

Systems Snapshot Q&A



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Q: How were you first introduced to systems thinking?

A: Back in 2019, I was a Fellow for a Leadership Academy with the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO). Waters Center facilitated systems thinking learning, which was a core curriculum strand for the Academy. This is where my interest began and I saw the magic of systems thinking. I will say, however, that systems thinking has always been a part of my journey – since I was a young child, I have always been inquisitive and curious about interconnectivity.

Q: Which Habit of a Systems Thinker do you wish everyone practiced?

A: *Recognizes that a system's structure generates its behavior.* To me, this speaks to investigating how behaviors emerge and evolve. This Habit has been particularly helpful in my work with state agencies – all the different departments and roles can lead to silos. Having an understanding of the structures in place that lead to this outcome and how to break down barriers is crucial.

Q: Which leader (past or present) do you admire most and why?

A: Stacey Abrams. As an African American woman, she possesses the grace, strength, tenacity, and grit necessary to end voter suppression and ensure every voice is heard.

Q: What is one book you think everyone should read?

A: *Braiding Sweetgrass*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer. I am an aspiring gardener and current “plant mom,” and this book is so fascinating because it celebrates the reciprocal relationships in nature and shines a light on how all life forms are joined in this inseparable community we call life. It is a must read.

Q: What advice do you have for someone getting started as a systems thinker?

A: Lean into the tools, concepts and Habits. Don't be intimidated because you are likely already using and applying systems thinking, you just are not familiar with the language yet. Also, find good resources, books and mentors to help you along on your systems thinking journey.

Q: Why do you think the world needs systems thinkers?

A: Systems thinkers possess the knowledge and skills necessary to make change in ANY sector. I saw this firsthand during my experience in the Waters Center Advanced Facilitator Credential program. There were cohort members working in technology, science, education –at the classroom and state level – in business, and more, yet we all have the same goal: to develop interventions to address barriers and tackle root causes. That's what being a systems thinker is all about!