is what it was. They were seeing it as an opportunity somebody was taking to twist." Indeed, nearly every fellow interviewed for this evaluation reflected this sentiment. Another fellow neatly summarized the impact that this distrust had on their experiences with PLNs, "I think for Hope Street Group to gain greater voice, we need to gain the trust of teachers that their time and their input is going to make a difference at the policy level, and is going to be listened to and taken seriously. And because it's a new program, they don't have that assurance."

Despite these challenges, fellows reported overwhelmingly positive feelings about their work with their PLNs, observing that they felt they had contributed high-quality data to the cause. When describing his experience with his PLN, one fellow neatly summarized the experience of many fellows,

I was impressed, again, despite all the pressure and all the challenges that they face, teachers, at least in Hawai`i, are such good soldiers. You set the bar and they will do everything they can to reach it. Just the commitment that people have to do, even though they may not agree this is what kids need, if you say this is what kids need, they will ... do their utmost to fulfill what they see as their responsibility. I was very impressed with that, because it was so consistent.

Fellows are familiar with diverse tools for communicating with other fellows and PLN members, but prioritize in-person or personal methods over social media.

In this section, we discuss the various strategies fellows used to communicate with their PLNs and amongst each other, and why the fellows chose not to embrace more strongly the social media tools available to them. The use of social media, particularly Twitter and Facebook, to inform and influence policy gained traction among State Teacher Fellows during the first year of the Kentucky STF Program in 2013-14 (see Aladjem, Meredith, and Arcaira 2014). In contrast, in the first year of the STF Program in Hawai`i, fellows remarked that they felt encouraged to use social media in their work, but they did not latch onto the virtual tools in the same way that their Kentucky counterparts did.

Fellows interacted with their PLNs frequently and with greater preference for email and in-person meetings than for social media. As shown in Exhibit 4 below, fellows used email most frequently to communicate with their PLNs, with two of the fifteen fellows who responded to the STF survey reporting they used it at least once a week for this purpose, four used it monthly, and nine using it less than two to three times per month. All but one fellow reported holding in-person meetings with members of their PLNs at least occasionally: two of the fifteen fellows reported holding meetings at least two to three times per month and twelve fellows reported holding meetings less than two to three times per month. Specific to other tools, there is a more noticeable divide between users and non-users: twelve of the fifteen fellows who responded to the STF survey used Facebook to interact with their PLNs two to three times per month or less, but three never used the tool. Furthermore, a third of fellows reported never using telephone, Twitter, texting or SurveyMonkey to interact with their PLNs, while most of remaining two-thirds used these tools less than two to three times per month. Finally, the VEP⁴—a tool whose use HSG has de-emphasized in the 2014-15 program year—was the least frequently used among fellows, with twelve surveyed fellows reported they never used it at all.

When fellows were interacting with their peer fellows (rather than their PLNs), they used the same set of tools but with different frequencies of interactions. As with PLN interactions, email was most frequently used for fellow-to-fellow communications: four of fifteen fellows who responded to the STF survey used email at least once a week to interact with other fellows, seven used it two to three times per month, and four used it less than two to three times per month (Exhibit 5). All fellows reported meeting in person with other fellows less than two to three times per month, and a higher proportion of fellows reported having used telephone, Twitter, Facebook or texting at least occasionally (less than two to three times per month or more frequently) to interact with other fellows than the proportion of fellows who used these tools

⁴ HSG trained the fellows on the use of the VEP, but as the year progressed fellows found that the tool lacked utility.

with their PLNs. SurveyMonkey, mainly used by fellows for data collection from their PLNs, was the least frequently used by fellows for communication with other fellows, and VEP ranked only slightly higher in use, with one fellow using the tool two to three times per month and the rest either using it less than two to three times per month or never.

Exhibit 4: Fellows’ Use of Tools to Communicate with Professional Learning Networks (N=15)

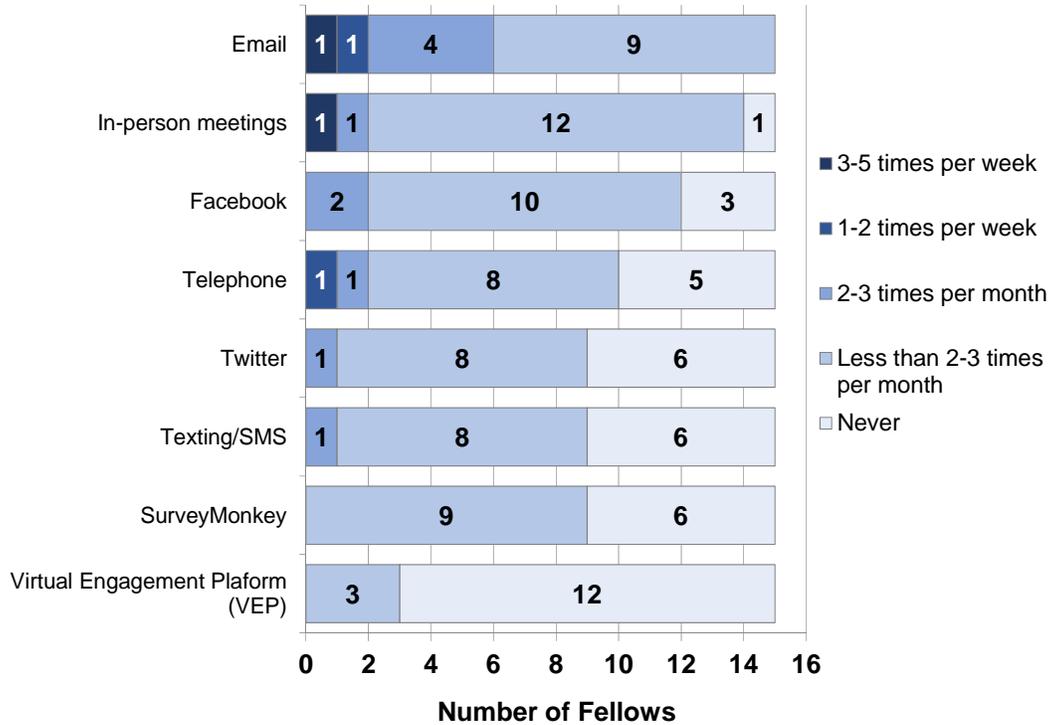


Exhibit reads: One fellow uses email 3-5 times per week to communicate with his or her PLN.
 Source: Spring 2015 STF survey question 5.

Exhibit 5: Fellows' Use of Tools to Communicate with other State Teacher Fellows (N=15)

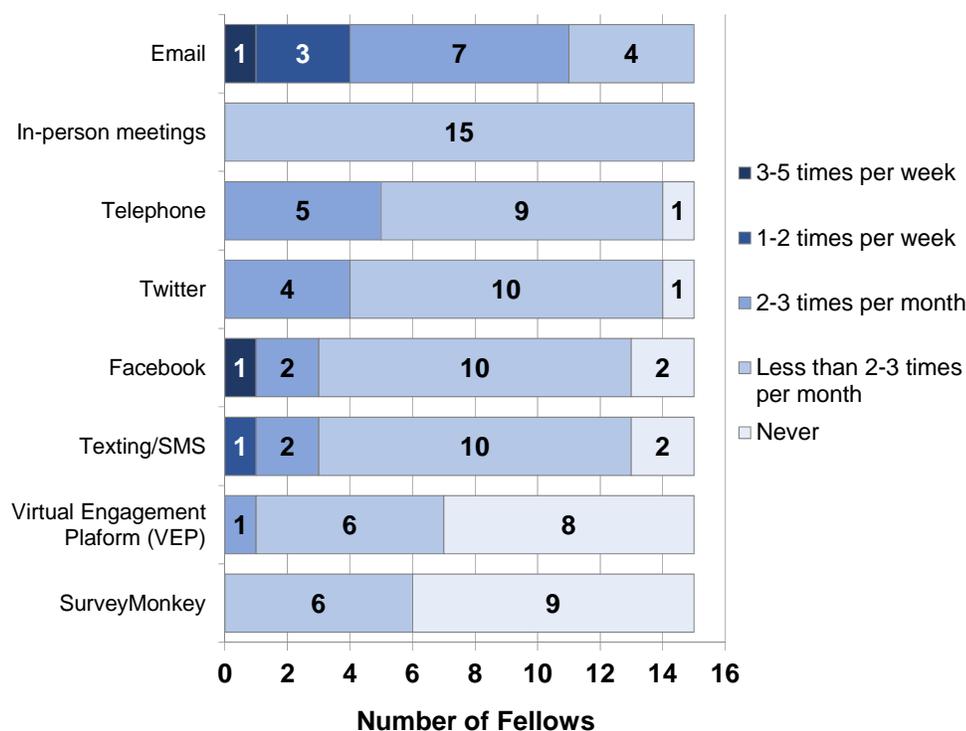


Exhibit reads: One fellow uses email 3-5 times per week to communicate with other fellows.
 Source: Spring 2015 STF survey question 6.

Overall, the fellows prioritized use of direct or personal modes of communications—email, in person meetings, telephone—more than use of social media. In addition to evidence from the fellows’ survey responses to use of tools described above, analysis of their Twitter presence and use sheds light on most fellows’ reluctance to fully embrace the tool as a means to conduct their work. The Hawai`i fellows each maintained an individual account on Twitter throughout the program year and used a program-specific hashtag— #HSGHI14 – to tag tweets on Twitter that were relevant to Hawai`i state policy and the STF program. In a collection of 131 top tweets⁵ from September 13, 2014 through May 6, 2015 tagged with #HSGHI14, only 12 percent (15 tweets) were tweeted by Hawai`i fellows, with seven fellows posting these 15 tweets. Nineteen percent of the tweets were posted by Hope Street Group’s twitter account or the former Hawai`i State Director, and 34 percent were posted by Kentucky fellows.

The word cloud in Exhibit 6 below highlights the most frequently used words within tweets containing #HSGHI14, with the largest words representing more frequent use. In addition to the prominence of the Kentucky STF hashtag (HSGKY) among #HSGHI tweets, tweet content highlighted upcoming HSG-led education chats (tagged with #HSGEDCHAT) and some of the work and achievements of the Hawai`i fellows (e.g., “fantastic”, “fellows”, “oahuinstituteday”).

⁵ Top tweets were collected via an online Twitter tracking software, Keyhole, which designates tweets as “top tweets” by the number of times a tweet was retweeted and its klout—or visibility—online. For further discussion, see methodology in Appendix A.

None of the larger words, however, are necessarily policy or Hawai`i-focused, suggesting that Hawai`i fellows' presence and outreach via Twitter is limited and not strongly focused on information dissemination or advocacy for state policies. Moreover, the smaller number of tweets (#HSGKY was used to tag tweets more than twice as often as #HSGHI14) and the fact that a third of these tweets were tweeted by Kentucky fellows shows that Twitter use did not flourish in Hawai`i the way that it did in Kentucky.

Exhibit 6: Content of Tweets Containing #HSGHI14 (N=131)

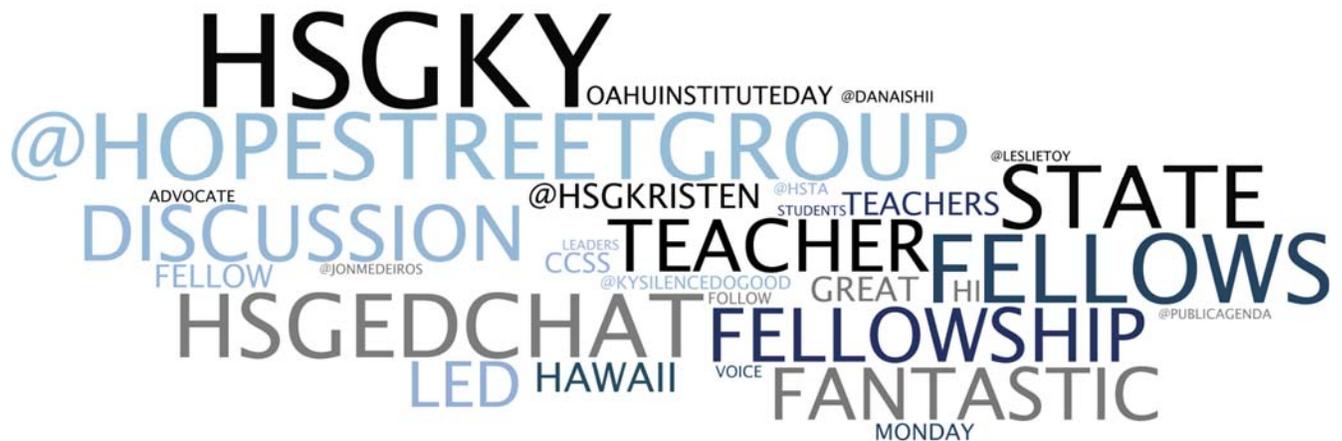


Exhibit reads: The most prominently used word in the tweets containing #HSGHI14 was HSGKY, the hashtag associated with the Kentucky STF program.

Source: Keyhole data downloads, 9/13/14 – 5/6/2015.

Fellows were candid about why they preferred other tools of communication over social media. When asked to explain their communication preferences, fellows described feeling that social media was less effective given their everyday communication practices. Though HSG provided the fellows with training and understanding of social media tools, the fellows expressed hesitation about investing time into using them when other communication opportunities were readily available and better fit their skills. One colleague described the social media tools' lack of utility:

I think the usefulness for those [tools], when you're talking about social networking, is that you have to have people who are going to receive and use [information like] that. Really, honestly, it's expanding that network of people I know who I can influence, or who can influence me where that's going to be that tool between us... We could try and build that culture to use [those tools] but I'm not sure if people aren't already using that tool if it's worth the time to say, "Hey, let's go on Twitter and do this," versus "Hey, we're already in person, let's hash out some education discussion right here and now."

Some fellows felt that their own networks did not use these tools, either, or at least not enough to bear fruit on the time investment. So while a fellow recognized the value in a tool such as

Twitter when used by one highly influential or well-connected person, the tool had little value to her communications with her PLN. She observed,

I think, personally, I am not a big Twitter user. I think a lot of the people I know are not big Twitter users. I know ... having taken courses in social media and stuff, I understand the value behind it. I don't know that I'm yet adept enough in it and have enough clout or followers to be super-influential... but it only takes one person.

Another colleague observed that while she did use the tools as was encouraged by HSG, she did not find them anywhere near as effective as her in-person interactions. She noted,

I used [social media], but I didn't really get people joining my PLN that way. It was more personal. You know, I think that's how a lot of the teachers are here. It's just more personal if they know you or they've met you. They're more inclined to say, "Oh, I guess I can learn a little bit more about it." Or, "Of course, I'll do that for you." Versus just somebody tweeting and seeing my Facebook.

Also noted among fellows was that the abundance of available communication tools could pose challenges, both in overwhelming fellows with communications tasks and in inhibiting a streamlined flow of discussion. One fellow described the VEP as unsuccessful because it was "another log in, another thing to log in to." Another fellow added,

I think for us, one of the issues is that we have so many methods of communication amongst the fellows so we have emails then you have the VEP. I think [one of the fellows] posted something I think on the VEP and I was like, "Oh, I totally missed that," because it's not via email. I think it's hard because there's so many methods of communication that we can use.

The same fellow also described her usage of Google Docs, signaling that other tools are emerging as relevant to fellows' work in addition to the ones described in this section. As Hawai'i fellows discover more tools to use for communication, it is likely their personal preferences and cultural norms will play a larger role in determining usage than HSG's encouragement of using certain tools.

Fellows perceive themselves as teacher leaders with knowledge of state policy, and look forward to expanding their sphere of influence on state policy next year.

Overall, the fellows were pleased with their experiences in the STF program, gaining the knowledge and support they need to become teacher leaders and advocating for state policies. All fifteen fellows who responded to the STF survey reported that they were either extremely satisfied (7) or satisfied (8) with the program (see Q14 frequency table in Appendix B). In an open-ended question asking them to explain their rating of satisfaction with the program, fellows mentioned great communication within the program, feeling well-supported and informed, and expanding their networks. In her response to the question, one fellow wrote about the value of establishing and growing her PLN:

I was really able to network and feel that teachers' voices are being heard. I have made a lot of really great connections. My PLN is extending and I'm able to support those in my PLN as well as in other fellows' PLN. We are able to work in teams to work on issues that teachers are having. We are definitely making change.

Another fellow discussed the opportunities she experienced, including the opportunity to interact with Hope Street Group's Kentucky and National fellows at conferences:⁶

I am happy to have had the opportunity to travel to other states and meet teachers across the country. I also feel that my opportunities to meet with state leaders and officials has been very helpful. Through this program I have become more motivated to better my teaching and grow as an educator.

The program also helped establish the fellows as teacher leaders with support from their peers, the HI STF Director, and the training they received. On the STF survey, all fellows strongly (4) or agreed (11) that they perceive themselves as teacher leaders (see Q10 frequency table in Appendix B). In an open-ended survey response, one fellow explained, "I have learned how to become a leader in terms of influencing a larger group of teachers through communication and an exchange of ideas. Additionally, I am able to voice their concerns and suggestions." As shown in Exhibit 7 below, a number of factors contributed to the fellows' perceptions of the program and their role as teacher leaders. All fellows strongly agreed (10) or agreed (5) that working with a cohort of other fellows was beneficial to their development as teacher leaders, and all but one fellow strongly agreed (8) or agreed (6) that support from the HI STF Director helped them become an effective teacher leader. As described earlier in the report, fellows also valued the training they received, with four fellows strongly agreeing and eleven agreeing that it helped prepare them to be effective teacher leaders. Alongside these contributing factors and the fellows' leadership, all fellows strongly agreed (10) or agreed (5) that the program is an effective way of giving teachers a voice in state policy.

The STF program also helped develop among the fellows a stronger knowledge base of state policy and concrete communication skills. As part of their work, fellows had several opportunities to meet address policymakers and present their ideas in public settings: in February, all the fellows met Representative Takashi Ohno, and 5 fellows were able to extend the conversation with classroom visits. Individual and small groups of fellows were also invited throughout the year to present the results of their work to various audiences, including the Teacher Education Coordinating Committee in Hawai'i and the Hawai'i Business Roundtable, among others.

As a result of participation in the program, all fellows strongly agreed (6) or agreed (9) that because of their role, they are more knowledgeable about state policy and have learned about new tools and resources to influence state policy (Exhibit 8). They also strongly agreed (5) or agreed (10) they have become better leaders among their peers in advocating state policy and that they learned about new tools and resources to influence state policy. Furthermore, all the

⁶ Several fellows were able to travel to the continental United States as part of their fellowship for a teacher leadership conference, where they were able to network with their HSG National and Kentucky State Teacher Fellows counterparts.

fellows strongly agreed (4) or agreed (11) they were better able to communicate their thoughts on state policy.

Exhibit 7: Fellows' Perception of the STF Program (N=15)

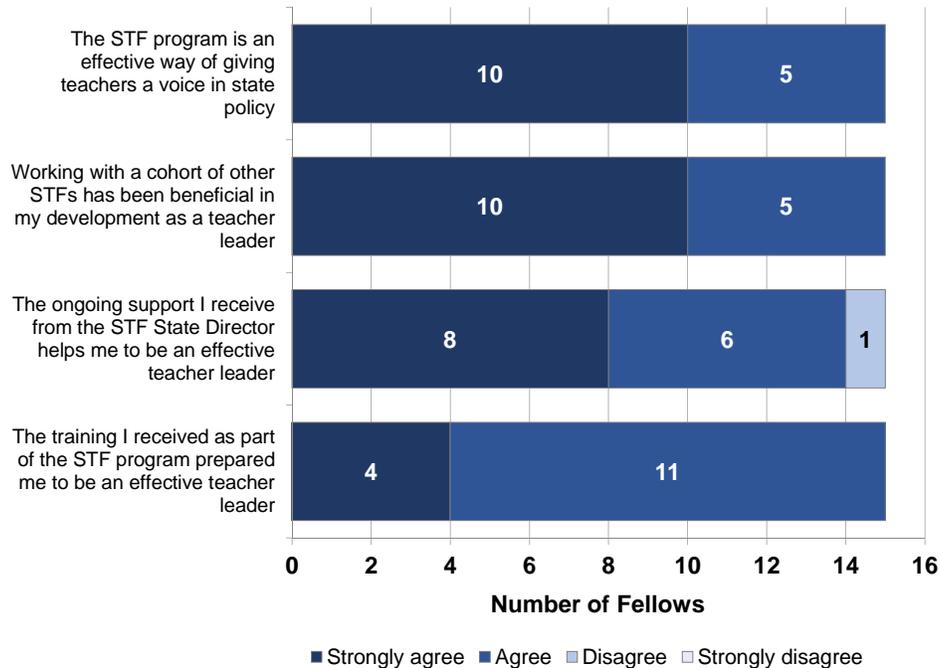


Exhibit reads: Ten fellows strongly agreed the STF program is an effective way of giving teachers a voice in state policy.

Source: STF survey, spring 2015.

With a foundation of knowledge and tools, the fellows are looking forward to continuing their work, particularly in having greater influence over state policy. All strongly agreed (2) or agreed (13) that they have informed their PLNs about state policy, but some hinted there is room for growth in their sphere of influence: four of fifteen STF survey respondents disagreed that either they or their PLNs have yet influenced state policy (Exhibit 9). Based on written commentary from the fellows via the STF survey, one way that fellows think they may have more influence is by meeting in-person with state policy makers. One fellow wrote that he had “anticipated more focus on meeting and working with state-level policy makers and less time managing social media tools.” In response to her satisfaction level with the program, a second fellow wrote, “it would be wonderful to have more time with policy makers.” Motivated to continue, the fellows anticipate building off of their first year’s activities in a second year.

Exhibit 8: Fellows’ Perceived Program Effect on Knowledge and Communication of State Policy (N=15)

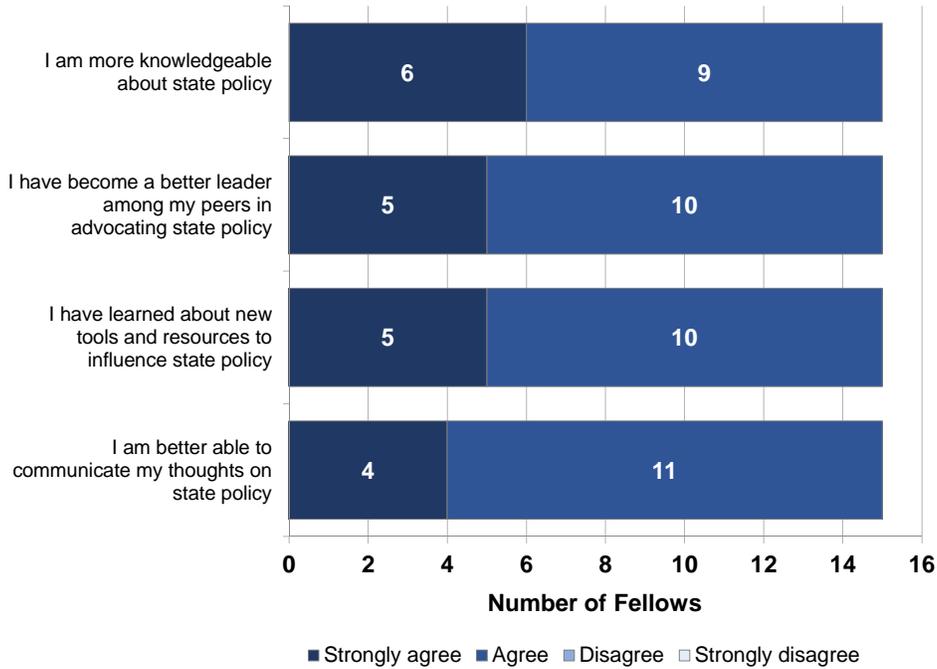


Exhibit reads: Six fellows strongly agreed they are more knowledgeable about state policy because of their role as a STF in 2014-15.
 Source: STF survey, spring 2015.

Other than two fellows who responded they are switching to new positions next year, all who responded to the survey said they would return in the next program year. As one fellow explained, “I am very excited about the work ahead. I know that this year was laying the groundwork for even more impactful work.” Another fellow expressed her motivation to represent her peers: “I am ready to use the tools that I have learned to increase my effectiveness as a teacher leader and as a representative voice of my fellow teachers.” The fellows recognized the importance of this first year in establishing their network and informing state policy and plan continue on this path should they return to the program.

Exhibit 9: Fellows’ Perceived Influence on State Policy (N=15)

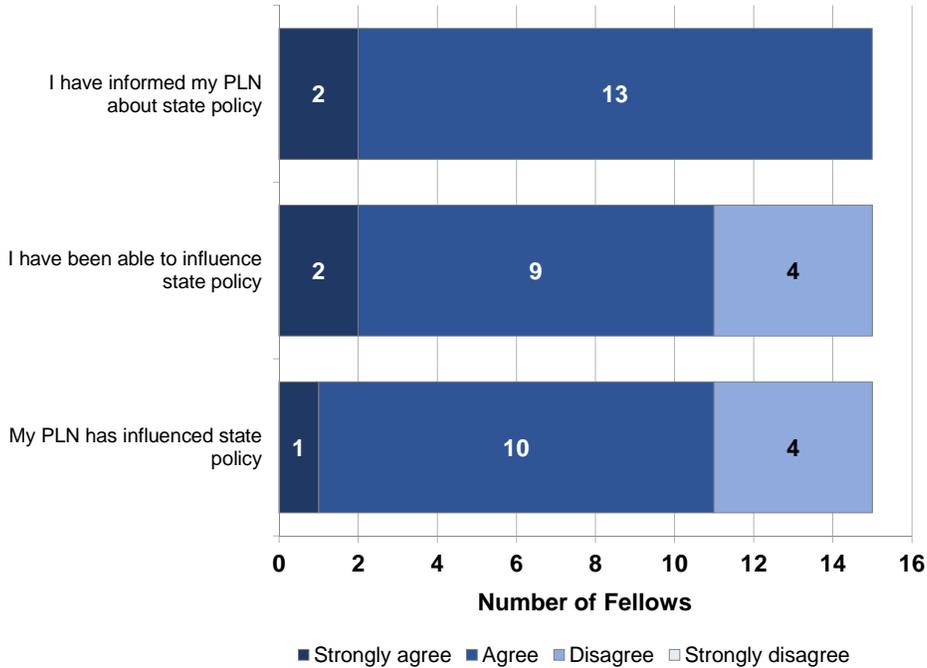


Exhibit reads: Two fellows strongly agreed that in their role as a STF, they have informed their PLN about state policy.
 Source: STF survey, spring 2015.

Partners expect that HSG will help formalize a mechanism for communicating teachers’ voices to policy leaders. While that process is not yet fully realized, partners are pleased with this first year’s work.

In this section, we consider the expectations and concerns expressed by representatives from Hope Street Group’s partner organizations: the Hawai’i Department of Education (HIDOE), the Hawai’i State Teachers’ Association (HSTA), the Hawai’i Community Foundation and the Harold K.L. Castle Foundation.⁷ As both financial and thought partners, Hope Street Group’s partner organizations play a number of roles in the planning and implementation of the program, as each organization brings a different agenda and set of expectations to the work. A PSA researcher interviewed representatives from four partner organizations, twice, in order to learn how both funders and state policymaking partners perceive the fellowship. As this section will explain, partners expressed the hope that the fellowship would create a vehicle for infusing teachers’ voices into state’s policymaking process, and though partners believe that goal has yet to materialize, they are nonetheless pleased with the first year’s accomplishments.

⁷ Representatives from McInerney Foundation declined to be interviewed for this project.

All partners interviewed for this evaluation reported that above all other ancillary goals, they hoped the STF program would work to formalize a durable “feedback loop”—an in-time mechanism through which to relay information from the classroom to policymakers and the HIDOE. In the aftermath of the conflict between teachers and the HIDOE, partners began to think about the HSG process as a way to build bridges between the two groups, hoping that the fellowship could work to create a mechanism that enables the HIDOE to incorporate teachers’ voices and perspectives effectively into the policymaking process. As one partner explained,

In our cultural context here, people are very reticent to stick their neck out. There’s this whole phenomenon called crabs in a bucket. If a crab kind of works his way up a bucket, the rest of the crabs go grab him and pull him back down. The manifestation of that has been that folks feel free to grumble, but there’s no voices from the field saying, “This is all really hard, but it’s all the right stuff.” The first thing I hoped was that we could create voices from the field... and by training them on how to facilitate constructive conversations with their peers, [we could] start to get more positive voices that are interested in being part of the solution.

The partner continued, “There’s a growing narrative that the department [HIDOE] is too top-down in its work. I think the more opportunities there are to flip that, so that the field is informing decisions that the department has to make, the better off we’ll be.” Other partners agreed, saying that they hoped that the HSG model would train strong teachers to be part of that feedback process in a productive way. The same partner shared that HSG “is really an experiment to see [if we can] get voices productively activated into the conversation so that we’re not just hearing really disgruntled people all the time or just union advocates.” With that kind of mechanism in place, partners hoped that the HIDOE and other education stakeholders could have the potential to “identify decisions that are coming up, that we could use formal data to capture methods through the teacher fellows program to inform [policy decisions]... Smart policy, in that respect.”

As part of the feedback loop, partners were expecting that the program would create a group of teachers with strong leadership training, who could be called on for expertise when necessary. Said one partner, the idea was to “empower a group of people to have a voice in the public arena and the public spectrum around issues related to reform.” That group, partners hoped, would be able to serve as representations of strong teaching work. Explained one of the partners,

In addition to the feedback loop, we were also excited about the opportunity to have a cadre of teachers who were empowered to use their voice for communications purposes to write letters to the editor and op-eds—respecting the independent nature of the group and let the fellows choose what they want to write on—but I think we’d had a hard time identifying teachers who were willing or felt comfortable writing letters to the editor, reaching out to policy makers.

Indeed, partners hoped that Hope Street Group’s independence as an organization with experience doing this work in other states (i.e., Kentucky) and not affiliated with either the HIDOE or the HSTA would work to engender its credibility to teachers. As one partner said,

I also value the independence of [HSG] and that the independence of the fellowship presented an opportunity to connect with more educators than [HIDOE] would have otherwise and I think a little bit of a deeper way... I think whenever the department is in the room, whether it's the principal or a complex area superintendent or somebody at the state office, it automatically puts a little bit of a different spin on the energy and I think what folks are willing to discuss or how they're willing to discuss it. But because [the fellowship relies on teachers soliciting input from their peer teachers] we are empowering teachers to use their voice in a way that lends itself to actionable recommendations.

With those expectations as background, partners reported feeling generally satisfied with the work of the fellows in their first year. Speaking generally, one of the partners shared that his organization has found that “there’s tremendous value in creating a cohort of people who have the courage to stand up and be accounted for, but kind of feel isolated. They draw a lot of strength from each other. It actually doesn’t take a whole lot to do something like that.... There’s a real value to it. I’ve seen them gel as a group in some very nice ways and grow in their camaraderie.” For the most part, though, partners agreed that the single biggest success of the fellows was their contribution to the public media sphere: specifically, the fifteen op-eds, essays and blog posts that appeared in media outlets ranging from the *Honolulu Civil Beat* to the education website *Real Clear Education*. This contribution served as the best evidence of the fellows’ voice, which partners believed had important impacts on the general atmosphere. As one of the partners explained,

There was a good volume of written commentary in various news outlets. I would say the focus of the commentary tended to be safe, more often than not. In other words, “Here’s why teacher voice matters.” As opposed to ... certainly some of the stories, that were fewer in number, were more along the lines of “Here’s why Common Core matters for my students, my community. Here’s what it looks like.” When those came out, I was really excited, because I think it profiles a very different story than what normally appears.

As a result of having fellows’ voice in the public sphere, partners believed that the rhetoric around education policy and the teachers’ union in Hawai‘i began to shift, if slightly. One partner observed,

I think one consequence is that it’s very hard to make sweeping statements in the way that the union has in the past. “Teachers want this, teachers are against that.” You start to provide some alternate voices, and the picture gets a lot more mixed in terms of where teachers are at.... In doing so, other similarly minded folks are [getting] a little bit more cover to participate and do that. We’ve definitely seen some ripple effects of this work, in terms of them being able to grow their spheres of influence among their peers. Like I said, at teachers’ union conventions and convenings, they have a real presence, and I think are helping to steer more productive conversation around what role the professional association plays for its members.

Beyond that, partners were positive about the formal policy reports and recommendations given to HIDOE. Fellows collected data from their PLNs in two rounds on issues agreed to by the partners: first, teachers' access to and experiences with Common Core-related professional development, and second, teachers' feelings on curricular materials policies and processes. Though the reports outlined several suggestions, the primary action item emerging from the fellows' recommendations is the creation of a teacher workgroup around improving professional development issues in Hawai'i. One partner observed,

I thought the recommendations were a little more processy.... Create a working group to figure this out, as opposed to being really clear, "Here's the net results of the current state of affairs, how you've chosen to structure this implementation. You need to rethink that structure." I just thought it could have been a little more pointed. As I said, you don't want to turn the partners off at the very beginning. They probably needed to soft pedal a little bit. Then, for the second data collection, like I said I thought the question set was a little too small bore. It makes it hard to point to large impact, when you've asked about a fairly narrow set of things.

This partner argued that, strategically in a first year, it made sense to issue recommendations that were not particularly pointed or controversial, even though s/he thinks that the report could have pointed to more direct policy routes.

That "safe" approach, though, may serve to help fellows in year two of their fellowship, insofar as it offers some indication of how a feedback loop could work without alienating any of the major stakeholders in the field. One of the partners shared that even though the action items were not particularly pointed, the use of the report could go a long way toward restoring a sense of trust between the HIDOE and the Hawai'i teaching community. Indeed, in an environment where individuals are reluctant to contribute for fear of rejection, making a "safe" recommendation that the HIDOE will actually be able to immediately act on may work to give HSG some initial credibility because it shows that the feedback loop "worked"—fellows collected data, made a recommendation, and the HIDOE acted on it. The partner shared that although the recommendations were "fairly timid, actually, in the sense that they shouldn't threaten anyone. For the very first piece of work together, I thought, 'that's probably appropriate.' They seem very doable... In terms of building trust in the utility of this feedback loop, I think they're very doable."

Another partner agreed, noting that because HSG was able to partner with the HIDOE toward getting something done, the results were successful insofar as they began to change perceptions of how the HIDOE regards teachers. The partner observed,

I think because there's even a partnership between the DOE, and there's even the acknowledgement and response, I think on the part of teachers it actually means a lot. Because this is unprecedented and because it's never worked that way... I think that goes a long way in acknowledging the work. For teachers to feel like something was collected that was [listened to]... To be acknowledged was quite a first step victory.

Partners are hopeful that the teacher workgroup will have larger, more practical impacts, but the results are still yet to come. Said one partner, “I think that there’s a lot of people that can benefit from the work from this work group, but the state has to be the first ones that actually adopt this work so that other people will see.” That same partner continued, “I’m really putting a lot on this professional development work group. Because it could end up being that we went through all these motions, and we get a PD work group and nothing happens after that. Then I would not say that this was a success.”

In order for the program to truly meet the partners’ expectations, partners wanted to see deeper integration of the fellows and their work into the policymaking processes. One of partners shared, “I was really hoping that the focus groups could fit into the structures that [are already] in place. [HSTA has] monthly meetings that...school representatives go to. I thought that [fellows] could better engage and really bridge that gap between Association work, policy work, and instructional work.” Summarized another partner,

I think [the fellows’ work is] good but we need more “live story” ... because I think what’s important about Hope Street Group to me is that we try to engage teachers... I mean, we try to engage teachers who had positive points of view about reforms [but they just] didn’t have enough confidence, training, peer-support to feel like they could speak out if their view was sort of contrary to negative points of view.... So I really thought that something like Hope Street Group was going to help empower people to find their voice beyond their school.

Overall, partners felt that the program resulted in appropriate achievements for a first year of operation. If, as one of the partners said above, the goal of the fellowship is to see “if we [can] get voices productively activated into the conversation so that we’re not just hearing really disgruntled people all the time,” partners agreed that fellows have met that expectation, particularly with regard to the number of op-eds and media placements. In the end, this achievement is regarded as enough for a first year of effort. Summarized one partner, “the training that Hope Street Group provides and the confidence that that brings for the cadre teachers that are in the fellowship, I think, has resulted in what we had hoped for, which was also a group of teachers that we could turn to if we needed communication support in some way.”

Recommendations

The findings of this evaluation demonstrate that in their first year of engagement, the Hawai`i fellows have been successful in establishing themselves as vehicles for teachers’ voices and advocates for their profession. By providing recommendations to the HDOE in their reports and by independently writing op-eds and essays that have been published in news outlets across the state and the nation, the fellows have contributed to the state’s ongoing conversation on education policy. When asked to reflect on these experiences, fellows strongly valued their in-person training experiences, and perceived those personal strategies as particularly important to building and growing their PLNs. Moreover, though fellows were familiar with how to use social media tools, many reported that the in-person and personal methods of communication (such as email and calls) were the best way to reach out to their PLNs. Fellows report satisfaction with their experiences in the STF program, and are looking forward to expanding

their influence next year. HSG's partners echoed this sentiment: while they are pleased with the fellows' work in the first year, they are looking forward to increased influence in the year to come. Fourteen of 17 fellows will continue for a second year, and those choosing to opt-out are leaving the classroom and thus no longer appropriate matches for the program. With these successes in mind, we make five recommendations for building on the accomplishments of the first year.

- Communicate the vision and timeline of the program to fellows early and often.
- Create opportunities to assess fellow's cultural contexts and training needs in order ensure that training, tools and resources align to fellows' work.
- Streamline communication procedures to ensure complete and efficient information exchange.
- Expand opportunities for in-person interactions for fellows to interact with one another and policymakers.
- Deepen credibility among teachers in the state by supporting the HIDOE in implementing additional concrete actions as recommended by the fellows' work.

HSG has already begun to address these recommendations. After the arrival of a new State Director midyear, fellows were offered an opportunity to reflect on their work to date and plan for the year ahead. Additionally, as fellows have reported their discomfort with the use of social media tools and the VEP, HSG is housing more and more material on Google, a platform that is more readily accessible to fellows. By thinking strategically around how to adopt a few changes to the program, HSG has the potential to achieve continued success in teacher leadership in Hawai'i.

Communicate the vision and timeline of the program to fellows early and often.

As noted in the findings section on training and preparation, fellows experienced considerable confusion around the vision and plan for the program. That confusion translated into some timidity in implementing the focus groups, as well as some anxiety about performance. As a result, fellows expressed feeling disoriented and disconnected from their work, even after their first trainings. This problem is easily addressed in a second year of programming by ensuring that the very first in-person training adequately explains three things: (1) an overarching vision for the goals of the fellowship program, (2) a clear description of the fellows' roles and responsibilities, and (3) a reasonable but flexible timeline for when fellows should be expected to both complete different tasks and be present for necessary events. This clear outline of the year's events will allow fellows to plan for the year ahead, effectively curtailing any confusion and ensuring that fellows are well prepared to execute their responsibilities.

Create opportunities to assess fellow's cultural contexts and training needs in order ensure that training, tools and resources align to fellows' work.

Although fellows strongly valued the in-person training and support provided by HSG, this report described how the social media tools strongly encouraged by HSG were less useful to fellows in their work. The fellows reported that they know how to use social media tools—Twitter in particular—many felt that the tool lacked applicability to their particular context.

Similarly, fellows observed that the more formal trainings that HSG provided—specifically, the teacher leadership training on the last day of the mid-year convening—were less relevant to their work as fellows. In response, HSG should reconsider its training and support levers to ensure that the training, tools, and resources are aligned to the fellows’ practical needs.

This challenge is easily resolved by building in opportunities in advance of the year to assess fellows’ training needs and cultural contexts. For instance, several fellows mentioned that although they had received some “messaging” training throughout the year, they could have used a workshop on persuasive writing, as so much of their work revolved around writing and publishing op-eds in the first year. In this sense, had HSG known ahead of time that fellows were less comfortable writing, training could have focused on improving those skills. Along those same lines, if Twitter does not have the same resonance in Hawai`i as it did in Kentucky, there may be alternatives for reaching Hawai`i teachers that go beyond the social media, such as taking advantage of existing structures for in-person meetings and gatherings or emailing via community listservs. HSG should additionally take stock of the support provided to fellows throughout the year with an eye toward ensuring that the training, tools, and resources are truly integrated into the work that fellows *are already doing* and what kinds of training will resonate for fellow’s experiences. This kind of assessment and planning will help to minimize the kind of support HSG will need to provide during the year as well as maximize the likelihood that fellows will stay consistent in carrying out their work.

Streamline communication procedures to ensure complete and efficient information exchange.

Fellows repeatedly noted that they were only soliciting feedback from their PLNs when HSG asked them to as part of a data gathering process. When interviews probed more deeply, however, data revealed that fellows were informally speaking to members of their PLNs quite frequently—but they did not know how to describe and include that information in their work as a fellow. Additionally, fellows reported that they were often overwhelmed by the number of modes of communication: between email, GoogleDocs, and the less-used VEP, fellows felt as though they were unsure of where to go for the right information.

HSG should strategize internally as well as in conjunction with Hawai`i fellows to consider how to streamline these communication procedures. By reflecting on what information is necessary and what is the simplest way for fellows to access that information, HSG will be able to eliminate tools that may not be the best fit. HSG should take care to help fellows document and observe their informal experiences throughout the year so that they may become part of the organization’s collective understanding of teacher leadership in Hawai`i.

Expand opportunities for in-person interactions for fellows to interact with one another and policymakers.

One of the primary themes across this report’s findings is that the Hawai`i fellows respond to in-person or personal forms of communication. This is particularly true for those fellows living on outer islands, who expressed deep appreciation for the moments in which they were able to work collaboratively in a face-to-face context. Moreover, while the fellows

recognized the value in the first year of the fellowship as a time to lay the groundwork for work ahead, they also expressed excitement in moving forward and intensifying their activities to influence state policy in person with policymakers.

HSG can capitalize on these findings together by prioritizing opportunities for fellows to meet in person: both with one another and with policymakers. This kind of commitment will be particularly important for fellows on Hawai'i's outer islands, who have less of an opportunity to interact directly with colleagues. Additionally, since the fellows ranked in-person meetings as the most useful tool to advocate for and influence state policy, HSG should facilitate more meetings between the fellows and state policymakers and influencers. By creating a structured time within the program for these meetings, fellows will be able to actualize their work in a way that they perceive as more productive, rather than focus their time on tools that are less well-integrated into their daily practice. Doing so will not only strengthen fellows' satisfaction with the program, it will also broaden the influence of the fellows on state policy.

Deepen credibility among teachers in the state by supporting the HIDOE in implementing additional concrete actions as recommended by the fellows' work.

In the wake of two turbulent years of negotiations between the HIDOE and HSTA around the design and implementation of an educator effectiveness system, fellows and partners reported feeling that teachers in their PLNs were highly skeptical that the HIDOE would use and value their contributions. Because of this low level of trust at the beginning of the fellowship, many fellows expressed that the success of the project would hinge on whether or not the HIDOE actually used the results of the report. In its first year, HIDOE acted on one recommendation from the fellows' work; but partners expressed feeling that the decision to create a working group was a bit "safe." HSG's long term credibility with teachers hinges on the ability to turn to teachers with proof that the program works: the more the HIDOE takes on and listens to HSG's recommendations, the more fellows will be able to entice their peers to participate in the data gathering process.

Though both fellows and partners felt that the recommendations from were appropriate for a first year, HSG could considerably accelerate the success of the fellows by working with the HIDOE to take on at least one, more concrete policy recommendation in year two. Though a workgroup is a good start, Hawai'i's teachers are likely to feel substantially more invested in the process if the HIDOE could point to a concrete policy—the creation a new program, for example, a shift in program implementation or guidance, or an adjusted regulation—and identify fellows' feedback as influential in the decision making. This kind of action could provide some "cover" for fellows to get better, richer data from the field, as it would serve as proof that the HIDOE is truly committed to the feedback loop process.

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Appendix A: Methods

This study of the first year of the Hawai`i State Teacher Fellowship used a mixed methods approach that included interviews, an end-of-year STF survey, and social network analysis. Findings were drawn from three sources of data, discussed below.

Interviews

We conducted two rounds of interviews with fellows, the first shortly after the start of the 2014-15 program year, and the second toward the end of the program year. In the first round, nine fellows were interviewed in Hawai`i in November 2015. Fellows were asked to discuss their background and application process to the STF program. They also responded to questions about their training and experiences to date with HSG tools and resources, as well as the early process of establishing their PLNs, interactions with other fellows, and their preliminary activities as fellows. The second round of interviews was held by phone in April and May 2015 with eight fellows. Questions remained centered on the topics covered in the first round, with added emphasis on program perception and outcomes.

Concurrently, we conducted two rounds of interviews with program stakeholders, speaking to representatives at both the Harold K.L. Castle Foundation and the Hawai`i Community Foundation, as well as the HDOE and the HSTA. Interviews were conducted in the same timeframes as both fellow interview rounds. Questions revolved around partners' expectations and goals for the program, as well as experiences and perceptions of the STF's work.

Finally, in April 2015, we conducted one interview with the State Director of the Hawai`i STF program. Questions focused on her experience with the program, her goals for this year and next, and challenges in program implementation.

STF survey

Hawai`i fellows were invited to participate in an online survey administered by PSA between April 21 and May 5, 2015 on SurveyGizmo.com. Of the 17 fellows, 15 responded to the survey for a response rate of 88 percent. The survey consisted of 15 questions and was divided into four sections, including participation, professional learning network, tools and resources, and program satisfaction. Most of the questions had been tested and found to be reliable on a previously administered PSA survey of Kentucky fellows in spring of 2014. All questions were close-ended, with three questions providing open space for the fellows to elaborate in writing. All response data were imported into and analyzed in Stata statistical software.

Social and professional network data

PSA researchers obtained and collected data from Twitter via Keyhole, an online data collection software that can track social media use of designated users and hashtags. The HSGHI14 hashtag was tracked from September 13, 2014 through May 6, 2015, and PSA

downloaded data approximately every three months. Each download contained text of a portion of the tweets, the users who tweeted them, the number of retweets per tweet included, and additional information on the location of users. Keyhole also produces a list of “top tweets” – up to 1,000 tweets in each download that contained the hashtag, ranked by retweets and starting at zero retweets. We combined the collection of top tweets from all downloads between September 13, 2014 and May 6, 2015, removing duplicate tweets by the same user. The resulting sample size was 131 tweets.

We analyzed the tweets in Excel to extract user names of those who composed the tweets, as well as the number and content of associated hashtags used in conjunction with #HSGHI14. We also used Excel to extract hyperlinks, and used an online URL expander, <http://urlex.org/>, to understand the content of these links. Lastly, we analyzed the recurrence of common words within the tweets by using an online word cloud generator, Wordle (<http://www.wordle.net/>).

Lastly, data on fellows’ email lists was obtained via MailChimp, an email marketing service provider. Each Hawai`i fellow had a designated list on the site with the emails of members of his or her PLN. We tracked the count of members on each fellow’s list, excluding the fellow’s email and the email of the State Director, both of which were included on all lists.

Limitations

The use of mixed-methods research for this evaluation ensures that findings are drawn from a variety of sources, reliably and accurately portraying the views and experiences of fellows and other stakeholders. Discussions about PLN size and social media use, however, are limited to the interpretation of available data. No accurate measures are available to assess the true size of fellows’ PLNs unless they are all documented in the fellows’ email list; for example, email lists may exclude members of PLN with whom fellows communicate solely by phone or through social media. For this reason, we included a survey question that asked fellows to estimate the size of their PLN.

Analysis of social media use was limited to Twitter hashtag tracking both because of available tracking software and to prevent infringing on fellows’ individual accounts. Keyhole, the hashtag tracking software, uses its own algorithm to determine “top tweets” that were then used for content analysis, possibly limiting the number of relevant tweets available for analysis. We also did not have access to data on fellows’ use of Facebook, which fellows listed as an occasional tool they used to communicate with each other and with their PLNs, nor did we track tweets from their personal Twitter accounts if they did not include HSG- and STF-related hashtags. As such, we used the STF survey to determine frequency of social media use, alongside interviews with the fellows to further clarify their perception of the value of these tools.

Appendix B: STF Survey Frequency Tables

I. STF Participation

Q1. Was the 2014-15 academic year your first year a State Teacher Fellow (STF)?	Number of respondents
Yes	15
No	0
Total	15

II. Professional Learning Network (PLN)

Q2. What do you estimate is the size of your PLN?	Number of respondents
Fewer than 50 people	7
Between 50-100 people	6
Between 101-500 people	2
More than 500 people	0
Total	15

Q3. What do you estimate is the geographical reach of your PLN?	Number of respondents
Mostly local (i.e., within my county)	8
Across my state	5
Across multiple states	2
Global	0
Total	15

Q4. Who comprises your PLN? <i>Select all that apply.</i>	Number of respondents
Teachers from my school district	14
Teachers from other school districts within my state	9
School administrators	3
District administrators	1
State policy makers	1
Other	1

III. Tools and Resources

Q5. This year, how often have you used the following tools/methods to communicate <u>with your PLN</u> ?	Number of respondents					Total
	3-5 times per week	1-2 times per week	2-3 times per month	Less than 2-3 times per month	Never	
In-person meetings	1	0	1	12	1	15
Telephone	0	1	1	8	5	15
Email	1	1	4	9	0	15
Texting/SMS	0	0	1	8	6	15
Twitter	0	0	1	8	6	15
Facebook	0	0	2	10	3	15
SurveyMonkey	0	0	0	9	6	15

Virtual Engagement Platform (VEP)	0	0	0	3	12	15
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Q6. This year, how often have you used the following tools/methods to communicate with other fellows?	Number of respondents					Total
	3-5 times per week	1-2 times per week	2-3 times per month	Less than 2-3 times per month	Never	
In-person meetings	0	0	0	15	0	15
Telephone	0	0	5	9	1	15
Email	1	3	7	4	0	15
Texting/SMS	0	1	2	10	2	15
Twitter	0	0	4	10	1	15
Facebook	1	0	2	10	2	15
SurveyMonkey	0	0	0	6	9	15
Virtual Engagement Platform (VEP)	0	0	1	6	8	15

Q7. How often do you interact with your STF State Director?	Number of respondents
3-5 times per week	2
1-2 times per week	3
2-3 times per month	8
Less than 2-3 times per month	2
Never	0
Total	15

Q8. Please rank your top 3 tools and/or resources you think have been most useful to you as a STF in advocating or influencing state policy.	Number of respondents		
	Ranked 1	Ranked 2	Ranked 3
In-person meetings	10	2	2
Telephone	0	1	2
Email	2	2	9
Texting/SMS	0	1	0
Facebook	1	1	1
Virtual Engagement Platform (VEP)	0	0	0
Advice from State Director	2	8	1
Other	0	0	0
Total	15	15	15

Q9. What state policy issues do you think have been most important to your PLN in 2014-15?	Number of respondents
Text	14

IV. Program Satisfaction

Q10. In my role as a STF in 2014-15...	Number of respondents				Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
I have been able to influence state policy.	2	9	4	0	15
I have informed my PLN about state policy.	2	13	0	0	15
My PLN has influenced state policy.	1	10	4	0	15
I perceive myself as a teacher leader.	4	11	0	0	15

Q11. Because of my role as a STF in 2014-15...	Number of respondents				Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
I am more knowledgeable about state policy.	6	9	0	0	15
I am able to better communicate my thoughts on state policy.	4	11	0	0	15
I have learned about new tools and resources to influence state policy.	5	10	0	0	15
I have become a better leader among my peers in advocating state policy.	5	10	0	0	15

Q12. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements about STF program components.	Number of respondents				Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
The training I received as part of the STF program prepared me to be an effective leader.	4	11	0	0	15
The ongoing support I receive from the STF State Director helps me to be an effective teacher leader.	8	6	1	0	15
Working with a cohort of other STFs has been beneficial in my development as a teacher leader.	10	5	0	0	15
The STF program is an effective way of giving teachers a voice in state policy.	10	5	0	0	15

Q13. The STF program met the expectations I had at the start of the fellowship.	Number of respondents
Strongly agree	7
Agree	8
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0
Total	15

Q14. Overall, please rate your satisfaction with the STF program:	Number of respondents
Extremely satisfied	7
Satisfied	8
Dissatisfied	0
Extremely dissatisfied	0
Total	15

Q15. Do you plan to return as a STF in 2015-16?	Number of respondents
Yes	13
No	2
Not sure	0
Total	15