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Connecting Evidence Use and Practice in K-12 Education: Discovering and Planning for Research Practice Partnerships

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ABSTRACT

CONNECTING EVIDENCE USE AND PRACTICE IN K-12 EDUCATION:
DISCOVERING AND PLANNING FOR RESEARCH
PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS

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Northern Illinois University, 2020

Benjamin Creed and Kelly Summers, Directors

In this dissertation, I begin with a paper exploring K-12 educators’ use of evidence. I give several examples of how practitioners are delivering programming that is in direct opposition to commonly held evidence-based understandings, explore the reasons why this is happening and then offer a relatively new type of partnership between practitioners and researchers that looks promising in the ongoing pursuit of greater research engagement and use of evidence by practitioners. This paper also applies the Outcomes Based Concern Model for deconstructing the reasons practitioners do not use evidence to the degree desired by policymakers.

In the second paper I discuss how these Research Practice Partnerships (RPPs) offer a relatively new approach to collaboration and cooperation between researchers and practitioners that relies on building a relationship between entities so that the resulting work has mutual benefits. The problems of practice are focused on increasing K-12 student achievement and providing actionable results for the practitioners. Two original diagrams illustrate how
knowledge is transferred in the traditional university to practitioner model compared to in an RPP.

The final product in this dissertation is a toolkit to assist the Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network in evolving into a Networked Improvement Community (NIC) RPP. Included in the final product is an updated P-20 Network Logic Model, aligned to the principles of an NIC and the dimensions of an RPP, recommendations for creating a leadership team and three Illinois Administrator Academies to be used to recruit K-12 administrators in the work with our researchers in the College of Education.
CONNECTING EVIDENCE USE AND PRACTICE IN K-12 EDUCATION:
DISCOVERING AND PLANNING FOR RESEARCH
PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS

BY

AMY JO CLEMENS
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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Dissertation Directors:
Benjamin Creed and Kelly Summers
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I owe my passion for continuous improvement to my colleagues and students at Malta Jr./Sr. High School from 1996-2000, whose unwavering belief in creating a school founded on the Coalition of Essential Schools’ 10 Common Principles by Ted Sizer guaranteed that we coached in the classroom, focused on using minds, valued depth over coverage, provided true personalization, addressed inequity and demonstrated mastery through graduation portfolios long before it became fashionable in 2020. The span of my career since then has encompassed all that you taught me.

Special thanks to Dr. Benjamin Creed and Dr. Kelly Summers who were convinced that even after a 12-year break in my studies, I could complete this dissertation and earn this degree. I wouldn’t have even tried without your encouragement and I couldn’t have done it without your contributions.

Thanks to Dr. Carolyn Pluim for agreeing to join my committee and help shepherd 32 years of practitioner knowledge into an Ed.D.

Finally, I can’t adequately describe how much I owe my family for their support. Thank you, Alan, Emily, Thomas and Nicholas. Each of you provided me both wonderful distractions from finishing and deep inspiration to continue as I completed this degree. I may be the fourth Dr. Clemens, but I am sure I won’t be the last.
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RESEARCH AND PRACTICE INSTEAD OF CHEMISTRY

When I graduated with a Chemistry Bachelor of Science degree in 1986, I should have known I was not going to be a very good chemist. My grades were great. Understanding chemistry was never a problem; however, working alone in front of my latest concoction bubbling in an arrangement of various glass containers over a Bunsen burner had never been my favorite part of the day. By the time I was a junior, every afternoon was spent in lab and I would be devastated if someone finished and got out of there before I did. Day after day I would rush through my lab work just to be able to enjoy racing out to more exciting activities, leaving everyone else in that smelly, remote room. What was I thinking? Still, I plodded on, determined to be a scientist because my mother said that was not a good career for a woman. As strange as it sounds, it was fortuitous that I could not find a chemistry job in Minneapolis after graduation. Instead, I took a position as a teacher’s aide in an 18-36-month Montessori classroom at the University of Minnesota and after six months of living on minimum wage while searching for said chemistry job, I decided to return to school to become a chemistry teacher.

Looking back on the 15 years before college, I was always teaching. Whether I was teaching my sister her math facts and vowel sounds before she attended Kindergarten, teaching the children I was babysitting to make cookies or teaching the younger members in my 4-H club through various projects and competitions, I was usually working with children in a mentoring/teaching role. Seeming like the obvious career path for me now, it was with a defeated
attitude that I enrolled in the NIU Masters in Secondary Education and moved back to DeKalb in 1987.

Fortunately for me, that defeat turned into a 32+ year career as a teacher, principal, professional development specialist, regional superintendent, assistant superintendent for the Illinois State Board of Education and now Director of NIU’s Center for P-20 Engagement.

Throughout my career, my passion for teaching has been interwoven with my appetite for data, evidence and research. As a young principal in 1998, I was the first in the district to understand and support school improvement. I remember explaining to a group of elementary teachers that school improvement meant using student achievement data to identify practices that could be changed between this year and next to help the children learn more next time - they all just stared at me. Using evidence to make decisions comes naturally to me, even though I have (hopefully) gotten better at it than when I was deciding my original career plan. Data, evidence and research are at the foundation of good decision-making and this dissertation is in pursuit of ways to better-support its use from preschool through life-long learning. Set forth below is an explanation of what readers will encounter while engaging with my dissertation.

Evidence in Education

In the first paper for this dissertation, I explored the use of evidence in education. Whether for decision-making (instrumental use), changing beliefs (conceptual use), justifying decisions (political) or satisfying mandates (imposed use), evidence use struggles to meet its potential in helping us improve our educational outcomes (Coburn, Honig & Stein, 2007; Coburn
& Talbert, 2006; Lysenko, et al., 2017; Penuel, et al., 2017). The characteristics of evidence and its origins makes educators question its reliability, authenticity and credibility which leaves us wary of believing in its promises and reluctant to use it (Coburn, Honig, & Stein, 2008; Lysenko, et al., 2014; Penuel, et.al, 2016). Along with the inconsistent ways educators are expected to use evidence, the current system results in millions of dollars and countless hours being spent generating research that rarely leaves the pages of the peer-reviewed journals in which it is published.

Research Practice Partnerships

My second dissertation paper explores the ways Research Practice Partnerships (RPP) have addressed some of the barriers to evidence use while also providing three benefits - (1) mutual understandings between researchers and practitioners about the role of research in both short-term and long-term educational settings, (2) the need for research to result in actionable strategies and (3) a targeted focus on increasing student achievement (Farrell et al., 2018; Munoz & Rodosky, 2015; Penuel & Gallagher, 2017).

Instead of a unidirectional system whereby researchers in universities send forth important findings, RPPs bring researchers and practitioners together to develop shared understandings, focus on problems of practice and build tools and frameworks that not only support districts involved in the partnership but other schools as well (Lopez Turley & Stevens, 2015; Research + Practice Collaboratory, November 15, 2015). RPPs can be focused on one particular district’s needs like the Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (Research Alliances), implementation in particular subjects like the Seattle-Renton partnership with the
University of Washington for math-science (Design-Based Implementation Research) or a network of organizations interested in addressing a problem from a variety of different angles like the Building a Teaching Effectiveness Network by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching focusing on supporting new teachers (Networked Improvement Communities) (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017; Research + Practice Collaboratory, October 15, 2015; Research + Practice Collaboratory, February 16, 2016).

Regardless of the structure, the foundation of a good RPP is a good relationship between researchers and practitioners and figuring out ways to grow and maintain that relationship through the trials of initial formation, subsequent district turnovers, and dips and swells in funding (Farrell, Harrison & Coburn, 2019). The relationship must be a priority for an RPP to realize its potential. Relationships are resource intensive, but like most efforts, it can be said that what a partner gets out of it is probably analogous to what a partner is willing to put into it.

Re-envisioning the Northern Illinois P-20 Network as a Network Improvement Community

In 2014, NIU’s then President, Doug Baker, challenged several community college presidents to respond to a state-wide commitment of reaching 60% of Illinois citizenry with a degree or credential by 2025, called the 60 x 25 goal. As part of the national work by the Lumina Foundation (2020), Illinois committed to this goal and President Baker brought educational leaders together across northern Illinois with the clear understanding that if they could not work together as a regional P-20 education system, the state was never going to reach its goals. As a result of this vision, the Northern Illinois P-20 Network was formed, which included district
superintendents, various state agencies and advocacy groups interested in working together to reach the 60 x 25 goal.

Within this P-20 Network, a partnership has formed between early childhood, K-12, higher education and state agency educators around various, just-in-time workstreams that have included everything from

- multiple surveys on early childhood attendance, credits earned with Advanced Placement scores, use of adult learning principles
- websites with resources, like for financial literacy, career pathways
- white papers on various topics, including the Elementary and Secondary Success Act revisions,
- resources for implementation of initiatives such as transitional math and PaCE Framework,
- workshops on key areas like peer mentoring and adult learner strategies,
- focus groups on topics such as dual credit or career pathways, workforce data and Illinois Report Card data scans,
- local, state and national conference presentations,
- various brochures and
- grant proposals.

It is amazing that a loosely tied group of educators who all have full-time employment expectations at their own institutions have been able to produce the resources that the P-20 Network has in five short years.
I have participated as a staff member, interim director and then supervisor for the network over the past four years, participating in many of the studies, coordinating several work groups and writing many of the reports. I have also authored four administrator academies approved by the Illinois State Board of Education in three of our key workstreams – Dual Credit, Postsecondary and Career Exploration (PaCE) Framework, and Transitional Math.

We have focused primarily on the link between secondary and post-secondary education and worked together on strategies to help bridge that gulf. These conversations and products led to additional work in bridging the gap between early childhood and kindergarten, which was surprisingly similar to the gap between secondary and postsecondary. These early childhood to kindergarten conversations have led to a series of research studies for the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Child Development.

As far as the P-20 Network, different entities in the network are focusing on different problems. Finding ways to share with each other has been a struggle with changing administrators, shifting priorities, new legislation and dwindling resources. Members of the network do not have time to complete a literature review to better understand a problem, set up an evaluation, or even fully implement an initiative in one area before they are expected to start on another, and yet another. The network has tried to help communicate key information, identify or create quality resources and bring practitioners together to share successes and challenges when possible. In the middle of this rapid-fire response work to the needs of the network, Dr. Benjamin Creed and Dr. Kelly Summers challenged me to use the P-20 Network efforts to complete this dissertation.
Over the last year, Dr’s. Ben Creed and Kelly Summers along with other key members of the P-20 Network have engaged in conversations about becoming more deeply rooted in research and evidence; considering how to live more intentionally in the space between research and practice so that the knowledge and expertise of one set of educators can influence the others. This has led to the creation of a P-20 Data and Research Collaborative at NIU as an extension of the P-20 Network. This dissertation summarizes my analysis of the problem of educators not using evidence and sets forth a promising new approach for addressing that problem. It was affirming and exciting to find out that the work we were naturally doing as a P-20 Network was so closely aligned to the best practices on RPPs. As I continued to dig into RPPs, I realized that our P-20 Network is a loosely formed Network Improvement Community since it meets the accepted definition - various partners with blurred roles, working on improvements in our P-20 educational system from all different perspectives, yet tied together in our efforts to help the system work better for kids and families, especially during difficult transition points.

Final Product

For the final product of this dissertation, I offer the Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network NIC Toolkit that I will use with the NIU Director for P-20 Initiatives, Dr. Jason Klein and Dr. Rena Cotones, NIU Associate Vice President for Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development. Our current P-20 Network is one of 5 engagement networks Associate VP Cotones has been developing with President Freeman and her executive leadership team. The engagement networks have internal and external representatives of partners engaged in
workforce development, arts, non-profit organizations, and Esports along with ours focused in education.

The toolkit includes three parts.

1. A revised P-20 Network Logic Model using the new knowledge I have on NICs. To start, I revised the P-20 Network Logic Model to have the following categories aligned to the needs of a NIC – inputs, problems of practice, short-term products and long-term outcomes. See Figure 1.

2. Recommended Leadership Team structure to coordinate the key inputs from the Logic Model. I propose that the P-20 Network identify a group of not more than 10 advisors that represent our different partners – early childhood, K-12, higher ed and state agencies and that this group work on key organizational tasks including, but not limited to
   - Roles and responsibilities – It is my recommendation that the Director of P-20 Initiatives provide day-to-day oversight for the network. The Dean, College of Education, and one non-NIU member will be an executive leadership team for the network. The Director should take on project management duties for the various problems of practice teams.
   - Data sharing – It is my recommendation that the executive leadership create standard protocols for data sharing across partners. A memorandum of understanding between partners regarding data sharing could be available so that it can be used as needed by partners within a problem of practice team.
   - Mutual benefits – the leadership team should maintain a focus on benefits for the practitioners like tools and frameworks along with possible publication opportunities for the researchers.
## Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network Logic Model as a Network Improvement Community (NIC) – 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Problems of Practice</th>
<th>2020 Products (Short Term)</th>
<th>Outcomes (Long Term)</th>
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**Relationships**
- P-20 Administrators
- P-20 Counselors
- CC Administration
- CC Faculty
- 4-year Administration
- 4-year Faculty
- State Agencies
- Early Childhood Advocacy

**Data Sharing**
- Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Illinois Report Card
- Illinois Postsecondary Profiles
- Local data
- CDDA Linked Data Sets

**Planned Mutual Benefits**
- Legislative Updates
- Access to Policymakers
- Implementation Supports
- Classroom Resources
- Publications

**Funding**
- In-kind
- Research Projects
- Foundations
- ISBE, ICCB, IBHE

### Dual Credit
- Increase dual credit opportunities 9-12
- Create qualification programs for teachers
- Increase dual credit options for career pathways
- Begin NIU dual credit
- Address inequities in dual credit programming

### Transitional Instruction
- Increase placement in credit-bearing classes
- Compare student outcomes to current developmental sequences
- Create curricular resources for 9-12
- Provide training through online and face to face

### Career Pathway Endorsements
- Increase CTE attainment
- Coordinate team-based challenges
- Increase internships, especially rural
- Investigate technology solutions
- Develop curriculum for competencies

### PoCCE Framework
- Increase career exploration, college decisions and financial literacy
- Coordinate with ISAC

### Northern Illinois Benefits
- More teachers qualified to teach dual credit
- More students graduating from high school with college credits
- More students graduating with CPEs
- More students graduating with Essential Competency Badges
- More graduating students meeting CRI criteria
- More post-secondary enrollment in and completion of credit-bearing classes
- Attainment of credentials or degrees

### Broader Impacts
- Increase percent of adults with postsecondary degree
- Increase percent of adults with postsecondary credential
- Higher quality workforce
- Reduce unemployment
- Reduce low income households
• Funding – besides staffing within the Center for P-20 Engagement, funding needs remain for course buyouts, stipends for K-12 participants, travel and graduate assistants and the leadership team should be coordinating efforts to support those activities financially through grants or contracts

• Problems of practice – the leadership team should screen and identify key problems of practice ensuring that the work of the network stays focused on the needs and interests of the partners and doesn’t get side-tracked by funding opportunities or other interests

• Short term and long-term outcomes – the leadership team should identify measurable outcomes that ensure that the network is meeting the needs of the partners, including short term accomplishments in pursuit of long-term results. The leadership team should have a ready answer if someone asked why the partners should continue to engage with the NIC.

3. Updated syllabi for three administrator academies (AA) to be used as recruitment opportunities for the NIC. It has been my experience that administrators are drawn to work that is relevant to their students. Administrators from all levels of our educational system are over-worked and their resources are stretched thin. Over the past 4 years I have watched institutions and their administrators come and go from the P-20 Network depending on the issues we were studying. Issues that resonated with administrators were ones most-relevant to the issues of their students. I then realized that the topics for the three administrator academies I wrote since coming to NIU were actually problems of practice and that I could use them to also inform the
attendees about RPPs and why they have been successful in addressing problems. I believe that recruiting administrators into an RPP must be done through the problems of practice that are being studied and that the administrator academies that I have written would be good entry points for those interested in studying that particular problem of practice. I was able to revise the administrator academies into recruitment opportunities by inserting activities to better understand RPPs, review the research about the particular problem of practice in the academy and include an additional dissemination component in which administrators reflect on joining the P-20 Network NIC with their building and/or central office staff. An administrator academy is required professional learning for all licensed administrators in the state of Illinois. Each year, all acting administrators must attend at least one administrator academy of 6 hours in length to maintain their licensure. Many administrators attend more than one. Administrator academies must be research-based, aligned to the administrator performance standards, and include strategic learning activities and dissemination components.

I updated the three administrator academies to be used in the NIC as ways to recruit new partners into our RPP, establish baseline information about the problem of practice we were addressing and distribute more information about the value and benefit to RPPs. Each of these academies are briefly discussed below along with a description of the problem of practice they are addressing.

*Transitional Math, AA #3696.* The first administrator academy I wrote is to address the thousands of students are placed into non-credit bearing math in postsecondary, only to lose
momentum, consume scholarship money and then become one of the 75% who end up leaving postsecondary before persisting through the developmental coursework and into the credit-bearing course.

This AA examines a productive conflict in the field (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). Can transitional math better-prepared students for credit-bearing math courses without introducing the negative effects on current developmental math practices? High schools are working in partnership with their local community colleges to create courses whose curriculum includes a demonstration of required Transitional Math competencies. The Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act ensured guaranteed placement in a credit-bearing math class at Illinois community colleges for high school students successfully demonstrating these state-approved competencies. These courses emphasize authentic learning experiences aligned with students’ chosen career paths as well as a student’s life and future coursework. The goal is to provide high school seniors with a new mathematical experience that is motivating as well as valuable because of the guaranteed college placement achieved.

_Dual Credit and other Early College Options, AA #1895_. The second administrator academy I wrote is about how early college options show more promise for postsecondary outcomes than graduation, attendance, grades or other activities our high schools currently focus on, but not all high schools even offer dual credit and then only the elite students are permitted to enroll (Problem of Practice).

This AA examines a gap in knowledge in the field (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). The postsecondary benefits of Dual Credit are widely documented but there are few solutions in Illinois. Academy outcomes include knowing the impact of dual credit on students’ secondary
and postsecondary outcomes, examining the issue of equity with early college credit data on the Illinois Report Card, planning for the new ISBE ESSA College and Career Readiness Indicators (CCRI) and using the Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) Framework to implement college and career readiness activities. Tools and data resources will be shared to measure current early college options, college career readiness, and plan for individual district needs.

*Postsecondary and Career Exploration (PaCE) Framework, AA #1890.* The third administrator academy I wrote addresses issues with high school students arriving at graduation with unclear plans for careers, vague plans continuing education and no idea of the financial consequences of those decisions (Problem of Practice).

This is a problem of practice that examines underused knowledge (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). College readiness, career exploration and financial literacy are known activities for students from middle school through high school. Unfortunately, district efforts at ensuring all students tackle these decisions have been disjointed and randomly completed before graduation, if at all. Through a collaborative process of learning, attendees in this administrator academy use the Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) Framework and the On PaCE to Thrive community guide to assess their local work in these three areas currently. Outcomes include a plan to implement college and career readiness activities aligned to the new PaCE Framework, which was a result of the Postsecondary Workforce Readiness Act and has been adopted by four state P-20 education agencies – Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Community College Board and Illinois Board of Higher Education, and Illinois Student Assistance Commission. Tools and data resources will be shared to measure current college career readiness, plan for
individual district needs and result in greater engagement with the community. Participants should bring an internet-connected device.

Each of these administrator academies provides a starting point in first discussing and then addressing these problems of practice. At times, the P-20 Network has become “stuck” admiring the many problems of practice before us. Using the administrator academies as “entry points” for institutions interested in working on that particular problem of practice will help ensure that the participants have a base level of information about the problem, possible solutions already in the field and ways they can contribute to the work. The syllabi for all follow a general plan to ensure participant base-knowledge about RPPs and the problem being studied. Updates to the syllabi were made to incorporate information about RPPs, NICs and the P-20 Network.

1. Presenters must be trained by the Center for P-20 Engagement. Updated to include a pair of presenters required -a practitioner and researcher.

2. An initial investigation about the problem of practice and how it is relevant to the administrators’ district situation. Updated to include a 15-minute activity on RPPs, using RPP terms and definitions, illustrating the P-20 Network NIC logic model.

3. An initial dive into the latest research available on websites and journals regarding the topic. Updated to include a discussion of where the evidence is coming from and how a deeper connection with practitioners would have been beneficial to the researcher publishing the journal article.

4. A deeper understanding of the available supports, materials and resources currently available. Updated to recruit participants as members of the P-20 Network NIC to help create more resources and provide more supports.
5. Creation of an initial plan to address the problem in the participants’ school setting.
   Updated to consider the ways the P-20 Network NIC could support addressing the problem
6. A requirement to disseminate the information from the administrator academy to their staff and community. Updated to include one activity to disseminate information about RPPs even if the district is not interested in joining the P-20 Network NIC.

Summary

Evidence-based decision making continues to be an elusive, vague, imprecise activity in most practitioners’ mentalities. In attempting to better understand the barriers practitioners face in using evidence, I identified a promising new approach that is growing across the country – Research Practice Partnerships (RPPs).

Further study into RPPs was so enlightening that I was able to see how our current Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network was already somewhat of a Network Improvement Community. With a few changes in our Logic Model, we are ready to intentionally embrace this model and recruit new members interested in using evidence in more intentional ways. This three-product dissertation explores the existing literature around evidence use, dives into what RPPs are and how they can impact evidence use, and then applies the learning to a current problem of practice – improving the Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network to better align with the principles of a NIC to better serve the participating members.
First, a review of the literature on evidence use revealed that practitioners question the reliability, authenticity and integrity of evidence, which reduces their interest in using it. Though we know that districts could improve evidence use through some targeted practices, we also know that these strategies must go far beyond traditional efforts to increase access. Instead, systematically providing more opportunities for social interaction around evidence, more supports for implementing changes due to evidence and more communication throughout the system regarding evidence represents a productive way forward. Imposing the use of evidence does not lead to more use, but strategies where practitioners generate research does. This leads me to the second paper on having practitioners involved in generating research.

The second product focuses on the role of Research-Practice Partnerships in improving the use of evidence by practitioners. RPPs are based on relationships between researchers and practitioners in which mutual benefits to both groups result in positive student outcomes for the partners and actionable tools and frameworks for others. Great strides have been made in the past 10 years with regard to RPPs – what makes them successful, what types are common, and essential components for success. Early results indicate that practitioners involved in RPPs use evidence for decisions, challenge beliefs and justify decisions, though much is still unknown. Little information is known about RPPs who struggle and then ultimately fail. Though there are new dimensions of effective RPPs, little information is known about the effectiveness of the different types, the resources needed to sustain them in the long-term and whether the benefits outweigh the costs.

Lastly, the current Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network has the potential to develop into an RPP Network Improvement Community (NIC). Several key elements are already present and
by making some intentional changes in the Logic Model and leadership structure its
transformation will be underway. Additionally, by having three administrator academies well-
aligned to the work of the P-20 Network, those administrator academies can be updated to
include information about RPPs and can be used to both disseminate new information to the field
and recruit new districts interested in engaging with researchers. The third product is the Toolkit
- updated Logic Model, leadership structure and the syllabi for these administrator academies,
which incorporate the insights from the first two products to establish the groundwork for the
development of the NIC.

Final Thoughts

This dissertation started as an exploration into ways that district officials, policymakers and
researchers have tried to address concerns practitioners have in using evidence in more of our
educational decision-making. During that study, I found a promising practice gaining momentum
across the nation – Research Practice Partnerships. Evidence use is a rather bleak topic, given the
millions of dollars and thousands of hours that researchers spend producing evidence that is
never used by practitioners, but Research Practice Partnerships are opening the door to new
relationships, benefits, products and long-term outcomes, encouraging the use of evidence in
ways not seen before in the nation.

Through this dissertation I’ve been inspired to help administrators and researchers build
relationships that focus on using evidence to solve problems through RPPs. Though I am not part
of a research team in the way I once thought I would be as a chemist, I am part of a research team that will use evidence to improve the lives of children every day. Can’t beat that!
References


INCREASING USE OF EVIDENCE IN K-12

Educational research journals are full of recommendations from years of published social science research. Topics like parent involvement, cooperative learning, site-based budgeting, teacher professional development and hundreds, if not thousands of other research-based best practices are available, defined, referenced and disseminated. John Hattie in *Visible Learning* asked, “how can there be so many published articles, so many reports providing directions, so many professional development sessions advocating this or that method, so many parents and politicians inventing new and better answers, while classrooms are hardly different from 200 years ago?” (2009, p. 3). On the one hand, it could be surmised as Hattie did, that nothing has worked and still, that everything works! Research is rarely definitive, and educators get confused when information is not unanimous (Asen et al., 2013).

Evidence-based programming is defined as programs with efficacy behind them; the programs have been tested by researchers without any connection to the program, results have been measured with valid and reliable instruments and outcomes have resulted in statistically significant improvements, including effect sizes that warrant the claims being made (Iowa Reading Research Center, 2015). An alternate approach is research-based, which is a lower threshold to cross; there are some studies who support its use, but the results are not definitive. Unfortunately, confusion regarding a research-base versus an evidence-base is just the beginning of the puzzle for educators when it comes to finding and implementing proven high-quality programming. In this paper I will give several examples of how practitioners are delivering
programming that is in direct opposition to commonly held evidence-based understandings, explore the reasons why this is happening and then offer a relatively new type of partnership between practitioners and researchers that looks promising in the ongoing pursuit of greater research engagement and use of evidence by practitioners.

Instead of asking what works, practitioners should be asking what works best (Hattie, 2003). Hattie suggests that educators need a way of collecting true evidence and measuring the success of reform efforts. To do that authentically, we need to look at the six elements known to impact student achievement the most—characteristics of 1. the individual student, 2. home, 3. school, 4. teacher, 5. curriculum, and 6. quality of teaching and then we need to focus on the strategies with evidence showing they work the best to positively impact those 6 factors. (2009).

To accurately communicate the impact of those six factors on student achievement, Hattie set a baseline so that educators know which changes elicit the most growth. His baseline was created by first considering that all students mature one year in age, which he called a child’s developmental effects and all students have a teacher in the classroom, which he called a child’s teacher effects. The actual effect size of these two factors averages \( d = .40 \), so Hattie argued that for an innovation or change to be considered successful, it needs to be more effective than those two elements: a year’s development and a teacher in the classroom (Hattie, 2009).

In his 2009 book, Visible Learning, John Hattie considers 800 meta-analyses using strict standards of which studies to include and comes up with an effect-size ranking for 138 different reform efforts that tried to positively impact student achievement. The greatest positive effect size measured was \( d = 1.44 \) for students who are in programs where they learn to self-report grades (Hattie, 2009). This would mean that the reform effort to self-report grades has an effect
of 1.04 above what is already expected due to a child’s annual growth and the presence of a teacher in the classroom. As for the most negative effort, it is students’ mobility, measured at $d = -0.34$ (Hattie, 2009). This would mean that being mobile (a move in or out of districts within one year) negatively impacts a student at such a degree that it first neutralizes any positive impact that we know happens just due to a years’ worth of development and having a teacher in the classroom and then reduces their achievement so they are losing achievement they had gained before.

**Accelerated Learning and Retention: An Example**

John Hattie’s book is just one of thousands of resources available whose intent is on supporting educators in identifying and implementing “research-based best practices.” Unfortunately, with thousands of recommendations at their fingertips, educators get confused or disillusioned about what research is and what it says, much less trying to maintain the distinction between evidence-based and research-based suggestions. This leads to educators leaning instead on their experience or beliefs.

The resistance of some educators to accelerate students despite the research-base in support illustrates the point. Hattie’s meta analyses show that accelerating learning has an effect size of $d = 0.88$, which exceeds the $d = 0.40$ effect size attained by the child’s development and having a teacher in the classroom by a considerable margin (2009). This effect size makes acceleration the #5 ranked positive effort when comparing to the other 137 efforts impacting student achievement (Hattie, 2009). On the other end of the spectrum, grade retention was $d = -0.16$ on effect size – placing 136 out of 138 in efforts to positively impact student achievement, yet, in
Illinois, acceleration is rarely used and retention is statutorily mandated (Illinois Compiled Statutes, 2019).

In my experience, elementary teachers commonly argue against acceleration based on misconceptions that students should always be with age-appropriate peers or they will be harmed in various ways if “moved up.” In November 2009, the Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration for the National Association for Gifted Children released “Guidelines for Developing an Academic Acceleration Policy” to support schools in writing acceleration policies. It also summarized the overwhelming evidence in favor of acceleration. The document explains that even in the face of this evidence, most schools have policies that specify how to serve gifted students within an enrichment program, without even mentioning acceleration (Institute for Policy and Programs on Acceleration, National Association for Gifted Children, Council for State Directors of Program of the Gifted, 2009).

The argument by the combined work group was that acceleration and enrichment should be part of the interventions available to all students based on their abilities and not their age (Institute et al., 2009). The research support section leans on a document, A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America’s Brightest Students, published in 2004 (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004). This book highlights the evidence on the benefits of acceleration and how America’s policies, beliefs and practices often run counter to this evidence. Reasons why America’s educational system does not support acceleration were included within the common misconceptions: Age is the most important factor to consider when schooling, it’s bad to push kids too hard, students will have to make new friends in their new grades, failure is devastating, and other comments based on teachers’ personal beliefs and experiences. The Guidelines for
Developing a State Academic Acceleration Policy (2009) makes a clear and convincing case that acceleration is the most beneficial to students when their achievement warrants it, which supports Hattie’s analysis giving it such a highly positive ranking among other efforts to improve achievement. “It is strongly supported by decades of research, yet the policy implications of that research are ignored by the wider educational community.” (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004, p. 11)

A further example of how educators cling to pre-conceived beliefs instead of implementing evidence-based programs, retention has an effect size of $d = -0.16$ but is commonly used even as young as kindergarten when students are held back because the staff decides the children are “not yet ready” and need another year to grow before they can be successful (Hattie, 2009). In March 2008, ASCD Educational Leadership Journal clearly summarized the vast evidence regarding retention’s ineffectiveness.

Although individual studies can be cited to support any conclusion, overall the preponderance of evidence argues that students who repeat a grade are no better off, and are sometimes worse off, than if they had been promoted with their classmates (David, 2008, pp. 83-84).

This has been found even for the youngest students. In 2012, the Marsico Institute for Early Learning and Literacy at the University of Denver posited: “Although post-third grade retention is found to be more harmful than early grades retention overall, research has shown that even as early as first grade, retention has negative effects on achievement that last throughout elementary and high school.” (n.p.)

Despite this persuasive research, Illinois still requires school districts to have a system of grading and reporting in which promotion is only determined based on academic performance. This effectively mandates retention. Students who do not rise to academic performance
expectations must not be promoted (Illinois Compiled Statutes, 2019a). Thankfully, in 2018, Illinois passed The Accelerated Placement Act Public Act 100-0421 in which all school districts must adopt and enforce a policy that all students, not only those identified as gifted and talented, be placed in academically appropriate instructional settings with an appropriate curriculum that may include accelerating a child ahead of their age-peers (Illinois State Board of Education, 2019a). Illinois legislators took more than 10-15 years after the national call to action to legislate practices promoting acceleration, which has strong positive evidence to its effects. Likewise, they are maintaining a mandate for educators to retain students, which disregards years of published evidence showing the lifelong negative effects of retention.

Hattie’s work (2009) gives us the example of retention versus acceleration to ponder, along with other examples of practices in contradiction to the evidence commonly found. High school start times are universally earlier than elementary schools instead of the reverse, as is commonly known to lead to better high school outcomes (Andersen, 2019; National Sleep Foundation, 2019; Urton, 2018). When looking at Hattie’s meta-analyses results, schools should be creating more vocabulary programs ($d = .67$), more outdoor education opportunities ($d = .52$) and provide more professional development for teachers on high quality formative assessment practices ($d = .90$) (Hattie, 2017). At the same time, schools should discontinue practices that Hattie’s metanalyses consider negative - expelling students ($d = -.20$), summer vacations ($d = -.09$) and student perceptions of boredom ($d = -.49$) (Hattie 2017).
Reasons Why Evidence Is Not Used

At the core of this vast belief in the benefit to using evidence in schools is a set of assumptions about evidence that practitioners do not necessarily share. Policymakers and other persons in the system assume evidence itself shares a common definition, flows unidirectionally from researchers, operates outside of the influence of politics and policymakers, and should primarily be used early in a program development process (Asen, et al. 2013). Similarly, Honig and Coburn (2008) summarize different reasons educators do not use evidence - it is difficult to use, highly influenced by personal beliefs, can be used in a variety of different ways which impacts its overall perceived effectiveness, and finally, its use is greatly influenced by organizational politics. These assumptions and concerns can be aligned into a framework tested and developed to explain K-12 teachers’ lack of technology integration into their classrooms (Clemens, 2015). The Outcomes Based Concerns Model (OBCM) suggests that people’s use of a tool is connected to their primary area of concern surrounding the tool itself (Clemens, 2015). In this case, evidence, itself, is the tool that teachers are being asked to use and practitioners have concerns with the ways evidence is being represented, claims of its effectiveness and the perceived impact on their personal practice and identity as a teacher.

Clemens (2015) described the four areas of concern surrounding the use of a tool as related to a practitioner’s perceptions and interactions with self or others. Evidence is seen as providing

- productivity outcomes - tools are adopted due to their potential impact on a person’s productivity, defined as more effective, more efficient, producing better outcomes;
• power outcomes—tools are adopted that change the relationship between people, defined in ways that are related to control and influence and the benefits that might come from that;

• symbolism/practice outcomes—tools are adopted due to a person being seen different symbolically, defined as more knowledgeable, more future-focused, better meeting their students’ needs, etc; and,

• identity outcomes—tools are adopted in pursuit of the change in the person, defined as a change related to “moral, ethical, or other personal standards of living and being” (Clemens, 2015, p.63).

Practitioner concerns as described by Honig and Coburn (2008) and policymaker assumptions as described by Asen et al., (2013) could then be aligned as outcome concerns as defined by OBCM. If evidence is the tool, then the reasons why evidence is not used is related to concerns we can identify through OBCM.

1. Concerns with outcomes related to productivity—evidence use is encouraged as ways to increase a practitioner’s effectiveness, expertise, efficiency and more. Practitioners rarely see evidence being used around them for programmatic decision-making, for deeper understanding of issues and personal learning or for justification of decisions. Practitioners ask – how do I know this will actually help us work better?

2. Concerns with outcomes related to power—evidence is portrayed as credible even though educators know the processes used to produce it are often highly influenced by actors outside a school or district. Funders, advocates, networks of peers and even state agencies unduly influence evidence promoted in the system to try sway or influence others. Practitioners ask – where did this even come from?

3. Concerns with outcomes related to symbolism/practice—evidence is represented as accurate, empirical information, not influenced by beliefs or assumptions but
practitioners are skeptical, often confused about terms and not convinced that the claims of its effectiveness will be realized. Practitioners ask – what am I supposed to use?

4. Concerns with outcomes related to identity – evidence is characterized as unidirectional, flowing from researchers to practitioners, ready for practitioners to apply to their contexts, when actually, evidence comes at practitioners from all directions, is confusing and rarely seen as matching their personal practice, classroom or community. Practitioners ask – who is this supposed to help?

Figure 2 illustrates a cycle that starts with the OBCM in the upper left of Figure 2. Productivity concerns are the least personal for the practitioner because they are related to the ways that the tool, evidence, can be used to make the system in which they operate more productive. The next concern becomes a little more personal to the practitioner as he/she begins to wonder where the evidence comes from and who might be benefitting from its use in the system. The next concern becomes even more personal as practitioners are asked to use evidence within their practice, but it is confusing since there is so much evidence available and it is coming at them from every direction. Finally, the last concern is the most personal. Practitioners are concerned that the evidence being used is not applicable to their students or personal circumstances.
Each of these concerns is discussed in more detail.

**Concerns Related to Productivity—How do I know this will actually help us work better?**

The first practitioner concern regarding the use of evidence is the general lack of evidence use throughout the system, whether using it to make program decisions, change in professional practice or to justify decisions, within a school or across schools, practitioners are being pressed to use evidence in many more ways (Asen et al., 2013; Lysenko, et al., 2014;
Many federal guidelines require research-based decisions early to influence program adoption, but after that initial directive, requiring the use of evidence is rarely mentioned (Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Asen et al., 2013). Evidence can impact ongoing decision-making by helping to make sense of formative program outcomes, influencing the choice of program activities to be targeted, directing ongoing data collection and interim reporting during planning, implementation, assessment and program improvement phases (Colbert & Talkbert, 2006). One of my favorite quotes is Maya Angelo “I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better” (Mom, the Intern, 2013). Evidence from the program becomes the knowledge needed to improve the program; however, this causes concerns and confusion for the practitioners since evidence comes in many forms and can be used in many ways throughout the system.

Evidence use has been traditionally summarized as 4 types: instrumental (decision making), conceptual (influencing beliefs), political (justifying current practices) and imposed (mandated) (Penuel et al., 2017; Tseng, 2012). A new type has been discussed more recently - process (being involved in the research) (Tseng, 2012). Examples and uses are defined below.

Instrumental use occurs when the evidence is in service to a particular decision of practice or policy (Tseng, 2012). The evidence is “instrumental” to the administrators in decision-making. As stated earlier, researchers and policy makers often assume that administrators most use evidence to provide perspectives and guidance while making decisions early in programming. Like most other school district processes, the practice is not as clear as the theory. Even when administrators have used evidence in making a decision, it is rarely the sole or defining factor (Coburn, Honig & Stein, 2007; Tseng, 2012). Sometimes it is interpreted too
widely from the original findings or it is of questionable quality—too old, too vague, too small of a sample size, etc. Even if individuals have very similar, well-defined common understandings needed for using evidence in instrumental ways, the amount that they actually use it in their practice varies widely (Coburn & Talbert, 2006).

Coburn and Talbert list four ways evidence were used instrumentally in the districts involved in their 2006 study—

- ensuring that accountability demands are met either for state and federal policymakers or internally within district accountability structures;
- informing program and policy decisions to justify new or ongoing resources spent on a program or activity;
- assessing student progress to inform individual placement decisions and interventions like what is expected through response to intervention; and
- monitoring students’ progress to inform instructional practices by providing formative feedback to the teachers.

In a 2016 national study, Findings from a National Study on Research use Among School and District Leaders, reported that 79% of their responding administrators self-reported that they frequently or always use research in at least one of these instrumental ways: purchased an intervention or program, designed professional development, conducted a major adoption of curriculum, or considered scaling up, redesigning or eliminating a program (Penuel et al., 2016). The National Center for Research in Policy and Practice conducted the study of 733 administrators from large districts (more than 9000 students) and purposely recruited central office staff. The sample included 90 superintendents, 115 curriculum specialists, 102 special
education administrators, 91 assessment specialists, 138 school principals, 89 federal program
officers and 108 administrators with multiple roles (Penuel et al., 2016). This study will be
referred to as the “2016 national study” when used throughout this paper.

Conceptual use occurs when evidence changes the way that a person views a problem or
the possible solutions available. Key to this use is “evidence plays a role in influencing
individual and shared working knowledge, even when it does not influence a specific decision”
(Coburn, Honig & Stein, 2008, p. 14). The 2016 national study showed that 71% of the
administrators self-reported that they found research expanding their understanding of an issue
and 57% said it provides a common language (Penuel et al., 2017). However, only 35% indicated
that research changed the way that they looked a problem (Penuel et al., 2017). Cynthia Coburn
suggests four ways to use evidence in conceptual ways- introducing new concepts, changing
understandings about practice, changing understandings about solutions, providing a framework
to guide action (2018).

Using evidence in conceptual ways might be more successful if it is seen as a more-
gradual process. Instead of expecting it to impact a particular decision, a body of evidence can be
collected and considered over time and that starts to seep in and sway decision making in a
different direction than before (Farley-Ripple, 2012; Tseng, 2012). People slowly integrate the
new information into their working knowledge (Tseng, 2012).

Political use occurs when evidence is used to validate a preference for a particular
decision or to justify a decision already made (Tseng, 2012). Several studies indicate that this
was an early use of evidence and has continued to grow (Coburn, Honig & Stein, 2007; Farley-
Ripple, 2012). Political use of evidence is generally vague. Statements are often made without
stating an author, methods, conclusions or other specifics that could be verified. When speakers start comments with “research says” they are using evidence in political ways. Most of these references seem to be done by the speaker to help elevate their point above the ongoing discussion. “Research bolsters the credibility and authority of the person who cites it” along with communicating that the person stating it has done additional study and has information that the general group is lacking” (Asen et al., 2013, p. 43).

The 2016 national study stated that 68% of the administrators self-reported using research to convince others to support a particular opinion or particular decision; whereas, only 21% reported that they used research to discredit a program (Penuel et al., 2017). Evidence used in activities by administrators to try to persuade others to be in support of decisions that were already made is also considered political (Asen et al., 2013; Farley-Ripple, 2012; Tseng, 2012). Farely-Ripple (2012) suggests that a lack of political use early in project planning could be because of a lack of capacity in a central office to find evidence before decisions are made. Instead, this effort to find research support is only made when decisions are challenged and must be defended. Also, as administrators report that much of their knowledge comes from their professional organizations, this might inadvertently encourage political use of evidence instead of instrumental use by those organizations (Coburn & Talbert, 2006). Even though most of these publications are primarily trying to help administrators access evidence to make decisions (instrumental use), these groups might be encouraging administrators to use evidence in political ways by “rely[ing] on others for identification and interpretation of research” (Farley-Ripple, 2012, p. 801).
Imposed use occurs when evidence use is mandated by law or policy. Often not used by the administrators themselves, it is used by state personnel to create lists of effective programs approved to be purchased with state or federal funds. In a recent study of administrators, researchers found that imposing evidence use did not result in more active searches for evidence (Penuel et al, 2017).

When evidence is simply not used by administrators at all, it could be that schools are so tied to community perspectives, past experiences or personal perspectives that they do not even consider it, or it could be that evidence is not influential to the decision makers so there is no reason to spend time finding it. As schools try to keep up with the mandates, student needs, parent concerns and community expectations, evidence can seem like just one more hoop without much benefit unless the organization or the stakeholders value it (Asen et al., 2013; Tseng, 2012).

In a 2014 study of 2,700 respondents of a Canadian survey, *Questionnaire about the Use of Research-based Information*, in 66 different schools in Quebec, teachers reported using evidence most frequently from the internet, mass media and multimedia like videos and TV (Lysenko et al., 2014). Administrators reported most-frequently using research-based information (RBI) about their schools that was collected and synthesized into school evaluation reports and sent to them as part of the project to make research more accessible to school personnel. Unfortunately, as a whole group, participants did not rate any of the 10 sources provided as being used more than a few times over the past year (Lysenko et al., 2014). This had to be disappointing to the project leaders since the intent of the project was to foster the success of secondary-school students in disadvantaged areas by having the school staff focus on RBI
when planning and implementing their improvement strategies. The project expected RBI to be used in three ways. “To understand and evaluate school needs, to choose solutions/intervention models and tools that would lead to the expected impact; and to enable the mechanisms and processes needed to implement the planned actions” (Lysenko et al., 2014, p. 7).

Administrators in this 2014 study reported that when they did use research, they almost always used the evidence for improving their professional practice. Reflecting on their attitudes and justifying their decisions also scored close to “always.” Teachers reported statistically significant (p<.001) less use for all 7 purposes listed even though their top reason matched the administrators’ top reason of improving their professional practice, with “satisfying intellectual curiosity” as second (Lysenko et al., 2014). One concern was that teachers rated “to resolve problems in your daily practice” and “to achieve a better understanding of issues in your practice” second to last and last. In this 2014 study, teachers did not use research much and when they did it was definitely not to remediate personal deficiencies in their teaching either noticed by themselves or pointed out by others. Even though administrators used research statistically more than the teachers from 8 of the 10 sources offered, they still did not use it much, as their top mean was still only 1.79 (once or twice a year) out of 4 (5+ times a year). Given that their standard deviation was only .93, they had fairly good agreement with each other that they did not use it much (Lysenko et al., 2014).

In contrast, the 2016 national study, found that administrators reported frequently using research for decision making (instrumental) while sometimes using it to challenge beliefs (conceptual) or justify decisions (political) as well (Penuel et al., 2017). The sources they most used were their professional networks and conferences, colleagues in other districts or even the
state department of education (Penuel et al., 2017). Teachers were not included in this survey so there is not information about any differences in their frequency or sources for evidence but an interesting finding from this study was that administrators reported the organizational characteristic of “regular occasions for discussing research” as the highest correlated organizational or individual factor to using research for decision-making \((r = .615)\) (Penuel et al., 2017). Regular occasions for discussing research was also highly correlated for using evidence to justify decisions \((r = .520)\). As far as using evidence to change beliefs, the highest correlate was the perceived value of the evidence \((r = .519)\) and the effort it took to acquire the evidence \((r = .469)\).

The two sets of surveyed administrators are different in several ways, which may call into question about whether their self-reported research use is comparable to each other. For example, the Canadian study included teachers, principals and professional staff, where the 2016 national study included only administrators from the central office of large districts. Since central office staff have been reported to use evidence more than building administrators, that might account for the Canadian administrators reporting infrequent use since central office staff were not identified in the Canadian study (Lysenko et al., 2014; Penuel et al., 2017). The size of the schools may have also been a factor since the Canadian survey included educators from small, medium and large schools and the 2016 national study included only administrators from large districts (>9000 students) (Lysenko et al., 2014; Penuel et al., 2017). Additionally, the Canadian staff included teachers and professional staff where the 2016 national study only included administrators (Lysenko et al., 2014; Penuel et al., 2017).
In other ways, the two studies support each other. Even though the teachers in the Canadian study reported infrequent use, they reported more-social sources for research when they did use it—internet, media, videos, TV (Lysenko et al., 2014). In the American study, administrators reported a high correlation between regular occasions for discussing research as an organization and using it for decision-making, so it seems that research use in the districts in both studies is social and supported by internal discussions. Creating opportunities to engage with evidence in social environments could help increase more consistent evidence use in decision making.

Practitioner concern #1 is with claims about productivity - evidence is inconsistently used throughout the educational system. Policymakers may require its use during program adoption but then neglect to put in structures and supports so that evidence is used throughout the lifecycle of a project or program, much less across programs or across schools. Central office administrators might report using it frequently, but building level practitioners report using evidence less than a couple of times a year.

Concerns Related to Power- Where did this even come from?

The second practitioner concern regarding the use of evidence is related to the difference in how evidence is represented as objective and not influenced by politics or policymakers and consequently, it’s findings and recommendations are often represented as unbiased and “a value-neutral solution to pressing social problems” (Asen et al., 2013, p. 34). Practitioners fear there is a surplus of external and internal actors focused on various student interests, teacher interests, community interests or national interests who are using evidence to position their causes more-
favorably in practitioners’ minds and practices. Internal actors are trying to influence organizational politics to promote their interests while external actors often publish research, offer workshops, and hold conferences all to support their cause and back their members (Asen et al., 2012). Statewide and nationally, advocacy groups are well-known for having a role in determining which policies are promoted and how funds are spent (Tseng, 2012). These influencers and personal agendas are well-known to practitioners and call into question the credibility of the evidence because of the lack of integrity of the processes often used to create it.

As far as external influencers, well-funded foundations contribute research, findings and recommendations to promote their approach or viewpoint. This is especially evident in Illinois for early childhood, Career Technical Education, accountability and afterschool programming, to name a few areas. An example of the ways that these influencers impact our system is as follows.

Illinois afterschool programming has an association of associations – ACT NOW! which meets regularly to increase the quality of and funding for after school programming (ACT NOW!, 2019). During my first few weeks at ISBE as an Assistant Superintendent in August 2013, I was on a telephone conference call with the Illinois State Superintendent, the Executive Director of the ACT NOW!, the director of Metropolitan Family Services, the afterschool coordinator for Children’s Home and Aid Society, a community outreach director for the United Way of Metropolitan Chicago, and an afterschool program director located in a Chicago Public School (CPS), but not an actual employee of CPS. The associations on the call were concerned about a standing practice in the 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) grant program that required grantees to slide down their federal funding in the last two years of their 5 year grant award and then be completely self-funded after two grant cycles (10 years). All the
organizations on the call had been funded for 10 years and were ineligible to apply for the new
grant coming out that winter. On the call, they were all giving the state superintendent and me
information about the effectiveness of their program and evidence of the need for their continued
funding. They wanted ISBE to change the grant guidelines so they could be eligible for the third
round of grants. 80 million was at stake and these entities were using their evidence to influence
a decade long ISBE policy which was recommended, but not required, by the federal funders of
the 21st CCLC program. The policy of ramping down their funding had influenced the results of
their external evaluations and published results. All of them made the case for stable, sustained
public funds since that is what they most wanted to see change and they were using their
programs’ evaluation reports as evidence for continued funding.

Most practitioners are not naturally research based, are not trained in using evidence to
make decisions (in their classrooms or in their schools) and are not generally held accountable
for using evidence in instrumental ways (Asen et al., 2013). Even with a decades-long focus on
using “evidence-based practices,” one can find more political (symbolic) use (ie “research
says”), but this has not led to much of an increase in actually using evidence in decision making,
even in meetings where those statements are made (Asen et al., 2013; Tseng, 2012). When
research is used, it is more appreciated when it “resonated with local values” and aligns with
trusted experts (Asen et al., 2013, p. 58). The 2016 national study found that 87% of the
administrators said that research has been useful to their organization and that 76% have been
encouraged to use it as part of their work (Penuel et al., 2017). Organizational structure can
influence people in different positions, or with different beliefs and that adds to the wide variety
of decisions that are possible from the evidence presented (Coburn & Talbert, 2006).
Practitioner concern #2 is with power – where did this even come from? Evidence being encouraged often lacks credibility because the processes used to create it are often influenced by individuals or organizations with ulterior motives. Practitioners know that much of the evidence produced for the K-12 system is influenced by policies, politics and policymakers and it is easier to ignore it, especially since entities can be disingenuous about their involvement.

Concerns Related to Symbolism- What am I supposed to use?

The third practitioner concern comes from a more personal perspective. What am I supposed to use and how is evidence-use going to change me as a practitioner? What will that mean to my day to day practice with my students? Policymakers assume that the word “evidence” denotes a common definition that is empirical in nature and not influenced by the beliefs or world views of the user so that when a colleague or person in authority states that something is “evidence-based” the practitioner can be assured that it is reliably accurate in communicating what needs to be done. Unfortunately, “evidence” is not reliable on several levels. The first level is that a common definition of “evidence” does not exist; our current system instead fosters opposing definitions- one that requires the consideration of a persons’ beliefs and one that requires its absence.

Educational research is generally defined as objective, reliable knowledge gained from educational activities (Asen et al., 2013; Coburn, & Talbert, 2006). Even if this was the common definition of the word “research,” there are many different terms that practitioners use interchangeably which will distort the meaning: evidence, data, knowledge, expertise, wisdom, best practices. For example, educational knowledge has been defined as broadly as “social
science research, policy research, analysis or evaluation” (Farley-Ripple, 2012, p. 788) whereas educational working knowledge has been defined as the “entire array of beliefs, assumptions, interests and experiences that influences the behavior of individual at work” (Farley-Ripple, 2012, p. 788). Practitioners often assume that research is an activity in which people employ “systematic, empirical methods to answer a specific [research]question” (p. 5) but that seems to indicate that it does not lead to working knowledge, which is more about beliefs, assumptions, interests and experiences (Penuel, Briggs, Davidson, Herlihy, Sherer, Hill, … & Allen, 2017; Coburn, & Talbert, 2006). Most researchers have found that for practitioners, “evidence” can be considered everything from anecdotal data (story) to classroom assessment data (grades) to data analyzed from a formal program evaluation (reports) to an article published in a peer-reviewed journal (Farley-Ripple, 2012). In contrast, some districts have simplified their definition of student achievement evidence to student test scores, attendance and graduation rates (Tseng, 2012). Afterall, they argue, that is the primary “evidence” that federal accountability requires states to use when categorizing a well-performing school versus a failing one (Illinois State Board of Education, 2019b).

On a more practical level, the word “research” is more commonly used but that results in its overuse, covering many different scenarios and examples and resulting in even more confusion. “Research” can include single studies or a meta-analysis of many studies, can include an analysis of observational data or empirical data, can be based on individuals’ performance or groups’ performance and can include the “gold standard” of research - randomized controlled trials like in medicine (Tseng, 2012). Frankly, in common daily usage, practitioners use terms
such as research, evaluation, knowledge, evidence, assessment or measurement with little to no consideration to the differences between them (Honig, & Coburn, 2008; Tseng, 2012).

As stated before, evidence-based programming is defined as programs with efficacy behind them, meaning the programs have been tested by researchers without any connection to the program, results have been measured with valid and reliable instruments and outcomes have resulted in statistically significant improvements, including effect sizes that warrant the claims being made (Iowa Reading Research Center, 2015). A research-base is a lower threshold to cross, meaning there are some studies that support its use, but the results are not overly conclusive.

This ongoing confusion educators have regarding the definition of the terms “research” and “evidence” is only the beginning of ways that practitioners find research confusing. The second characteristic confusing to practitioners is that evidence use is commonly influenced by the world-views or beliefs of the professionals using it. An example of how even the most experienced educators disregard generally available and accepted evidence occurred during a policy class in my NIU Ed.S. program. The professor made a claim that the Illinois State Standards (1997) were written by a bunch of businesspeople trying to impact education. Since I had participated in several of the public information sessions as part of the 1997 adoption of the first Illinois state standards, I brought him a published Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) document that listed the people involved in writing the standards grouped by subject. I had tallied committee members that were listed in Appendix D by their school, district, or community role and showed him that the participants were more than two-thirds practicing teachers and administrators (Illinois State Board of Education, 1997). The professor, who was a
recently retired superintendent from a suburban school district, looked at me and said “well, just because their name is on the list, does not mean they actually participated”. In response I offered him contact information for several of the participants that I knew personally, and he waived me off. I realized that if I could not convince him that the published ISBE list of educators involved was evidence of educator involvement in the process, and he was not interested in talking to any of the educators listed, the problem was not in the evidence itself, it was in his belief that educators were not involved and there was probably no amount of “evidence” that I could come up with that would change that. My hope in bringing him this evidence was that he would correct his statement to my peers since I feared that they would take his statement to heart and question the credibility of the standards.

My fear was well-founded since administrators often turn to networks of trusted peers, whose opinions and experiences become the evidence they need to support a decision and, regrettably, both sides of an issue are rarely considered in these types of interactions. Coburn, Honig and Stein (2007) state “simply put, administrators tend to see aspects of the data or research that support their beliefs, assumptions and experiences and do not even notice those aspects of the data that might contradict or challenge these beliefs” (p. 7). Studies show that central office administrators pay greater attention to evidence that fits their current understandings of issues or programs (Honig & Coburn, 2008). This confirmation bias means that we tend to seek out and interpret information that supports our current understandings, disregarding those that challenge it.

Evidence being used to contradict currently held beliefs and assumptions or being ignored due to those beliefs and assumptions speaks to the role of trusting relationships in using
evidence. In 2008 Honig and Coburn found that “district central office administrators seemed better able to collect evidence about student performance from schools when school-level leaders trusted that the information would be used to support rather than penalize them “(p. 597).

Building a trusting relationship comes from interacting over time, developing a shared language and, basically, being trustworthy: reliably meeting commitments, maintaining confidentiality and showing respect for the needs and concerns of the partners. All of these are roles that a professor would develop with his students or administrators would develop with each other in peer networks or with their teachers.

Unfortunately, I have several more examples of the ways that evidence was dismissed by administrators as being confusing. Likewise, I have many examples of how implemented improvements were derailed by a decline in early performance, which caused panic and regret, which then gave strength to the nay-sayer voices which overcame the small group of early adopters. Trust has a strong role in whether evidence is seen as reliable or not by practitioners.

Ongoing constructive conversations regarding the evidence support or lack thereof might be the best way to encourage more engagement with research and uncover beliefs and worldviews at the foundation of the issue, especially since having the opportunities to engage in discussions about evidence is important to using it to make decisions (Asen et al., 2013; Penuel et al., 2017). Maybe using evidence for decision-making should start with promoting more engagement with evidence.

Concern #3 is related to symbolism – what am I supposed to use? Practitioners believe that the evidence used in educational systems is unreliable. Evidence is unclearly defined and often
misrepresented as empirical findings while ignoring the impact of practitioner and researcher beliefs, assumptions and context.

**Concerns Related to Identity – Who is this supposed to help?**

The fourth concern regarding the use of evidence by practitioners is with regard to a practitioners’ identity in their classroom and whether they perceive the evidence as applicable to their context and students. Evidence is an overwhelming presence, abundantly given from all directions and represented as having great impact once known. Researchers and policymakers have a naïve assumption that information flows in one direction in the system. In their logic model, the researchers publish to peer-reviewed journals and then central office staff spends hours combing, searching, accessing and then interpreting research found in peer-reviewed journals, disseminating out to their program staff who then use it to guide programming decisions (Asen et al., 2013; Coburn & Talbert, 2006). Even though central office staff have been identified as the most supportive administrators when it comes to coherent evidence use, this unidirectional model is short sighted (Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Tseng, 2013). This assumption does not consider the amount of internal evidence collected locally by district administrators about student performance and instruction that should be included in their decision-making processes, it dismisses the rich evidence collected through local community surveys, focus groups and dialogues, and it neglects the amount of information constantly generated by state agencies, foundations and special-interest groups through their published data, reports, findings and recommendations. Figure 3 is a graphic I created that illustrates the unidirectional flow of information assumed in traditional research models.
Figure 3: Flow of knowledge in a traditional research model.

An example of this unidirectional thinking when it comes to research is the climate and culture survey required by ISBE. School districts must complete a bi-annual community, parent and staff survey of all schools (Illinois State Board of Education, 2019c). The survey provided by ISBE is the 5 Essentials Survey of Learning Conditions, coordinated by the University of Chicago and when first introduced to the state, ISBE intended it to be used by all Illinois public schools. The survey is provided at no charge to the schools due to an ISBE contract with the survey authors (U Chicago Impact, 2020). Due to pressure from schools, legislation was passed that allowed districts to choose from a list of surveys screened by an ISBE workgroup (Illinois Compiled Statutes, 2019b). This is an example of the unidirectional thinking of lawmakers
because legislators were only considering how the survey would impact school district decisions and did not consider the many other uses of the data, such as informing state policy, advising legislative priorities or verifying state programmatic effectiveness.

Unidirectional thinking has long-ranging influences. By allowing districts optional surveys and not collecting the state results as an aggregate, the legislators and policy makers are being shortsighted by not building a state unified data set. For example, the Illinois Education Research Council published a Policy Research Brief in 2014 that analyzed the use of the 5 Essentials Survey of Learning Conditions data for school improvement across the state and made recommendations for improvements to the survey and process (Klostermann, et al., 2014). They also looked at familiarity with the survey, perceived value and preferences of schools when it comes to using the survey results for local planning. Districts which chose to administer alternative surveys were absent from this study, so the results were not representative of the state. The decision to allow districts to give an alternative survey was a result of unidirectional thinking when it comes to school climate research. In the effort to allow local control, the legislators were only focused on the survey providing information to the district which threatens the overall authenticity of the data collected back from the schools and communities. They did not consider the other ways that the information from the districts and communities could help inform state policies and practices.

Unidirectional thinking also negates the ways that practitioners could inform the system “backwards” by influencing the researchers’ practice. Instead of researchers just using the results of their data collection to influence their personal practice, practitioners can be a source of important expertise about research questions, data collection, limitations, application of results
and recommendations for future study. “Practitioners are not simply passive adopters of research; they are active agents with their own experiences, judgement and knowledge about serving children and families” (Tseng, 2013, p.1). If research is not being completed just for the research audience, then the system should have mechanisms in place that ensure the practitioners influence the researcher’s work as well.

This unidirectional thinking by the researchers and policymakers also ignores the issues that practitioners have with evidence coming from all directions. The presence of evidence throughout the system makes it difficult to use. Administrators are often buried under journals on every educational topic from bussing to budget to technology. They are also inundated with the overwhelming arrival of emailed newsletters with hundreds of the latest updates, findings and recommendations; daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly briefings continue. Confusing information about what evidence is accurate, applicable or appropriate magnifies the barriers to finding evidence to use. Given the vast amount of available evidence over the past 60 years, evidence can be found to support both sides of most issues (Hattie, 2009; Tseng, 2012). Evidence that is too ambiguous makes it difficult to use. This limits its use because different interpretations lead to different recommendations, confusing the decision-making process (Honig & Coburn, 2008). Likewise, evidence that is too specific is considered out of context and not applicable to local issues (Tseng, 2012). Researchers may focus on internal validity but practitioners look to other factors to determine its relevance to their situation. Factors like the population included, demographics, costs and staff training needs impact whether practitioners consider the results applicable to their local contexts (Tseng, 2012).
Answers to large, hairy problems often involve large, hairy solutions seen as impossible to implement as a school district; for instance, a single district cannot address issues connected to generational poverty, neighborhood violence, family violence or homelessness. Evidence that advocates expensive or long-term methods is also rejected as not applicable to their local context due to the lack of accessibility to those solutions. Organizations representing researchers have tried policy briefs, executive summaries and research reviews that are free of research-based vocabulary and focused on communicating results and findings in ways practitioners can understand and use. Results show there is still infrequent use (Lysenko et al., 2014; Tseng, 2012).

Unidirectional thinking also challenges practitioners to be patient for results. At times there is too long between initiating a project and measuring an impact; implementation fatigue sets in, distracting administrators from their original plans and outcomes (Honig & Coburn, 2008). Districts report that data collection and reporting is far too slow and central office staff have to appear decisive long before the data is in a usable form (Honig & Coburn, 2008). When it comes to student performance data, most districts do not have the personnel to interpret student performance data from the standardized state assessment, much less being able to collect and analyze their own program, classroom or grade level data. Is data available and accessible? If not, it will not be used (Honig & Coburn, 2008).

Practitioner concern #4 is about a practitioner’s identity and if evidence is presented too inauthentic to the practitioners’ personal contexts, it is dismissed. Researchers and policymakers represent evidence as unidirectional from “ivory towers” but practitioners know it does not run unidirectional in a pipeline from researchers to practitioners in their schools and classrooms; it is coming at them from all directions, often represents participants in contexts much different from
their own, involves solutions that are beyond the scope of their influence, and is rarely available within a timeframe it can be used for decision-making. Additionally, practitioners readily dismiss evidence that is too far removed from their personal circumstances.

**Exemplification of Practitioners’ Four Concerns.**

On April 15, 2015, the Illinois State Board of Education appointed a new State Superintendent, Anthony Smith, Ph.D. Superintendent Smith received a performance contract that included the duties of the state superintendent and the goals and measurements of the performance of the students in the state of Illinois (Illinois State Board of Education, 2015a). On September 16, 2015, the State Board of Education approved this motion

Superintendent Smith proposed that the Board amend Goal #1 in the Illinois State Board of Education Strategic Plan in order to prioritize the needs of students. Dr. Smith expressed his desire that every student should attend a school system that helps them exceed expectations and become college and career ready. Superintendent Smith led a discussion with the Board regarding a universal goal of how to engage students into striving for academic achievement and being prepared for success. He informed the Board that the measurements in this amendment come from Superintendents in the school districts. Mr. Pimentel moved that the State Board of Education hereby amends the Illinois State Board of Education Goal No. 1 as follows:

Every child in each public-school system in the state of Illinois deserves to attend a system wherein…

1. All Kindergarteners are assessed for readiness.
2. 90% or more 3rd grade students are reading at or above grade level.
3. 90% or more 5th grade students meet or exceed expectations in mathematics
4. 90% or more students are on track to graduate with their cohort at the end of 9th grade.
5. 90% or more students graduate from high school ready for college or career.

Mr. Lindvahl seconded this motion and it passed with a unanimous voice vote. (Illinois State Board of Education, 2015b, p. 3)

On page 27.2 of the supplementary packet for that meeting, additional information by Superintendent Smith was written as a personal communication between the Board and him,
regarding his personal thoughts behind this recommendation. At no point in his explanation was there a single reference to a research base, state data analysis, policy review or other evidence for his recommendations. There was no reference or justification of the goals set or the metric used throughout (90%). In fact, a review of the packets and minutes of all the board meetings between Superintendent Smith’s hire and this request revealed no additional information, conversation or discussion with the board, staff, legislators, school personnel, businesses, communities, parents, students or anyone regarding this monumental change in achievement expectations for the 2 million school children in the state of Illinois.

Even more confusing is the fact that Superintendent Smith’s recommendation was not in compliance with the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act requiring that all students meet benchmarks in reading and math in 3rd-8th grade and at least once in high school. The US Department of Education was in the process of both renewing current states’ flexibility waivers from No Child Left Behind and negotiating a reauthorization to the law, called Every Student Succeeds Act (US Department of Education, 2015). Much national and local press reported on the progress of states through the waiver reauthorization and of Congress’s progress through the reauthorization process. The goals of all students achieving remained a key part of the national discussion and when the national reauthorization to NCLB was finally approved by Congress on December 8, 2015, it included the ongoing expectation that all students meet high standards (college and career benchmarks) in reading and math from 3rd-8th grade and at least once in high school. If this was the clearly stated, codified and commonly held expectation across 50 states in and the nation at large, it is surprising that the Illinois State Board of Education change its expectation to 90% meeting in 3rd grade reading and 90% meeting expectations in 5th grade
math, etc. Superintendent Smith’s recommendation and the Illinois State Board of Education’s action jeopardized the more than $1 billion in educational funds that Illinois receives from the federal government and cracked the philosophical foundation of educational equity – all children can achieve at high levels.

The answer lies in a conversation not recorded in official minutes but supported by the lack of evidence revealing any other process. Superintendent Smith told staff in a meeting shortly after his hire that it was his belief that schools could get to 9 out of 10 students meeting grade-level expectations. Everyone knew that 10 out of 10 was just not possible and that 8 out of 10 seemed low. His personal belief, based on his years of experience and knowledge, was that 9 out of 10 was the right target. That is a summary of what he wrote in his memo to the board for their meeting on September 16, 2015 and that led to their unanimous approval (Illinois State Board of Education, 2015c). This exemplifies that even at the highest level of school administration, even those with the deepest responsibility to enact federal accountability and with lifelong public service to the most vulnerable children do not necessarily use evidence in instrumental ways, even for “big” decisions.

This story exemplifies the four practitioner concerns about the use of evidence in an educational system.

• Concerns with productivity – how do I know this will actually help us work better? The goals approved by the state board were so poorly conceived that they are unusable in any district in the state which does want to ensure student achievement. Even the federal government requires 3rd-8th grade assessment in reading, writing, math and science, attendance and graduation rates. The target of the new goals jumped from a satisfactory
performance in the number of students assessed at Kindergarten to the percent of students meeting expectations on just one particular subject in certain grade levels to entire grade levels with no expectations at all. These new goals could not result in a more productive educational system, even if that was the intent.

- Concerns with power – where did this even come from? Superintendent Smith was an external force in the system since he was in the agency for less than 4 months. Organizational politics and norms resulted in the board approving his illegal recommendation without a question or discussion even though it fundamentally changed the 3rd through 12th grade performance goals for 2 million children in Illinois. The introduction of this powerful decision maker, the state superintendent, resulted in new goals, the process to adopt them lacked integrity and practitioners should be concerned about them.

- Concerns with symbolism/practice – what am I supposed to use? The evidence for success was narrowly defined by a single metric (90%) determined by Superintendent Smith based only on his personal belief system, resulting in other definitions (from the federal government or state legislation) being cast aside without even a discussion by the board. The metric would not be reliable in guaranteeing student achievement throughout the system and should be considered suspect by practitioners.

- Concerns with identity – who is this supposed to help? Superintendent Smith did not have stakeholder meetings, did not run preliminary analysis to gauge the effect of the new performance metrics and did not support his decision with evidence from researchers or
voices of practitioners. The new metrics did not authentically represent an Illinois context much less a personal context for any of the practitioners.

This strategic planning session of ISBE demonstrates that even at the highest levels of our educational system, practitioners concerns regarding the use of evidence are sound.

Suggested Actions to Remedy Practitioner Concerns with Evidence Use

Coburn, Honig and Stein summarized ways to encourage evidence use in districts (2007). Each of these suggestions are ways to help address practitioners well-founded concerns regarding the use of evidence. The suggestions listed include examples from Research Practice Partnerships (RPPs) as ways to help support evidence use. RPPs organized between researchers and practitioners help address the long-standing concerns that practitioners have with the use of evidence. They “are long-term partnerships driven by problems of practice” (Denner, Bean, Campe, Martinez, Torres, 2019, p. 1).

For districts, a good research partnership would

- align with their strategic goals, which addresses practitioner concerns with identity by using the local context,
- regularly report local results and makes adjustments even partway through the study, which addresses practitioner concerns with symbolism/practice,
- involve practitioners in developing the research agenda, which addresses practitioner concerns with power and
understand that districts often need results with much shorter timelines than most researchers usually work in, which addresses practitioner concerns with productivity (Munoz & Rodosky, 2015).

For research entities, a good practitioner partnership would be one that would include funding for course buy-outs and graduate student assistants, one that allows access to local data and cooperates with data safety and institutional review board practices, one that allows valid and reliable tools like national surveys and assessments and one that permits results published in peer-reviewed journals. The two groups may need an intermediary that can talk across both research and practice and can help facilitate the communication needed to make this happen (Research + Practice Collaboratory, October 15, 2015).

One common misconception is the difference between an RPP and a vendor/contractor relationship. In an early study, Honig and Coburn (2008) found that central office administrators commonly interacted with a vendor who provided coaches to teach administrators to observe and document classroom practice and then the teams used that evidence to make decisions about the quality of the instruction. In this relationship, the district directed the work and the contractor executed the defined deliverables but this is not an RPP. Rather, RPPs between researchers and practitioners focus on cooperatively solving long-term persistent educational problems in mutually beneficial ways. RPPs build relationships between practitioners and researchers so that there are mutual benefits -researchers have access to authentic data and practitioners have access to evidence that is more likely to be used because it is more focused on district problems based on their local context with fear of influence from external agents. Farrell, Harrison, & Coburn (2019) described to new district administrators that the work of the RPP was different and more
collaborative than traditional vendor relationships “we figure out together how we’re going to
tackle the problem” (p. 6).

The discussion below indicates that RPPs are well aligned to address practitioner
concerns with the use of evidence when it comes to claims of productivity, power, symbolism
and identity.

**Strategy #1 - Build organizational capacity to use evidence to address productivity concerns**

If district personnel believe that evidence use will increase the productivity of their
system, they need to create a culture in which practitioners promote, support and expect evidence
use and then that process must be modeled continuously on all levels. Practitioners concerned
with productivity will ask “how am I even supposed to use this stuff?”. Penuel et al., (2017)
proposed that administrators in settings in which decisions are being made using evidence will
probably learn to use evidence in instrumental ways. Modeling for students, for teachers and for
decision makers seems to be a highly successful strategy for changing behavior (Nilsen, 2015;
University of Minnesota, 2016). Administrators need new models of professional practice that
include evidence use as part of their day-to-day routines (Tseng, 2012).

Relationships between central office staff and teachers are hinged on the principal.
Teachers saw principals as important sources of evidence which means that principals with
stronger relationships with teachers and central office staff could be key to using evidence more
consistently in decision-making (Tseng, 2012). Central office staff were found to have the most-
clear understanding of evidence use in instrumental ways so Coburn and Talbert recommended
that this understanding and the relationships both above and below this level in a district “may be
crucial to the development of coherent and complementary conceptions and evidence-based practice in district systems” (2006, p. 491). However, Phil Daro, Strategic Education Research Partnership (SERP) talks about the disconnect between classroom planning and central office planning and the impact of district administrators living in a constant state of urgency and reactivity (Research + Practice Collaboratory, March 17, 2016). Most of the principal’s day is spent on things that were unknown to the principal on the way to work in the morning. Daro asks - how can a long-term, thoughtful planning processes, designed to engage, uncover and examine evidence that challenges previously held assumptions be facilitated through administrators who have to thrive in such a highly reactive environment (Research + Practice Collaboratory, March 17, 2016)?

One of the key benefits of an RPP is sharing expertise. Even though some large districts might have their own research staff, Ruth Lopez-Durley and Trigatti (2017) found that even in districts with local research staff, they were often assigned to accountability and other district compliance demands and rarely available for strategic planning or program effectiveness questions much less the types of conversations that lead to more conceptual use of evidence (Farrell et.al, 2018; Research + Practice Collaboratory, November 19, 2019). RPPs enable these districts to expand their researching abilities. Additionally, district research staff attended professional development with the Rice University team and learned more about data collection and analysis, developing their own research methods (Research + Practice Collaboratory, November 19, 2015). This is not often available for K-12 administrators, even those specializing in research.
Likewise, researchers involved with the local staff learn more about the project and make better researchers. We have all seen research reports where it is clear that the researcher was missing key information about the project. As members of an RPP on tinkering, Emily McLeod and Jean Ryoo reported that they were able to participate in training about tinkering which made them better researchers on the tinkering project (Research + Practice Collaboratory, November 19, 2015). The district reported that having the researchers in the training helped add a dimension to the training that had not been available before. These types of collaborative activities which use evidence model ways that both partners can benefit from evidence use, addressing practitioners concerns about productivity.

**Strategy #2 - Develop political support throughout the organization to address power concerns**

Decision-making is social and the people making the changes due to those decisions must consider the implications socially for the people in and outside of the system. Practitioner concerns about power are summarized as “where did this stuff even come from”? When protocols were created for communication and social connections between central office research staff and programmatic staff, then evidence use was increased (Honig & Coburn, 2008). Some districts do not use evidence itself in decision making and instead put the evidence through a process called “sensemaking” in which central office staff use it, discuss it and determine its meaning (Honig & Coburn, 2008). “Evidence never directly informs decisions but influences working knowledge which may shape decision making” (Honig & Coburn, 2008, p. 592). Studies suggest that this is a highly social process making the evidence less ambiguous and
results in changing data into information that can better-communicate its meaning and how it can be applied. (Honig & Coburn, 2008)

In the 2016 national survey of American administrators in large districts, administrators strongly agreed with statements about the value, relevance and credibility of research (Penuel et al., 2017). 71% of the respondents said that research is brought up most commonly in decision-making meetings, along with those focusing on particular programs (67%) but can be used as a weapon more than a support (Tseng, 2012). Better understanding research’s role in the political and policy-making process will help explain the pros/cons of applying research findings versus the other processes like cost, risk and rewards that are more-commonly used in district decision making (Tseng, 2012).

Honig and Coburn (2008) found that there are multiple uses for evidence in districts including ways to address political concerns or supports with the outer community. One study reported that research was used with board members to defend a program even though research was not used when originally designing the program. Considering that 40-60% of board members are re-elected every 2 years, Illinois’s administrators can find the longevity of their programs at the center of board election campaigning so having structures in place to help “on-board” new members about the value and research support of current programs is essential and helps derail any new political agenda (Tseng, 2012).

Honig and Coburn (2008) also mentioned how political controversy can force district administrators to collect and analyze their own program evidence which can help support the perceived integrity of the recommendations. They gave examples of times when the evidence supported the program and justified the decisions, but just as often, the evidence can be weak or
obviously biased, which can weaken support and weaken commitment to the program even if it still ends up alleviating an immediate controversy. One of the stronger RPPs in the country, Stanford University and San Francisco Unified School District, actually began their relationship in response to a controversial community issue – an English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Stanford University was able to support the district when it came under attack by a community group about their program. Afterward, the district agreed that the help provided by Stanford University was important to the success of their program and they jointly wrote a grant to study the ESL program. In summary, after the successful effort to address local political issues, both the district and the University turned the collaboration into a partnership (Research + Practice Collaboratory, October 15, 2015). When needed, RPP research partners can take a role as a third party, independent researcher which can better support the perceived integrity of a local study or support district efforts to earn grants (Trigatti, 2017).

**Strategy #3 - Collaborate with external organizations to address concerns with symbolism/practice**

Coburn, Honig and Stein (2007) pointed out that many educators use their professional associations and networks as places to attain evidence to influence their practice so they are not individually responsible for combing the thousands of journals, articles, and manuscripts from conferences, white papers, policy briefs or books into digestible, actionable understandings (Tseng, 2012, Tseng, 2014). Using these associations helps narrow the information in an organization that a practitioner is supposed to implement. Practitioners with symbolism/practice concerns ask “out of all of this, what am I supposed to be using?”. In the 2016 national study of
administrators in large districts, 55% reported professional networks as the way that they accessed research, which made it the most common among those listed (Penuel et al., 2017). School and district leaders also stated that they valued the research that they could access through their networks and that it greatly impacted their practice (Penuel et al., 2017).

Administrators who want to increase the use of evidence in their practice need support in identifying the evidence that is most applicable. Likewise, knowing that practitioners are turning to their professional organizations might mean that these types of publications should “count” more in research environments since they are seen as more authentic sources for the practitioners. Peer-reviewed journals are the most valued type of publication for researchers, especially for tenure and promotion, but if practitioners are using their professional associations for access, then publishing in those journals and newsletters, and presenting in those conferences should take on a more valid role for universities, especially for tenure and promotion (Farley-Ripple, 2012; Penuel et al, 2017).

In some ways, researchers have counted on practitioners working with their external networks, expecting that dissemination will happen through these organizations instead of initiating more direct interaction with practitioners (Tseng, 2012). This results in professional associations who have considerable influence on policy and practice across schools and generate concerns about power, especially when those associations become professional development vendors who then enter into contracts with districts to help districts implement the “authentic” research that they are publishing. Another concern is that professional associations are generally centered around one professional role – principals, counselors, teachers of English, etc. These associations then have a tendency to publish the evidence that is more authentic to that role, but
that leaves their members convinced of particular approaches that support the associations’ vision of their role in the district, even if one group may be in conflict with other peer groups (Coburn & Talbert, 2006).

Not surprisingly, groups of staff that have similar content assignments, regular contact within the organizational structure and a history of working with particular reform movements together, had the most similar interpretation of evidence presented to them (Coburn & Talbert, 2006). Farley-Ripple (2012) identified early that central office decision-makers prefer practitioner-oriented research reporting.

Using professional networks to access research was one way of using external entities and at times those external entities can have close relationships with researchers with similar philosophies which also helps address practitioner concerns with identity because that evidence is seen as more authentic. The same leaders that responded that they often looked for relevant and authentic research studies, reported that they rarely or never contacted researchers directly and if so, only ones that they were familiar and/or were connected to through a class or previous project (Penuel et al., 2017). Additionally, school district personnel have doubts that researchers will provide useful information within a useful timeline which illustrates issues with the administrator’s perceived authenticity of evidence. RPPs with researchers who are willing to meet tighter deadlines in pursuit of programmatic decision making will help address the issues with authenticity.

External organizations could also be intermediary organizations used as relationship-brokers who bring researchers and practitioners together, capitalizing on the expertise of each but providing a bridge across the gap between their purposes (Tseng, 2012). This would provide
opportunities in which the entity could help researchers use practitioners to build a more applicable research agenda and practitioners could use the researcher to answer questions specific to their practice (Tseng, 2012). This type of partnership would be mutually beneficial to both groups.

Strategy #4 - Foster conditions for collective interpretation to address concerns with identity

Administrators generally dismiss evidence as unreliable if it does not support their pre-existing beliefs, so a district must create a culture that helps practitioners question their assumptions and challenge their current frames instead of dismissing the evidence that does not match (Coburn & Talbert, 2006). Practitioners with concerns about identity are asking “who will this even help” because they are skeptical that the evidence being presented is similar enough to their personal circumstances to be worth the try. Professional learning communities (PLC) attempt to do this on a classroom level – socially teaming professionals with evidence from their classrooms given first as an aggregate, disconnected from personal factors, before asking them to report on what the data is saying. After creating agreed-upon understandings with the now-familiar data, the PLC members then consider the ramifications of the evidence provided (DuFour, 2004). PLC proponents show that this strategy can help teachers move beyond their individual ways of thinking and open up other considerations. They turn the data into information that they can use to ensure that students learn (DuFour, 2004). This is time-consuming and most successfully done in a trusting team relationship, but individuals who work together with opportunities to formally and informally converse, end up sharing understandings about evidence and the impact that it could have (Tseng, 2012).
The conditions under which practitioners use research greatly promotes or limits its use. Its role in daily routines and organizational structures affects its perceived relevance and its overall use (Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Penuel et al., 2017; Tseng, 2012). “Using research” is not a single activity but is a combination of attaining the evidence and then sorting, sifting, interpreting it and incorporating it into conversations and daily practice (Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Honig & Coburn, 2008; Tseng, 2012). The success that central office staff have in creating these processes is shaped by the opportunities that practitioners have to engage in the “sense-making” of the evidence. Modeling is available to help support this process (Honig & Coburn, 2008). For instance, “Webinar: Getting a Partnership Started” (Research + Practice Collaboratory, October 15, 2015) found that modeling a research process within the school helps the administrators understand the process themselves and at the same time, shows the benefits to other school personnel.

For example, Phillip Bell and Dan Gallagher found that previous attempts by the central office to develop curricular resources and send them out to the schools with a mandatory train the trainer process was not very successful (Research + Practice Collaboratory, November 19, 2015). After using social network analysis, the researchers used a process to “leak” the information out across the district between networks of trusting peers – practitioners in subject-area groups, grade-level groups, etc. The new strategies were seen as more applicable to individual practitioners when they were not randomly sent from central office.

The researchers were then able to use the same social network analysis to monitor the growth and spread of the new curriculum identifying and addressing gaps in a process. The district ended up with a stronger and quicker dissemination than in previous adoptions and the
researchers ended up with a social network analysis process that could be used with other projects – either with the other partner districts or published for widespread use- which is an important component for RPPs (Research + Practice Collaboratory, November 19, 2015). Work with one partner should be able to be generalizable for other practitioners (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017).

Strategies for evidence use within the district need to include activities in which practitioners can discuss how the evidence relates to their students or classrooms. Practitioner concerns with identity can be addressed with discussions among trusted peers about its applicability to their personal circumstances (Coburn & Talbert, 2006).

Strategy # 5 - Fund and support internal structures and processes including those that generate research will address all four areas of concern

Another internal strategy that seemed to promote evidence use was districts generating their own evidence. Honig and Coburn (2008) summarized a school where central office staff collected and interpreted evidence internally from their own community focus groups, surveys, parent questionnaires, student performance data. They disseminated reports to influence decisions, support actions and change peoples’ perspectives on district programs. Central office administrators indicated that they use a broad range of evidence besides published sources and many of these focused on their own students and instruction (Honig & Coburn, 2008).

A Research Practice Partnership (RPP) can support these activities- for both the districts and the researchers. Farley-Ripple (2012) identified that decision makers have a preference for practitioner-oriented resources and so having a close relationship between practitioner and
researcher can provide credibility to the local evidence collected and being used (Honig & Coburn, 2008). School districts are interested in having guidance about their daily practice and research requests that promote student learning based on their own data are often prioritized (Munoz & Rodosky, 2015). Protocols that review research requests ensure that there is a good fit between the researchers’ agenda and the district’s strategic agenda. RPPs can also help with protocols that ensure student data privacy. “School districts can be great research partners as long as researchers focus on improving teaching and learning that provides actionable information” (Munoz & Rodosky, 2015, p. 46).

Laura Wentworth from Stanford University explained that in their RPP, for every research project, a set of questions is negotiated that represent district and research interests (Research + Practice Collaboratory, October 15, 2015). They have found that at times the researchers search for immediate information that districts would like so that the district can get information to help more quickly. Then the researcher questions the group chooses to study are often more complex and longer-term since the practitioners were able to have some actionable information fairly quickly, addressing the more pressing district issues. Another key finding was that the district had an “owner” for each of the research areas so there was an early understanding of why the district wanted those questions answered and what they would do with the information when it was available (Research + Practice Collaboratory, October 15, 2015).

In “Webinar: Defining the Focus of Partnership Work” Carla Stevens, Assistant Superintendent, Houston Independent School District, explained that one of the first priorities for the Houston RPP was to work jointly to create a large longitudinal data set (Research + Practice Collaboratory, November 19, 2015). At first, the researcher requests for data took a great deal of
district time since the data was unconnected and stored in various places and formats. After prioritizing the creation of this data set, Rice University has been able to provide the funding for a person on the district team to be the RPP liaison (Research + Practice Collaboratory, November 19, 2015). As time went on, internal structures and processes developed as were needed and as the partnership had the capacity to generate evidence used by district personnel because the RPP processes addressed many of the practitioner concerns.

Conclusion

Everyone agrees that using evidence in educational decision making is preferred. Whether mandated by the federal agencies, required by districts, encouraged by peer networks or practiced in Professional Learning Communities, research-based best practices are the expected norm. After 60 years of educational research, evidence can be found on both sides of most issues. Most people discount evidence that does not support their beliefs and political issues arise when evidence does not reinforce long-standing programs. Questioning evidence regarding claims about its increased productivity, the roles of influencers (power), general reliability (symbolism) and applicability to local contexts (identity) results in a type of gridlock between researchers and practitioners. School districts rarely develop protocols or processes that result in consistent use of evidence in decision-making, changing beliefs, or justifying decisions.

RPPs are a mechanism to improve evidence use in district decision making because they are a vehicle built on relationships and focused on problems of practice. RPPs require districts to
partner with an external research organization, generate research and as a social enterprise, they promote collective interpretations of the evidence. It is not uncommon for them to provide important political support for a district when needed and result in practical tools or frameworks which give administrators new strategies for using research best practices. RPPs develop relationships that result in sustained commitments, allowing the partners to explore issues more in-depth and more relevant to the everyday practice of the districts.
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There is no difference between practice and theory, in theory. Often attributed to Yogi Berra, this quip summarizes many practitioners’ view of research-based evidence being sent from the “Ivory Towers” of higher education to impact their classroom. When I worked at the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), I used to ask “how is this going to impact a child in a classroom because that is where the magic happens!” In more than 20 years of federal legislation like No Child Left Behind, educators have gotten the message that their practices need to be research-based. Their instructional programs need evidence of effectiveness and data must be converted into information that is used to guide continual improvement in the classroom and the school. Evidence of effectiveness with all children is collected through internal and external reporting; tips, tools, and workshops from the State, Federal agencies, and non-governmental groups regularly focus on the latest research-based information designed to impact practice. On the one hand, educators cannot keep up with the journals, newsletters, research briefs and webinars available to help them improve, on the other hand, anyone with classroom experience would argue that building a relationship, knowing your students’ needs, and using your instincts to support students through their learning struggles is more important than the latest research-based techniques.

In the 21st century, where information is growing exponentially, children’s needs are escalating, and accountability is mushrooming; educators must find ways to integrate research-based information (RBI) into their practice. Reliable, authentic and usable research evidence is
difficult to identify and incorporate into educational systems. Research Practice Partnerships (RPPs) offer a relatively new approach to collaboration and cooperation between researchers and practitioners that relies on building a relationship between entities that results in work that has mutual benefits to both entities but more importantly, the work must focus on increasing K-12 student achievement.

Defining RPPs

RPPs are generally organized to increase the relevance and usability of research (Denner, J., Bean, S., Campe, S, Martinez, J. & Torres, D., 2019). RPPs are defined as “long-term, mutually beneficial collaborations that promote the production and use of rigorous research by one of the partners [ie university] about problems of practice for the other partner [ie district]” (William T. Grant Foundation, 2019). Often created to build central office capacity in using evidence in determining, defining and defending programmatic decisions and reflections, early studies show that ongoing conversations between external researchers and central office administrators help administrators connect new evidence to their working knowledge (Honig & Coburn, 2008). However, in high-quality partnerships, practitioners’ impact, influence and instruct the researchers as much as they benefit from the research itself (Coburn & Stein, 2010; Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). This bi-directional flow of information has the potential to address many of the issues that are causing the disconnect between researchers producing evidence for K-12 practitioners to use and the K-12 practitioners who do not find, consider or apply that evidence.
Not all research-practitioner interactions are RPPs

In a traditionally represented research model, information flows in one direction in the system. The model assumes that university faculty complete and publish research findings where practitioners will find it and use it in program adoption. Particularly, central office staff will spend hours combing, searching, accessing and then interpreting research found in peer-reviewed journals and then will disseminate this out to their program staff who then use it to guide programming decisions (Asen et al., 2013; Coburn & Talbert, 2006). Even though central office staff have been identified as the most supportive administrators when it comes to coherent evidence use, this model is short sighted and for districts too small to have central office staff, this model is generally invalid (Coburn & Talbert, 2006; Tseng, 2013). Figure 4 is a graphic I created that illustrates the unidirectional flow of information assumed in traditional research.

![Traditional Research Model](image)

**Figure 4:** Flow of knowledge in the traditional research model.
This model is flawed in several ways. First, even when federally funded entities create systems to help improve access to research for practitioners, these systems are rarely used more than once or twice a year (Lysenko et al., 2014). Efforts to improve the ways the arrow works on the “practitioner” side of the wall does not lead to more use within the schoolhouse.

Additionally, this model does not consider the amount of internal evidence collected locally by district administrators about student performance and instruction that should be included in their decision-making processes. The model also dismisses the rich evidence collected through local community surveys, focus groups and dialogues, and it neglects the amount of information constantly generated by state agencies, foundations and special-interest groups through their published data, reports, findings and recommendations.

Next, this model assumes that the only purpose for universities is to publish research. When school districts can’t access the publications in ways that make them usable, the publications become published primarily for other researchers. Ruth Lopez-Turley states the difference in her informational video from Rice University. As the research partner in the Houston Research Practice Consortium, “I wanted to do research that mattered, research that was used” (n.d.). She describes a longing to not just study educational inequality but to change it. This hands-on approach to research has not been fully embraced by the higher education community as can be seen by traditional tenure and promotion models focused on publishing in peer-reviewed journals. Through current efforts, evidence-based accountability is becoming common-place in the human services, criminal justice systems and K-12 education. When will it impact higher education service and advancement?
Finally, this model leaves researchers and practitioners separated from each other instead of working together. Successful 21st Century workplaces value collaboration, team building with members of various skills and expertise, partnering across entities with different purposes and addressing issues through a more-holistic approach. To address the educational issues our society is facing, we need to abandon traditional models that portray researchers as the producers, while portraying practitioners as the consumers and instead view researchers and practitioners as partners to solving our most pressing educational problems.

RPPs are long-term, mutualistic relationships intended to address problems of practice

RPPs bring together both researchers and practitioners to work collaboratively on problems of practice. By working in the overlap between the two systems, mutual benefits can be attained while researchers continue to meet the mission of their institutions and practitioners meet the needs of their staff and students. Both systems benefit from the overlap as knowledge is transferred back to their entities. Researchers learn more about doing research in school districts. Not only do they have access to data, but activities like collecting data over a series of classroom observations versus giving a one-time survey can help to strengthen their results. By having a relationship with practitioners interested in knowing the results, universities can have impacts in ways not before envisioned.

Practitioners benefit from being connected to a university system because they can access research to use in their decision-making, reassured that it was created with integrity, communicated reliably and applicable to their context. All four of these practitioner concerns to
the traditional model were more-fully discussed in the first paper on Evidence Use in school districts.

Figure 5 is a graphic I created to show a simple version of a research-practice partnership where work roles are blurred through relationship-building, data sharing, solving problems of practice and enjoying long-term outcomes.

Figure 5: Flow of Knowledge in a Research Practice Partnership.

The three underpinnings of an RPP provide some insight in how RPPs address educators’ four concerns regarding using evidence.

1. RPPs should have the intention of being long-term (William T. Grant Foundation, 2019)
Even though many partnerships might start out as a single project, grant or research study, eventually the work transitions into answering longer term questions, which is a hallmark of RPPs. Partnership strategic planning should combine short term benchmarks with long term outcomes. Picking topics that are of interest across the nation helps the Chicago Consortium stay focused on issues that will still be of interest in 2-3 years and not too tightly focused on the pressing day to day district needs (Research + Practice Collaboratory, February 16, 2016). This is especially important so that the partnership can weather the frequent changes of district administration, local board elections and politics that can cause programs to come and go. Changing state and federal mandates can exacerbate an unstable foundation to these programs. A change in key district administrators can cause the partnership to be completely re-directed and at times, jeopardize the district’s continued involvement. Frequently the partnership will have to justify its work and resources to the partnering entities, which helps address the practitioner concern that the RPP evidence is not authentic to local contexts or personal circumstances (identity). Instead, the RPP ensures that the evidence is applicable to the district. Sam Severance, Ph. D. student at the University of Boulder stated, “How would we go about showing the district the difference it would make if we weren’t there?” (Research + Practice Collaboratory, January 19, 2016). Short term quick wins should be within long term work (Research + Practice Collaboratory, January 19, 2016).

The relationships needed for a successful RPP go beyond administrators and researchers. Elaine Allensworth, University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, reports working with the teachers’ union, parent-school councils and various advocacy groups when relevant to their project (Research + Practice Collaboratory, February 16, 2016). Likewise, researchers from
various programs and departments within the university are helpful and these relationships
further support the perception of the evidence being generated by the partnership as reliable.
Partners should be able to tell the story of how the partnership has developed and changed over
time. If working collaboratively, their perspective on the problems they are now working on
must change over time (Penuel & Gallaher, 2017).

Regular negotiation and deliberation ensure that practitioners have incorporated the work of
the RPP into their daily practices, which helps address concerns about how to use evidence more
consistently. It also helps ensure that the university has contributed general knowledge to the
field. Feedback from each of these processes should inform next steps in solving the problems
they are focused on. This is long-term work.

2. RPPs should consist of mutualistic collaborations between researchers and practitioners
(William T. Grant Foundation, 2019).

Long term partnerships must discuss and work through the pull between individual
researcher interests and district strategic plans. Cynthia Coburn, Northwestern University,
reminds us that RPPs have researchers taking roles they usually do not and they have districts
acting in ways they usually do not (Research + Practice Collaboratory, January 19, 2016).
Relationships are important pathways by which policy makers and practitioners can acquire,
interpret and use research but “relationships are resource-intensive” (Tseng, 2012, p. 13) and the
benefits need to be mutual (Lopez-Turley, & Stevens, 2015; Research + Practice Collaboratory,
February 16, 2016).

Most RPPs have people from both entities working on some type of screening committee
which will help to ensure a combination of research interest and district use. The combined
screening committee also ensures that the evidence provided by the RPP is authentic and applicable to district needs. Districts often look for projects that require few resources to complete but result in a high impact on student achievement. Answering questions about the impact of a particular program or practice helps researchers remain neutral but still provide practical, actionable information (Research + Practice Collaboratory, February 16, 2016). This needs to be balanced by a researcher’s need to stay neutral and answer more globally relevant questions.

District interests can be maintained by actively including district stakeholders early in the planning, building in feedback loops that allow for mid-project corrections, distributing reports for a practitioner audience, ensuring timely completion and providing additional follow up after the report to support implementation of actions (Munoz & Rodosky, 2015; Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). All of these ensure that the RPP work is reliable and authentic to district needs along with promoting consistent use across decisions and programs. Likewise, researchers receive formative feedback through engagement with the districts. Experienced members of RPPs indicate that topics that have lost momentum over time are usually ones in which the researchers’ primary goal was publishing and providing support for actionable improvements within the district was secondary (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017; Research + Practice Collaboratory, February 16, 2016).

Making the results actionable reinforces more consistent use of evidence. One of the RPP topics that was lacking momentum suddenly came to the forefront of district needs because of a local reporter’s story for San Francisco Unified School District. After the topic became an intense local political concern, the district administrators’ attention was re-directed, and Stanford University was able to help the district through those initial community concerns by providing
research-based support and suggestions. After the crisis, Stanford University wrote a grant with the district to study the issue over a longer term. Building that relationship and addressing district timely issues builds the perceived reliability of the work and leads to more consistent use of the results. After that intense time, the district and the research partner agreed on the importance of the topic, momentum returned, and the project was able to be completed with mutual benefits (Research + Practice Collaboratory, October 15, 2015).

Issues that will impact future publications and conferences need to be addressed early for the researchers. Jennifer Russell, University Pittsburgh, states that when the analytics are being run, the methodology should be publishable. Reports need to be translatable into articles and district administrators should be available for conferences or other academic presentations (Research + Practice Collaboratory, February 16, 2016).

Dr. James Kimble, Research Alliance for New York City Schools (Research + Practice Collaboratory, January 19, 2016) mentioned that their researchers were ready to start disseminating some of their results from one of the RPP topics for the year; however, the district felt like they were too early in implementing the program to support the researchers’ claims. Ultimately, the researchers waited for the district to catch up before proceeding with the conference session. In another example, Dr. Kimble discussed how some of their publications showed the district in a more negative light than the district had expected, but the university explained their need to maintain their independence and published anyway (Research + Practice Collaboratory, January 10, 2016).

It is important that researchers learn how to talk to educators about negative findings without damaging their relationship (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). The push and pull between
independence and collaboration is an ongoing issue that speaks to ensuring the integrity of the process and resulting evidence. Both sides must engage in deep collaboration but remain independent when called upon (Research + Practice Collaboratory, January 19, 2016).

3. RPPs should be focused on addressing problems of practice and developing solutions (William T. Grant Foundation, 2019).

Breaking from traditionally developed research questions, RPP-developed research questions are meant to be *directly relevant* to practitioners. Carla Stevens, Assistant Superintendent on the Houston ISD/Rice University RPP, explained that everyone in the district had questions they needed answered, and Rice University had people interested in finding answers to questions (Research + Practice Collaboratory, November 19, 2015). Ruth Lopez Turley, Rice University, described how the partnership started with a structure described in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the two entities in which the Houston Independent School District first created a large data set for the Rice University researchers while the partnership was developing questions on issues and activities that were known to lead to increased student achievement (Research + Practice Collaboratory, November 19, 2015). Carla Stevens also explained that an unplanned benefit was how the RPP developed the skills of the local district research team since they were receiving professional development by working with the Rice University research teams (Research + Practice Collaboratory, November 19, 2015). All of these actions would bolster claims from the partnership that their results were reliable and applicable to the district (authentic), along with ensuring the results would be credible to others. This supported the likelihood that future findings and outcomes would be used by the district in decision making.
Successful RPPs can point to processes and strategies they have implemented to support the decisions needed around focus, outcomes and use of resources (people, data, time). These processes are different from contracts in which vendor expectations are listed as deliverables. Instead, RPP processes include voices from a variety of stakeholders and often include advisory boards, strategic planning meetings, board subcommittees or working groups. (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017)

For example, Munoz & Rodosky listed questions that their screening committee uses to identify the RPP proposals for the next year:

1. Does the research proposal address an important topic for improving teaching and increasing learning?
2. Does the research proposal align with the school district’s specific research priorities as delineated in the strategic plan?
3. Will the research result in practical rather than theoretical implications?
4. Will the benefit of the research justify the expenditure of resources?
5. Is there a burden on students or staff who might be asked to participate in data collection activities?
6. Is the research proposal compliant with federal rules and regulations on student privacy, records, etc.? (2015, p. 45)

These types of screening groups or boards ensure that both entities have a voice in the work, have results that are mutually beneficial and focus on long-term needs instead of day-to-day district issues. These committees can also help with screening requests. John Rice, Washington DC Public Schools indicates that the district receives about 50 requests a month from various
researchers and interest groups for access to their schools; however, by having the chancellor identify 5 strategic goals, it helped narrow the possible projects that the partnership could focus on (Research + Practice Collaboratory, December 17, 2015).

Regardless, the studies must address a problem of practice. Even though districts might be interested in the results of a particular study, they are ultimately most interested in information that could guide their daily practice. “School districts would prefer less information about the technical accuracy [of the study] and more about the usefulness of the research” (Munoz & Rodosky, 2015, p. 46). Many practitioners in RPPs share that without the partnership, their engagement with research in decision making would be greatly reduced. As discussed earlier, traditional research that is published in academic journals is often irrelevant to their daily practice (concerns with symbolism versus relevance), not written with implementation in mind (concerns with identity), seen as being influenced by hidden agendas (concerns with power and influence) and not available within the time they need it (concerns with the promised productivity). Marco Munoz states that even though RPP work can be distracting for school districts, it can be worth it to get actionable information (Research + Practice Collaboratory, February 16, 2016). Researchers must ensure that their efforts result in actionable information for the districts while also setting realistic expectations about the length of time it takes to see changes in student achievement. Nevertheless, Laura Wentworth, California Education Partners, indicates that it has been their experience that when researchers in partnerships are giving shorter deadlines due to district needs, the researchers are able to meet those deadlines after all (Research + Practice Collaboratory, October 15, 2015). Overall, measures need to be put in
place that communicate the partnerships’ overall effectiveness in the short term while working toward long-term solutions.

Before diving into the different types of RPPs, it is educative to consider what they are not. RPPs are not contractor/vendor in nature. When district leaders hire researchers as experts to resolve a local question, there is no intentionality towards developing new generalizable knowledge for the field. Additionally, a preponderance of control over the work is by the contractee (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). There might be terms in the agreement that include partnership-type language, but the agreement makes it clear that one side is being paid for a service to be completed by the other. Also, institutions with academy-type programs, built to create a new set of skills or complete degrees are not RPPs. When universities need a school district to be a site for studies, this is not an RPP. Examples of grant-funded projects in which the research institution approaches the district with a pre-determined program are common, but not RPPs (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). That is not to say that those types of working relationships are not valuable. Indeed, as Emily McLeod noted from their work in the California Tinkering Afterschool Network, relationships between research institutions and districts can often start as a vendor relationship or a grantee site and then evolve over time into RPPs (Engle, 2010; Research + Practice Collaboratory, November 19, 2015). Projects that create trusting relationships, shared visions and important communication processes between entities can be a strong foundation of an RPP.
Different RPPs for Different Purposes and Contexts

While all RPPs have similar defining characteristics, their operationalization can look quite different. The RPP literature proposes four types of RPPs defined by the type of organizing structure, role of the partners, content being studied and intended use of the outcomes.

1. Research Alliances are place-based partnerships, linked to specific districts or other territories and formed to study problems of practice that are key to the district (Denner et al., 2019; Henrick, Cobb, Penuel, Jackson & Clark, 2017; Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). Researchers study policies and programs of the particular entity (ie district) but are not involved in designing them. Researchers seek to maintain their independence so they can provide much more objective evidence than other partnerships. These RPPs are often more rigid and are regularly affected by local political issues (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017; Research + Practice Collaboratory, February 16, 2016). Elaine Allensworth, University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, reports that the results of the research alliance in Chicago are designed to impact the particular district’s policies and programs, but they can tell they are making an impact when their findings start driving more conversations and questions from the practitioners. The alliance also creates various publications like research briefs to help the work be generalizable to other districts in similar situations (Research + Practice Collaboratory, February 16, 2016). In Research Alliances, researchers maintain more independence to help support the external credibility and generalizability of the internal work they are doing (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017).
2. Design-Based Implementation Research Partnerships focus on solving problems of practice, developing, testing and refining challenges of implementation and the organizational change needed to bring about implementation, particularly in a specific content area (Denner et al., 2019; Henrick et al., 2017; Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). The primary difference in these RPPs is that the researchers are key collaborators in the design process. Less emphasis is placed on objectivity because the purpose of these partnerships is to find new knowledge on successful implementation and change for that content area (Henrick et al., 2017; Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). Most have focused on strategies for improved teaching and learning. Some include multiple districts. The focus is on designing an implementation plan and then incorporating continuous improvement in all the factors needed for change – new skills through professional development, execution in the classroom through coaching supports, measuring improvements with new assessments, and disseminating new resources for the discipline. Social network maps help measure the spread of practices throughout the included classrooms (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). The Bellevue School District – University of Washington Partnership was a Design-Based Partnership funded by the Gates Foundation to do a curricular redesign for science (Research + Practice Collaboratory, October 15, 2015). Even though they had three curriculum developers funded, it took them a long time to find common ground and eventually get started with elementary curriculum. The project ended up leaving a process with the district that could be replicated for future curriculum redesign (Research + Practice Collaboratory, October 15, 2015).
3. Networked Improvement Communities (NICs) are a group of organizations brought together to address a specific persistent problem of practice; afterwards the group designs and tests various solutions, communicating their successes and challenges with each other. Researcher and educator roles get blurred as everyone contributes to the improvement effort (Denner et al., 2019; Henrick et al., 2017; Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). NICs are not place-based but have a “hub” in which people with expertise on the problem are brought together to define the problem and determine the work that will be done across the independent entities in service to solving the cooperative problem. The NIC also has network nodes where entities trying one of the particular improvement efforts are concentrated and measured during implementation. The entities involved in the node agree to one of the possible solutions and they work together to collect data and make formative adjustments in service to that possible solution, sharing their results with the network as a whole (Henrick et al., 2017). Dr. Sue Allen explains that their Maine Mathematics and Science Alliance decided to focus on out of school STEM learning, which brought in many different community partners like 4-H, conservation groups, ecology advocates, and more, making it difficult to maintain focus, but still allow everyone a voice in their part of the project (Research + Practice Collaboratory, December 17, 2015).

4. Hybrid Partnerships are various combinations of the three types of partnerships. Penuel and Gallagher (2017) give several examples where a partnership works like a research alliance for one topic and then works more as a DBIR for another topic. The emphasis is more on addressing mutual needs of the partners than on the organizing structure.
RPPs are voluntary partnerships where personnel must be responsive, flexible, and results oriented. Though there are key understandings that define an RPP compared to other types of partnerships, there is a great deal of flexibility in their purpose, structure, and timeframe. The focus must be on meeting the needs of the partners because they are created with personnel from two entities with historically little flexibility (districts and universities) but they must show great responsiveness to the people, context, and resources needed. Ongoing day to day changes and adjustments must be accommodated for but the RPP must remain committed to staying the course through these short-term corrections in pursuit of long-term outcomes. Partners must consider whether the resource costs are worth the benefits of an RPP. Successful RPPs are commonly discussed and reported on but little is known about RPPs that have either never gotten off the ground or failed. This is a wide gap in the current understanding of RPPs. By having no information about RPPs who have failed to engage or failed to develop beyond an initial engagement, we have only a partial understanding of the needs of the partners in an RPP. Like any partnership, the partnership is most at risk at the beginning. Knowing how to engage districts, negotiating the use of resources and people across two very different systems, and coming to agreement about the problems being studies all must happen before trusting relationships can be built. This can jeopardize partnerships. Studies on failing RPPs need to be prioritized by funders as much, if not more than studying successful RPPs. As time goes on, we will hopefully get a more-complete understanding of RPPs and the issues that lead to their success or failure.
Evidence Use in an RPP

An organization promoting the use of research contains individuals who use research and vice versa. The “National Center for Research in Policy and Practice (NCRPP) found a strong correlation between the leaders’ levels of research use and their endorsements of statements about the culture in their department or district regarding evidence use” (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017, p. 156). In a January 2018 address to the New Zealand Association for Research in Education, Cynthia Coburn made it clear that researchers and policymakers need to go beyond just providing better access to research and instead “cultivate new roles for researchers” and more broadly “create conditions that enable decision makers to engage with new ideas and each other in ways that cause them to question and rethink their assumptions about the nature of the problem; and to open up to new ideas rather than discount them” (Farrell et al., 2018).

There is a vast belief in the benefit of using research-based practices in schools yet practitioners struggle to meet that vision. For example, a 2014 study of Quebec schools found that even when resources are dedicated to improving access to research, practitioners report using it less than a couple of times during a year (Lysenko, L., Abrami, P., Bernard, R., Dagenais, C., & Janosz, M., 2014). In the study, Quebec K-12 schools were given greater access to research materials produced by educational agencies over the course of two years. Materials included professional publications, scholarly documents, websites, mass media, in-service training, pre-service training, multi-media videos, access to experts, conferences and individual school evaluation packets set regularly to administrators with data from their school. Unfortunately, the surveys of 2700 teachers, administrators and professional staff found that out
of the 10 different ways the educational agencies tried to improve access to research for the
group, the source most frequently accessed was internet websites and these only had a mean of
1.90 on a scale of 0 - meaning never using it to 4 – indicating they used it 5 or more times in a
year (Lysenko et al., 2014). When divided by role, administrators reported that they most-preferred the school evaluation packets that were sent to them about their particular schools but
their use of these packets still only scored a mean of 1.79 (less than a few times a year) on the 0
to 4 scale (Lysenko et al., 2014).

I summarized the issues that practitioners have with research evidence in an earlier paper
and even though access to research has been noted as a problem, it is not the only one.
Practitioners consider evidence irrelevant to their practice (concerns with symbolism and
relevance), out of their context (concerns with identity), suspect due to all of the political
influences in K-12 (concerns with power and influence) and difficult to apply (concerns with
promised productivity). Early evidence from RPPs are showing promise in addressing these
deeper concerns practitioners have with evidence use. They go further than simple concerns
about access.

Participants in the RPPs reported a change district decision-making

In July 2018, the National Center for Research in Policy and Practice (NCRPP) published
a two-year descriptive study of researchers and practitioners engaged in RPPs funded by the
Institute of Education Sciences (IES) (Farrell et al., 2018). In this study, researchers and
practitioners in the IES RPPs were interviewed and surveyed about the benefits, outcomes and
perceptions of the RPPs. Comparisons were made to the National Survey of Research Results, a
2016 study of 733 administrators of large districts (> 9000 students) from across the nation not involved in RPPs (Penuel et al., 2016). Participants reported an increase in evidence use in decision-making.

In some areas, the administrators in IES-funded RPPs showed more use of evidence in district decision making than the administrators in the 2016 national study (Farrell et al., 2018). The administrators in both studies indicated that instrumental use (decision making) was the most frequent with conceptual use (changing beliefs) second. The two groups of administrators differed in that the RPP practitioners reported less political use (justifying current practices) and more process use (participating in research). Administrators not in RPPs mentioned that their most common source for research was books (58% in national study versus 12% in RPPs), and that research was most useful to advance their own professional growth. This seems to indicate that the administrators in the national study see research as applicable to their own practice, but not necessarily authentic to their district programming. Whereas the administrators in RPPs mentioned journal articles (46% RPPs versus 14% national study) as the most useful because it helped “design programs, policies, and initiatives”, demonstrating that the articles had more applicability to their district work (Farrell et al., 2018, p54).

The study found practitioners in RPPs mentioned articles related to student achievement and other topics related to the focus of their RPPs demonstrating again that the evidence from the RPPs was more authentic to their district since they were studying research related to the RPP problems. The national survey respondents mentioned topics related to instructional leadership or pedagogy, which shows less connection to their district-identified problems and more connection to personal needs and interests. One of the most noteworthy differences found in the
survey with the RPP participants was that everyone reported that researchers were involved in common district decisions and that these decisions were informed by evidence. Decisions about designing professional development, directing resources, and scaling up or eliminating programs were informed by evidence relevant to the decision. This finding shows a meaningful change in the way those districts were using the evidence consistently to make decisions.

Participants in the RPPs reported a change in their individual practice

The practitioners reported a change in their individual practice due to the partnership in some ways. For the practitioners in the RPP, 81% reported having new skills for working in a partnership, 77% reported that they have become better at using research to inform their work and 68% said they were more likely to use research to inform their work because of the partnership (Farrell et al., 2018). All of these results speak to using evidence more consistently. Even a higher percent of the researchers reported the same changes due to their involvement in the partnerships (Farrell et al., 2018). Overall, three quarters of the practitioners and two-thirds of the researchers reported that their colleagues and/or organizations had changed due to the partnership (Farrell et al., 2018). “Some practitioners noted that their colleagues were more receptive to participating in and using research because their experience with the partnership’s study had been relevant and useful for their work” (Farrell et al., 2018, p. 60). Practitioners and researchers who said there was not much of a change indicated it was because they were already very knowledgeable, skilled and experienced in working with each other.
Participants in RPPs did not report changes in their organizational expectations

When participants of the RPPs were asked questions about their organizational culture around the use of research, their responses were not as positive as those in the national survey. Even though both groups listed research being a useful source of information (84% national vs 77% RPPs), the RPP practitioners reported fewer organizational expectations regarding research use (Farrell et al., 2018). Only half of the RPP practitioners reported that they are genuinely encouraged to use research as part of ongoing work (compared to 76% of the respondents of the national survey) and only one third of the RPP practitioners indicated that they are expected to conduct studies on programs they select and implement, compared to 54% of the national respondents. Also, only a third of the RPP practitioners reported that it is expected if you make a claim at a meeting, you will be able to cite research evidence to back it up (compared to 44% of the national respondents).

There are several possible reasons for the differences the survey participants reported for their organizations’ approach to research use. This first difference is sample size. There were 733 administrators from 485 school districts in the national study vs 52 practitioners across 27 RPPS in that study, indicating that the number of districts involved in the national study would be from many more districts. Understandably, little is known about the 485 districts in the national study, besides their size and their geographical spread – 423 cities across 45 states (Penuel et al., 2016). Reflections by administrators about their district requirements could be less comparable than originally intended.

Another difference is in the types of administrators involved in the two studies. The over-general term “administrators” is used to describe a widely diverse set of job duties, experiences
and background knowledge. The national study purposely targeted large districts (> 9000 students) so that there would be a wide range of administrators involved. An effort was made to capture central office administrators since they seem to be more involved in research application than other district administrators. The national study also included a wider range of specific job titles: 90 superintendents, 115 curriculum specialists, 102 special education administrators, 91 assessment specialists, 89 with responsibility of federal programs and 108 with multiple roles in the district along with 138 principals (Penuel et al, 2016). For the RPP study, there were only 52 practitioners from 27 RPPs. The practitioners’ roles in these districts were co-principal investigators in the RPPs (28), and only 23 other types of administrators across various roles in research assessment and accountability, early childhood, postsecondary policy and practice, federal programming, deputy superintendents, special education, educator evaluation and curriculum and instruction were included (Farrell et al., 2018). The experiences and background knowledge between the widely diverse set of central office administrators for the national study would be much different than the sample of administrators in the RPP study, who were mostly co-principal investigators.

Additionally, there were no principals in the RPP study, yet we know that teachers often see their principals as a key point of contact with central office. To better understand the impact that RPPs have on practitioners with direct student contact, understanding the principals’ role is an important next step (Lysenko, et al., 2014).

The last issue when trying to explain the reported differences in organizational expectations for research use in the national survey vs the RPP survey is the background knowledge and expertise of the survey participants. “Administrators” in the RPP survey had spent several years
clearly defining phrases like “using research as part of their work”, “doing research on their programs” and “supporting claims with research”. It is possible that the RPP participants had a much clearer definition and higher expectations in describing those activities and were reluctant to claim that their districts regularly met that expectation. On the other hand, without that background and expertise, the national administrators could conceivably have a much more general definition of “using research” and were more willing to claim that their districts were meeting that lower expectation.

Participants in RPPs reported an increase in evidence-based tools

Other studies have shown that RPPs increase the use of evidence because they result in evidence-based tools and frameworks that can be shared with other districts. Penuel, Farrell, Allen, Toyama, & Coburn (2018) found that the research that administrators most often cited and discussed was from authors who provided supports for the ways that the research could impact practice. Frameworks made the research actionable (Coburn, Honig & Stein, 2007). In the RPP study, researchers quoted by administrators were often ones involved in the RPPs or researchers who had been vendors on previous reform efforts in the district, which supports the concern that without actionable results, evidence is not used consistently or considered outside of the specific context it was found (Farrell et al., 2018). The Strategic Education Research Partnership (SERP) has created tools for the partner districts and others as one of their three goals (Research + Practice Collaboratory, February 16, 2016). They emphasized that ongoing relationships across the districts mattered for boosting evidence use, but so did ensuring that the research was turned
into research-based practices that intentionally addressed concerns that prohibited educational evidence from being used across the district.

Similar benefits were found in a study of an RPP with a rural school

*The Rural Educator* published an article recently that described the impacts of a two-year process of creating an RPP with a small rural school district in northern New York (Wilcox & Zuckerman, 2019). The project came out of a New York research practice partnership funded by the state of New York since 2004. The partnership was given the charge in 2010 to improve their outcomes by “redoubling their efforts to facilitate educators’ translation of research into practice improvements” (Wilcox & Zuckerman, 2019, p 74). In response to this higher expectation, the partnership brought experienced professional development facilitators, to create a framework based on plan, act, do. Leadership teams in the school or district first implement a needs assessment, then determine priorities given their resources and needs, next use readings to determine key strategies and finally develop measurable goals (Wilcox & Zuckerman, 2019). As far as structure, teams complete two full days of professional development in the process and are provided access to a web-portal with tools and resources in addition to regular coaching throughout the school year. Gradual release occurs over years two and three as the RPP transitions out of processes now led by district staff.

With this process, this small rural K-12 district of 800 total students was able to form an improvement RPP that accomplished several key objectives by the end of two years. They had increased the commitment of teachers to engage in district and school-wide improvement efforts, created new teacher routines to engage with research at both the elementary and secondary levels
and formed new understandings in the staff about creating and using measurable improvement goals for their local program and data reviews (Wilcox & Zuckerman, 2019). More importantly, in just two short years they were able to produce positive student outcomes showing gains in literacy at the elementary school and improvements in attendance/graduation rates at the junior/senior high school. (Wilcox & Zuckerman, 2019).

The authors also pointed out ways that the RPP provided bidirectional impacts to the researchers on how to scaffold their supports for improvement planning by taking into account the presence or absence of existing knowledge and experience of the practitioners. Additional researcher benefits were found in more understanding in how to use evidence in school decision making, how to provide incentives in the form of professional development hours for teachers and ways to expand to other rural schools within their network. (Wilcox & Zuckerman, 2019).

Characteristics of Effective RPPs

The National Network of Education Research Practice Partnerships has shared 5 key dimensions related to RPP work. These dimensions can be measured and evaluated, resulting in long-term continuous improvement (Henrick, 2016; Henrick et al., 2017). To better understand how these dimensions add to the effectiveness of an RPP, examples and testimonials of successful RPPs are included. Much of this evidence was collected by the Research + Practice Collaboratory during a series of webinars with panels of RPP co-principal investigators that William Penuel recorded from October 2015-March 2016.
RPP Dimension #1 – Building Trust and Cultivating Partnership Relationships (Henrick et al., 2017).

The care and feeding of partners is a critical element of successful partnerships (Bell & Rienhart, 2015; Henrick et al., 2017; Lopez Turley & Stevens, 2015; Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). “All the RPP leaders we interviewed reported that in the absence of strong relationships and trust, partnership usually fail” (Henrick et al., 2017, p. 5). Determining which concerns and interests intersect will take several meetings, conversations, and exchanges. This process should also uncover shared values and underlying assumptions (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). Facilitating these conversations can be complicated but result in better agreement between researchers and practitioners about the reliability of the evidence produced through the partnership. To do this, researchers and practitioners need to prioritize time to work together, and if meetings are being cancelled or rescheduled, it is a good indication that the partnership is in trouble (Henrick et al., 2017).

Penuel and Gallagher (2017) offered a role not found in other RPP resources - a boundary spanner to help bridge the gap between the partners. A boundary spanner is defined as someone who has close ties to people outside their organization along with a high level of respect within their organization (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). This person is in a better position to help bridge the two organizations because they understand the needs, preferences and challenges of both types of organizations. Penuel and Gallagher (2017) claim that having a boundary spanner is not essential in getting a partnership started but becomes more important in sustaining the work as time goes on and the inevitable changes in organizational leadership ensue. Laura Wentworth California Education Partners, explains that their researchers benefited from people in these roles
because it is important to have clear communication across both partners from early in the work (Research + Practice Collaboratory, October 15, 2015). Boundary spanners promoted mutual engagement needed to move the partnerships into more active work.

The initial thoughts around the problem or practice being studied changes as a result of the mutual engagement. Joint resources and individual knowledge help inform what is collectively known about the problem and result in changing partners’ preconceived ideas about possible solutions. Literature reviews, initial focus groups of the “users,” and surveys from different stakeholders ensure that the background knowledge is clearly established and shared (Bell & Rhinehart, 2015). A common baseline must be created among the partners. The organizational structure and approach to the work must “enable partners to leverage one another’s experiences and expertise” (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017, p. 51). Key roles to negotiate and address include the following

a. **Project management** – coordination of tasks across different organizations with very different cultures, standards and task-masters results in long periods of paralyzing inactivity as forms are filled out, agendas created, and calendars coordinated. Mature partnerships often require project managers to facilitate the work, especially as more than one problem is tackled.

b. **Data agreements** – Important protocols and processes are needed to protect the participants. University Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), district student records requirements, and records which threaten students’ and teachers’ privacy must be organized and addressed by persons knowledgeable about both the university and district systems, rules and protocols. Additional issues beyond the forms and procedures include
issues with data collection. Data collection needs to be part of the daily work of the
district and not something seen as “extra” that takes away from practitioners’ main
priorities (Denner, et al., 2019).

c. Funding – “People in partnerships will write lots of proposals” (Penuel & Gallagher,
2017, p. 118). RPPs often submit competitive grants. Their competitiveness is often
greater than as individual institutions due to work that has been done to form the
partnership, preliminary research already conducted on a shared problem, the established
relationships between researcher and practitioner, data agreements in place and the
prevalence of in-kind contributions from the partner organizations. A proven track record
for the partnership should be established early, earning the confidence of future funders –
both public and private (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). Funders most often have a narrow
focus of what they want to address. Finding funders that match the needs of the
partnership takes effort and must be prioritized by the RPP leadership to make this
happen. At times, funding requirements may conflict with priorities of the practitioners.
Working beyond leadership with the day to day practitioners is needed so that everyone
understands and has bought into the reasons for the extra work (Denner et al., 2019).
Funding must be tackled, and partnerships need to prioritize the ability to get the
proposals submitted. At the same time, staff throughout the organizations must see the
benefit to the work as described in the proposals (Denner et al., 2019).

Researcher roles can be complicated in an RPP especially with projects that include
considerable time in the classroom. Bell, Rhinehart and Peterman (2015) shared several
principles that they have brought to their partnerships when establishing their researcher roles.
First, act as a thoughtful and responsive “sensemaker”- focusing more on the big picture in the classroom and less on the individual components (Bell et al., 2015). Listening to and reflecting with practitioners on their priorities helps build relationships that are needed to complete the work – the research needs to address the things they care about (Denner et al., 2019). An experienced RPP research team recognized that it was beneficial when “The research team shift[ed] from approaching staff with a focus on the research agenda to leading with a focus that shows a respect and understanding of the organizational norms and students’ lives” (Denner et al., 2019, p. 9). After having discussions with local teachers, the researchers can then take the discussions to the larger project to share, maybe within coaching, maybe within professional development activities, maybe within PLCs. After being in several classrooms over time, trends and patterns emerge that can be missed by teachers isolated in one class.

Secondly, work to build interpersonal relationships with the teachers and the students, especially by being transparent in the work (Bell et al., 2015). Developing and maintaining trust can be difficult if teachers fear that they are being evaluated. Some researchers can elide these anxieties by being transparent about student data collection, supporting the learning by helping students in the classroom when present and engaging in building relationships with the students, especially if engagement with the class will be ongoing while working on the problem (Bell et al., 2015).

Next, researchers should co-design, co-teach and co-research in response to the problems of practice (Bell et al., 2015; Research + Practice Collaboratory, March 17, 2016). Tools, lessons and frameworks need to be tried in the classroom and researchers need to see students and teachers interacting with them. After trusting relationships have been established, researchers
should draw upon their former experiences as teachers and instructional designers by jumping into testing the strategies. Without the relationships, practitioners may feel distracted from their core work and become irritated the work that really needs to be done, or worse, they will feel like they are being evaluated (Denner et al., 2019).

Finally, understand and work within the realities, needs and demands of classrooms and educational systems (Bell et al., 2015). The differences in students, teachers, classrooms and schools can make educations research messy. After building relationships, researchers have a better understanding of the school priorities and the needs of the students. Data collection strategies and research questions might need to be revised as relationships are built and researchers learn more about the needs of practitioners (Denner et al., 2019). Ruth Lopez Turley stated, “I didn’t really know much about how school districts really work. I learned a lot. I thought I knew a lot but I didn’t and I have had to learn from Carla [Houston ISD Assistant Superintendent]. That caused most of the bumps” (Research + Practice Collaboratory, November 19, 2015, n.p.). Researchers need to know how district systems work and this is best done through partnerships.

Unfortunately, changes in leadership, turnover in governance (new board members), funding variances or other factors might trigger the need for RPPs to reestablish the roles needed to work together (Farrell, Harrison & Coburn, 2019, p. 3). Sometimes role renegotiating will necessarily slow down the productivity of the RPP because confusion in roles leads to confusion in resource allocation, decision-making, focus, priorities and more. In Farrell et al., (2019), a mature partnership of 16 years, it still took 25% of the meeting time they had over 2 years to role renegotiate when district leadership changed. The time spent in discussions clarifying and
negotiating new roles took away from time that could have been spent discussing the projects. However, since trust is built from clear role understandings, the discussions were necessary. One recommendation from Farrell et al.’s (2019) experience is that if an RPP is having trouble moving forward, it could need more definition around roles. An RPP might prepare for a known imminent change in district leadership by having information gathered that shows the history and accomplishments of the partnership. Hopefully the time spent re-negotiating can be minimized since it distracts from the other work.

RPP Dimension #2 - Conduct rigorous and relevant research to inform action (Henrick et al., 2017).

Even though we know that RPPs should address problems of practice, the research needs to be of high quality and balance between rigor and feasibility (Henrick et al., 2017). Penuel and Gallagher (2017) suggest the following types of questions are at the intersection of research and practice. Examples of current Illinois’ issues align well to these 5 types of questions and could serve as a starting point for districts and universities interested in forming an RPP. These suggestions support the ways RPPs can address practitioner concerns of evidence as unrelated to local contexts or personal circumstances.

a) Gaps in knowledge: the problem is well-documented but there are few identified solutions (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). An example of this is the need for dual credit opportunities for secondary students in Illinois. Studies unequivocally support the benefits of experiencing and attaining postsecondary credits in high school, but the process of qualifying high school instructors and guaranteeing a postsecondary
curriculum have led to inordinate rules, regulations and statutes (Hughes, Rodriguez, Edwards & Belfield, 2012; Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016; Zamani-Gallagher, North & Lang, 2016). As the state of Illinois tries to address these issues, there is no question of the benefits of more dual credit; the only question remains the path to provide more.

b) Unused or underused knowledge – the problem is defined and understood but tools to address the problem or support the solution are unknown or unsupported (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). An Illinois example of this is the Postsecondary and Career Exploration (PaCE) Framework. Three areas - postsecondary education readiness, career exploration and financial literacy - have been identified for students to graduate college and career ready. Specific milestones in these areas are supported by research but implementing activities that support these areas are rare and often fractured in high schools. Students should know and address weaknesses in their academic preparation, identify career fields matching their skills and interest and understand the financial implications of their postsecondary options. The Illinois Student Assistance Commission is working with local districts to implement PaCE activities to address student needs and decision making. The task of ensuring that more than 150,000 annual public school graduates have completed all three of these activities known to promote post-secondary success (career pathway decisions, continuing education needed and short and long-term financial impact) has been assigned to all 700+ Illinois public high schools (Illinois Student Assistance Commission, 2019).

c) Incipient/Emerging knowledge in the field – new and exciting developments have been offered but more information is needed about possible applications or tools that could
address the issue (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). An Illinois example of this is work-based learning in high school. A continuum that starts with career exploration but then moves into career development and eventually career skill attainment is far different than current high school practices. Career-based challenges, 60-hour career internships and assessments that give industry credentials are all examples of ways that students show increasing career skills, yet high schools have difficulty developing and delivering these programs, especially for large groups of students or for careers across various sectors. (Educational Systems Center, 2019) Rural schools are finding it particularly challenging to provide such resources because of the lack of business and industry within commuting distance of the town is often an issue.

d) Productive conflicts in the field – conflicting claims from the research yield opportunities to design possible solutions and address the conflicts currently found in districts (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). An Illinois example of this includes transitional math. Conflicts are between post-secondary and secondary systems. Historically, students are expected to show math skills fundamental to college courses through a post-secondary placement test. This practice continues in spite of the evidence about their inaccurate placement rate and the impact of being placed in developmental sequences at all. A lack of post-secondary momentum, completion or graduation indicates that developmental math is one of the greatest barriers to postsecondary completion. Research also points to a mismatch between the content the placement test measures and the content of the actual math curriculum most post-secondary students need (Barnett, et al., 2018; Liston & Getz, 2013). Placement tests measure readiness for college algebra when fewer students need to
complete that math pathway, instead needing quantitative literacy and statistics. New transitional math courses allow students to show readiness for a college math curriculum in their field without taking the placement test required by postsecondary institutions. Once the course is successfully completed in high school, students must be placed in credit-bearing postsecondary math courses without requiring a placement test (Illinois Community College Board, 2019). Questions remain about whether these students will be prepared to then complete the credit-bearing postsecondary course successfully.

e) Dilemmas in measurement and predictive analytics: multiple measures (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). Many educational practitioners agree that the sum of a students’ knowledge and abilities could never be communicated as a number resulting from a standardized test (Coburn & Talbert, 2006). Even though standardized test vendors have worked to align their test to current standards, utilized the latest in research on assessment and augmented the information provided about student performance, the issue of what you can use standardized testing results for remains murky at best, especially for the public (PDK/Gallup Poll, 2015). Educators must communicate the abilities of students, both in standardized test results and students’ inventive, innovative and ingenious abilities. Students’ abilities need to be quantified and then measured against actual performance in ways that have not been reported in the past. For example, the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) accountability system for Illinois secondary schools includes a College and Career Readiness Indicator for all graduating students (Illinois State Board of Education, 2018). The indicator is a combination of student performance on the SAT©, performance on factors known to impact achievement- (attendance and
GPA, and completion of activities known to impact postsecondary readiness) - career pathway work, remedial coursework, dual credit and transitional courses. Career readiness in particular can be shown through a combination of Career Development Experiences, an Industry Credential, Military Service or an ASVAB Score of 31 or Higher, Dual Credit Career Pathway Course (College Credit Earned), Completion of Career Technical Education Program of Study, Attaining and Maintaining Consistent Employment for a Minimum of 12 Months, Consecutive Summer Employment, 25 Hours of Community Service, and Two or More Organized Co-Curricular Activities (Illinois State Board of Education, 2018).

Questions remain on whether these activities are predictive of career success or postsecondary success. Illinois will find out as students are identified as meeting these requirements, or not, and then tracked into postsecondary education, training or the workplace.

RPP Dimension #3- Supporting the partner practice organization in achieving its goals (Henrick et al., 2017).

The partnerships must result in mutual benefits for both researchers and practitioners. Understanding the conditions under which research can impact practice is one side of this; understanding that practice must impact research is the other. Here are two examples of mutual benefits.

a. Developing a pipeline of papers that includes interim reports to guide the team’s work (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). The process of submitting an article to a peer-reviewed journal is vastly different than providing recommendations to a school board from a
district implementation study. RPPs need to develop multi-disciplinary teams that focus on a variety of different publishing options. Deep understanding about the content and the audience is needed to be influential in either type of publishing and having team members working across their traditional roles will benefit all and deepen the local impact and dissemination of the RPP work.

b. Creating tools, frameworks and job-aides that help operationalize the RPP findings (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017). As change theory has shown, it takes several instances of engagement with ideas, recommendations or suggestions before people implement changes in their practices. RPPs should not be content with producing reports and articles. Information must be summarized and organized in ways that promote its application to the classroom. Book studies, classroom visits, peer coaching, workshops, webinars and other “boots on the ground” strategies help RPPs develop tools that will support local implementation in classrooms (Henrick et al., 2017). Suzanne Donovan, SERP reports that one of their goals is to ensure that they are creating tools that can be used by other districts. Over time, they have found that other districts are more successful at getting their staff to use the tools than the school creating the tools. Since the work to create tools or job-aides is often owned by the central office staff, district teachers view them somewhat skeptically, whereas other districts consider the tools as created by experts (Research + Practice Collaboratory, February 16, 2016).

There is often an urgency in RPPs to show partnership impact on student outcomes yet the work of the RPP might be far removed from direct student engagement. Ensuring that there are other impacts being measured that can be linked to student achievement are important. An
example includes successful efforts to change administrator feedback in teacher evaluations which cannot be measured by changes in student achievement but can be measured in changes in teacher lesson planning and delivery, which is known to then impact student achievement (Henrick et al., 2017). Other indicators that the RPP is making local impacts includes showing how information from the RPP is making in-course adjustments to improvement strategies based on formative data collection and analysis.

RPP Dimension #4 – Producing knowledge that can inform educational improvement efforts more broadly (Henrick et al., 2017).

“In a partnership, it is not enough for researchers to communicate findings to their educational partners” (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017, p. 143). Reports, tools and big ideas include important information that should be applied to the practitioners’ work. Some partnerships include supports for application of the results. Overall, partnerships help researchers ask better questions about practice while also helping practitioners access research relevant to their practice (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017).

Research partners from higher education must meet the demands of their system for tenure and promotion. Peer-reviewed journal articles, papers presented at academic conferences and publishing books are ways that researchers are promoted within their university systems. RPPs focused on practitioner needs must ensure that higher education partners can benefit from their work with the practitioners. At the same time, higher educational institutions should become more inclusive about the value that this work has on the educational system and work directly with practitioners, documenting results for students should become more valuable. For example,
conferences designed for academic presentations are not usually attended by practitioners. Likewise, conferences designed for practitioners are not generally attended by researchers, but relationships built across these groups can result in joint presentation teams. RPPs that have combined teams presenting at conferences can introduce each other to their divided professional development activities, promoting a deeper joint understanding of the workings of each group and overall broader dissemination of the work (National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships, 2020). Ultimately, higher education institutions need to re-examine current tenure and promotion practices to more highly-value practitioner-focused research with documented results.

In the meantime, addressing researcher needs might necessitate developing two different dissemination plans to ensure that the work of the partnership extends beyond the involved partners (Henrick et al., 2017). Ensuring that there are internal communication strategies along with external communication plans, especially for any tools or routines developed and used successfully, will guarantee that the RPP contributes to the research base and extends efforts to use evidence consistently in educational systems.

RPP Dimension #5 – Building the capacity of participating researchers, practitioners, practice organizations, and research organizations to engage in partnership work (Henrick et al., 2017).

Within the sixth webinar in the Research + Practice Collaboratory’s winter 2015-2016 series covered the topic of Sustaining Partnerships. The host, William Penuel asked 5 different multi-year RPPs to describe their path to the current RPP. As I listened to them, I was struck by the similarity of their descriptions and aspects of group dynamics I studied during my work with
PLCs. I realized that all of them framed their journey aligned within Bruce Tuckman’s “forming, storming, norming and performing” of teamwork (Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, 2019). For the rest of this section, I used the information in the webinar to support the group dynamics descriptions from Tuckman but I encourage ongoing study on RPPs for the theoretical frameworks of group dynamics.

Forming stage is defined as general anxiety about roles and relationships. A strong facilitator is needed to help guide the team through the initial decisions but most of the guidance for the group is external – studying other RPPs, talking with more-experienced members of more-established partnerships, etc. (Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, 2019). The RPP partners described the first phase for all of them as related to relationships and initial structures (Research + Practice Collaboratory, March 17, 2016). Philip Bell, Executive Director, UW Institute for Science and Math Education, called it “assemble and sprint”. Kara Jackson, University of Washington, explained that building trust between the district and research institutions meant that the researchers showed the district it was going to be worth their time (Research + Practice Collaboratory, March 17, 2016). Dr. Bell stated that at first, the RPP had been planning annual reporting cycles, but the research institutions realized they needed to break it up into more frequent reports to show more-current credibility and viability. Additionally, even though they were forming a curriculum development RPP, they had to understand that there wasn’t time to create new curriculum in the beginning. They were going to have to be using the tools and resources currently available in the district and work on new curriculum after the team was more mature (Research + Practice Collaboratory, March 17, 2016). Another key insight from the first year was shared by Phil Daro, SERP, “Researchers can’t put the district request in
their language- they have to keep what the district has asked them” (Research + Practice Collaboratory, March 17, 2016, n.p.). This phase of team building has been described as having a “positive but polite atmosphere” (Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, 2019).

Storming is marked as a time where boundaries are tested, individual versus team identity is defined, which results in a growing confidence by the team in its role and purpose (Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, 2019). Frustrations over lack of productivity can result as initial processes and procedures are tested (Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, 2019). Working through issues like deciding on research questions together, agreeing to focus on classroom implementation practices and clarifying resource allocations takes most of time and energy of the group during this phase (Research + Practice Collaboratory, March 17, 2016). Tamara Summer, Executive Director of Digital Learning Sciences, mentioned that because they were working with a single district, they could focus on what that one district needed which helped push them through much of the decision-making and focus on productivity. An original focus on math led to branching out to science but only after the team was well established (Research + Practice Collaboratory, March 17, 2016). Likewise, Kara Jackson explained that in working with four large urban districts, they had agreed to all focus on middle school math classroom practices but they learned that the complicated processes and procedures across the districts meant that they were better off building in time to pilot initiatives on a much smaller basis before disseminating out to the larger multi-district group (Research + Practice Collaboratory, March 17, 2016). During this time, assumptions about the equity in expertise brought to the partnership, the equity in the capacity of the organizations to engage and the
actual versus perceived equity in overall benefit can influence relationship building and trust, undermine impact and any willingness for continued engagement (Denner, et al., 2019).

Norming means “team members start to resolve their differences, appreciate colleagues’ strengths and respect the leader’s authority” (Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, 2019). Basically, this next phase for all of the RPPs in the March 17, 2016 webinar was related to getting the work done, understanding each other’s strengths and accepting their differences. Creating a longer-term agenda and deeper understanding marked this phase. Phil Daro noted that during this time in their partnership, they uncovered that the word “implementation” meant considerably different things to different teachers and administrators. Uncovering and addressing the roots to the “deeply embedded school autonomy issues” slowed down progress but lead to a better understanding and connectedness that would be applied in future work. Daro explained that getting graduate assistants into the classrooms and focusing on coaching supports provided important communication and dissemination pathways to the classrooms (Research + Practice Collaboratory, March 17, 2016). Grappling with the disconnect between the 5-10 year vision that curriculum office uses versus the day-to-day teacher and principal focus meant building new processes. Daro asks the guiding question of this phase: “how do you get these two different worlds as partners?” (Research + Practice Collaboratory, March 17, 2016, n.p.). In this phase, issues and concerns moved away from individual interests and conflicts and into better understanding across the team. Personnel moved into new roles within the partnership and participants expand capacity building opportunities for teammates. This included district personnel attending research seminars and researchers attending district professional development. Productivity increased and the value of the partnership was mutually accepted.
Performing – Philip Bell described this phase as “breaking new ground together” (Research + Practice Collaboratory, March 17, 2016). “People share a common focus, communicate effectively and become more efficient and flexible as a result” (Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, 2019). This phase includes scaling, whether it is to branch out to other partners, other content areas or other researchers. Partners discuss and decide what is needed as next steps. Several respondents discussed how they finally started to develop or refine district tools to make them more effective for the partnership (Research + Practice Collaboratory, March 17, 2016). Other groups were able to introduce technological solutions and new ways of collecting data. This phase also provided enough resources to create and deliver new approaches like-re-imagining traditional professional development systems. Problems were solved as they appeared, and the leadership had the time and experienced people in place to close the loop on improving their own practice within the RPP (Henrick, et al., 2017). Organizational expectations for engagement with the RPP scaled up. As a result, long-term budgets, strategic plans and permanent structures like teachers’ contracts and job descriptions included language about the RPP.

As RPPs evolved, the most important subject of the RPP became the dynamics of the RPP rather than the ‘findings’ produced. (Denner et al., 2019, p. 9), which complicates evidence on the RPP’s effectiveness. Up to this point, most RPPs are considered successful if they have maintained relationships, provided mutual benefits to the partners, accomplished short term objectives and hopefully a few long-term outcomes. By introducing the dimensions of effectiveness, the Research + Practice Collaboratory introduced additional ways to measure effectiveness. It will be interesting to observe whether these dimensions provide a more-
scaffolded look at RPP effectiveness between formation and outcomes, whereby RPPs can target areas that need formative adjustment, encouraging more to “stay the course” to results. A concern of mine is whether the focus on process will at times overshadow the focus on results. I often lament educators’ tendency to “admire the problems” instead of buckling up and addressing issues. In my experience, educators can sometimes go through “paralysis by analysis” instead of taking actions that change kids’ lives. RPPs provide a promising approach based on partnerships across experts in pursuit of positive student outcomes.

Conclusion

District leaders must improve their use of evidence in both decision-making and in changing beliefs and practices across their districts. RPPs are built on relationships, long-term visions and an understanding of the differences, yet benefits of research versus practice. People with successful experiences in the two different systems, universities and school districts, must work together to see things from the others’ perspective, respect each other’s needs and commit to working out their differences in pursuit of benefits for our students, parents and communities.

It is only by understanding the actual rhythms of people’s work—the nature of the challenges they face and how their work is organized—that we gain insight into windows of opportunity to foster change. (Coburn, 2018, n.p.)

RPPs build relationships between practitioners and researchers and collaborate with external research organizations whose role is to generate and disseminate educational evidence. From the district perspective, RPPs first involve district personnel from all levels in governing the RPP, deciding on initial research questions even though most will be adjusted as the
partnership matures. RPPs then foster conditions for collective understandings of the resulting evidence across the district. RPP partners develop political support for their work and then support internal district structures and processes that not only use evidence but generate it for locally important issues and problems. RPPs provide opportunities for building administrators’ to consistently use evidence in social ways as part of the district norms. From the university perspective, RPPs build relationships with district personnel so that researchers can have access to data, work on problems that have impact, and create tools used to solve problems, not just study them. Benefits to the researchers include publishing, but do not end there. Hopefully university systems will recognize the importance of RPP work by having it count toward tenure and promotion.

Develop a culture that reflects the belief that the work researchers and practitioners can do together is better than the work they would be able to do separately because their perspectives and areas of expertise are complementary and produce novel solutions to challenging problems when brought together. (Henrick et al., 2017, p.17)

By maintaining mutual benefits for both researchers and practitioners, RPPs ensure that everyone is invested in long-term success. RPPs are often called upon to address the most complicated and entangled problems in our educational system – often requiring multiple layers of personnel, impacting many different community members and demanding long term resources of people and funds.

Yet, these partnerships are not more common. Ruth Lopez Turley and Carla Stevens (2015) point out that more funding is needed for these partnerships, more information is needed to first support and encourage their creation and then to help navigate documented challenges to long-term sustainability. Finally, that university researchers do not have any incentives to ensure
that their work is applicable in the first place. Additional issues include holes in the research for RPPs; failing or failed RPPs are rarely studied and neither are rebuffed inquiries from either researchers or practitioners regarding the opportunity to create them.

Evidence from mature RPPs promise success, but experienced RPP directors caution that … partnerships [can’t] design interventions or produce evidence quickly enough to meet the nearly insatiable demands of politicians and other stakeholders for immediate solution to education’s most persistent problems. In short, partnerships are not the magic bullet that we continually seek for education. (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017, p. 146)

While it is encouraging to see how successful RPPs have been able to address issues with using evidence, we need to be practical about the resources RPPs need to start, grow and sustain, at least in theory.
References


http://researchandpractice.org/resource/october2015-rpp-forum/


http://researchandpractice.org/resource/december2015-rpp-forum/

http://researchandpractice.org/resource/january2016-rpp-forum/

http://researchandpractice.org/resource/february2016-rpp-forum/

http://researchandpractice.org/resource/march2016-rpp-forum/


https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/cb/two_way_streets_transcript.pdf


APPENDIX

THREE ILLINOIS ADMINISTRATOR ACADEMY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES SYLLABI
Administrator Academies – Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network

Course #1890 – Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) Framework

Course Summary
A. Title - Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) Framework: Are Your Students On PaCE to Thrive?
B. Description
Through a collaborative process of learning, use the Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) Framework and the On PaCE to Thrive community guide to impact the college and career readiness of your students. Outcomes include a plan to implement college and career readiness activities aligned to the new PaCE Framework, which was a result of the Postsecondary Workforce Readiness Act and has been adopted by four state P20 education agencies – Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Community College Board and Illinois Board of Higher Education, and Illinois Student Assistance Commission. Tools and data resources will be shared to measure current college career readiness, plan for individual district needs and result in greater engagement with the community. Participants should bring an internet-connected device.
C. Professional Development Time 6 hours
D. Leadership Area School Improvement
E. School Leader Standard Collaboration with Families and Communities
F. Target Group Principal
G. Professional Learning Standards
Learning Communities
Leadership
Learning Designs

Participants’ Outcome(s), school leader standards, and performance/knowledge indicators
Problem of Practice - high school students arrive at graduation with unclear plans for careers, vague plans continuing education and no idea of the financial consequences of those decisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>School Leader Standards</th>
<th>Performance/Knowledge Indicators</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Participants will be able to analyze their school’s college and career readiness activities, including career</td>
<td>Standard 1 – Facilitating a Vision of Learning</td>
<td>1A – has knowledge and understanding of learning goals in a pluralistic society</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1B – comprehends the principles of developing and implementing long term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants will know the PaCE Framework and that it has been adopted by the 4 Illinois state agencies – ISBE, ICCB, IBHE, ISAC.</td>
<td>Standard 4 – Collaboration with Families and Communities</td>
<td>4A – recognizes emerging issues and trends that potentially affect the school community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants will be able to plan and evaluate college and career readiness from early childhood through high school.</td>
<td>Standard 1 – Facilitating a Vision of Learning</td>
<td>1B – comprehends the principles of developing and implementing long term plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants will be able to synthesize their learning into a plan for college and career readiness that includes community partners.</td>
<td>Standard 4 – Collaboration with Families and Communities</td>
<td>4C – understands the conditions and dynamics of the diverse school community</td>
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<td>4D – has knowledge of community resources</td>
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<td>4F – is aware of successful models of school, family, business, community, government, and higher education partnerships</td>
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<td>4L – articulates the district’s or schools’ vision, mission, and priorities to the community and media and understands how to build community support for district’s or school’s priorities and programs</td>
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<td>5. Participants will determine the benefits and consequences of using the PaCE Framework as a problem of practice within a Research Practice Partnership</td>
<td>5- Building and Maintaining Collaborative Relationships</td>
<td>5d. Demonstrates an understanding of the change process and uses leadership and facilitation skills to manage it effectively</td>
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<td>Are Your Students <em>On PaCE to Thrive?</em></td>
<td>Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network</td>
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<td>Metrics Checklist and Benchmarks and Alternate Planning Document</td>
<td>Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network</td>
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<td>Gap Analysis Prioritization and Planning Chart</td>
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<td>Illinois Student Assistance Commission <a href="http://www.isac.org">http://www.isac.org</a></td>
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<td>Website</td>
<td>Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network <a href="http://niu.edu/p20network">http://niu.edu/p20network</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network Documents and Website</td>
<td>Sara Finnegan</td>
<td>815-753-1272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America’s Divided Recovery: College Haves and Have Nots</td>
<td>Sara Finnegan</td>
<td>815-753-1272</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illinois Student Assistance Commission website</td>
<td>Lynne Baker</td>
<td>847-831-8024 (office) or 847-715-6267 (cell)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illinois Report Card</td>
<td>Kerry Ralls</td>
<td>815-753-0978</td>
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</table>

### Research References

<p>| Type of Material   | Title                                                                 | Author(s)                                                      | Year of Publication | Time Period | Page No(s) |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|                                                               |                    |            |            |
| Research Paper     | America’s Divided Recovery, College Haves and Have Nots              | Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce             | 2016               | ALL        |            |
| Journal Article    | Student council, volunteering, basketball, or marching band what kind of extracurricular involvement matters? | Eccles, J. S., &amp; Barber, B. L                                  | 1999               | 10-43      |            |
| Report             | Young Lives on Hold: The College Dreams of Undocumented Students      | Gonzales                                                      | 2009               | All        |            |
| Literature Review  | Connecting informal STEM experiences to career choices: Identifying the pathway | Dorsen, J., Carlson, B., &amp; Goodyear, L                        | 2006               | All        |            |</p>
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<th>Type of Material</th>
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<th>Year of Publication</th>
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<td>Website</td>
<td>Making a Difference Through Volunteering and Nonprofit Careers</td>
<td>Learn How to Become</td>
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<td>Report</td>
<td>Job Shadow: How Business Can Help Attack the Dropout Crisis in America</td>
<td>Junior Achievement</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<td>Middle School Career Exploration: The Role of Teachers and Principals</td>
<td>Smith, A. E.</td>
<td>2000</td>
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<td>Website</td>
<td>NACAC National College Fair FAQs</td>
<td>The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)</td>
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<td>Work Toward College Success</td>
<td>The College Board</td>
<td>2016</td>
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<td>Journal Article</td>
<td>Adolescent involvement in extracurricular activities: Influences on leadership skills</td>
<td>Hancock, D., Dyk, P. H., &amp; Jones, K.</td>
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<td>Resource Document</td>
<td>Nine Steps to Making Your College Plans a Reality</td>
<td>Benjamin L. Castleman &amp; Lindsay C. Page</td>
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<td>Research Brief</td>
<td>The role of mentoring in college access and success</td>
<td>Coles, A</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>Website</td>
<td>College Planning for Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>LD Online</td>
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<td>Journal Article</td>
<td>Increasing College-Going Rate, Parent Involvement, and Community Participation in Rural Communities</td>
<td>King, S. B</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>20-26</td>
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<td>Journal Article</td>
<td>The role of application assistance and information in college decisions: Results from the H&amp;R Block FAFSA experiment</td>
<td>Bettinger, E. P., Long, B. T., Oreopoulos, P., &amp; Sanbonmatsu, L.</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<td>1205-1242</td>
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<td>Paper Brief</td>
<td>“We’re Going to Do This Together”: Examining the Relationship between Parental Educational Expectations and a Community-Based Children’s Savings Account Program.</td>
<td>Rauscher, E., Elliott, W., O’Brien, M., Callahan, J., Steensma, J.</td>
<td>2016</td>
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<td>America’s Divided Recovery: College Haves and Have-Nots</td>
<td>Georgetown University</td>
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<td>Website</td>
<td>Postsecondary Attainment for Adults 25+ By County</td>
<td>Advance Illinois</td>
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<td>Website</td>
<td>Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study</td>
<td>National Center for Education Statistics</td>
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<td>Journal</td>
<td>English Language</td>
<td>Yasuko Kanno and</td>
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### Type of Material | Title | Author(s) | Year of Publication | Time Period | Page No(s)
---|---|---|---|---|---
Article | Learners’ Pathways to Four-Year Colleges | Jennifer Cromley | | | |
Report | The Post-High school outcomes of youth with disabilities up to 4 years after high school | Newman, L., Wagner, M., Cameto, R., & Knokey, A. M. | 2009 | | |
Report | Illinois State Board of Education State Template for the Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act | Illinois State Board of Education | | | 70-74
Resource Document | Facts about HB5729, the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act | Advance Illinois | | | |
Website | | Illinois State Board of Education | | | |
Website | | College Changes Everything | | | |
Website | 2017-18 FAFSA Completion Initiative | Illinois Student Assistance Commission | | | |
Website | Financial Literacy for Education Success | Northern Illinois University | | | |
Website | Resources | Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network | | | |

### Course Syllabus

| Subtopic (Maximum 100 characters) | Recommended Activity (choose no more than 3) | Application Component Yes or No | Duration Time (Hrs | Mins) | Direct Contact | Indirect Contact | Outcome (Indicate No.) |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---
Problems of Practice within Research Practice Partnerships | Individual survey on use of research, discussion and venn diagram on RPPs | No | 30 | Yes | | Outcome #6 |
Illinois’ commitment to the | Video, Individual Activity, Large | No | 15 | Yes | | Outcome #1-2 |
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Group Discussion</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Outcome #1</th>
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<tr>
<td>What is our school’s Illinois Report Card and Illinois Student Assistance Commission data telling us about CCR?</td>
<td>Review Websites for Data Small Group Activity Large Group Discussion</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Outcome #1</td>
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<td>Introducing the PaCE Framework</td>
<td>Individual Reading Small Group Discussion</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Outcome #1-2</td>
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<td>Complete the school’s gap analysis using PaCE benchmarks</td>
<td>Individual Activity (unless they attend with a school team – small group activity)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Outcome #1-2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning for and prioritizing benchmarks identified as gaps</td>
<td>Individual Activity (unless they attend with a school team – small group activity)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Outcome #1-2</td>
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<td>Using the community guide and support documents to deepen the impact of the PaCE Framework</td>
<td>Jigsaw Activity -Individual Reading, Small Group Discussion</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Outcome #3-4</td>
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<td>Recruit members of the P-20</td>
<td>Small group - create pro/con t-chart on RPP</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Outcome #1 and #5</td>
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</table>
### Application/Dissemination Component
Complete the 30-90-180 Day Planning Document to implement activities that align to the PaCE Framework and involve community organizations in college and career readiness.
Complete a discussion with central office staff about the pros/cons of joining the P-20 Network’s Networked Improvement Community on Dual Credit.

### Certified or Trained Presenters
The course must be presented by certified/trained presenters. **YES**

### Trained Presenters
- Who to contact for list of trained presenters: Sara Finnegan, 815-753-1272
- Names of all Trained Presenters
  - Amy Jo Clemens, Jason Klein
- Minimum requirements: Complete training with Amy Jo Clemens and include a research partner in the delivery.
Administrator Academies – Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network

Course #1895: Expanding Early College Opportunities

Course Summary
A. Title How Data Demands Dual Credit for Everyone
B. Description –
   Dual Credit and other Early College Options are increasing the College and Career Readiness of students across the state. Academy outcomes include knowing the impact of dual credit on students’ secondary and postsecondary outcomes, examining the issue of equity with early college credit data on the Illinois Report Card, planning for the new ISBE ESSA College and Career Indicators and using the Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) Framework to implement college and career readiness activities. Tools and data resources will be shared to measure current early college options, college career readiness, and plan for individual district needs. Participants should bring an internet-connected device
C. Professional Development Time 6 hours
D. Leadership Area School Improvement
E. School Leader Standard School Culture and Instructional Program
F. Target Group Principal/Assistant Principal
G. Professional Learning Standards
   a. Leadership
   b. Resources
   c. Data

Participants’ Outcome(s), school leader standards, and performance/knowledge indicators
   Problem of Practice - early college options show more promise for postsecondary outcomes than graduation, attendance, grades or other activities our high schools currently focus on, but not all high schools even offer dual credit and then only the elite students are permitted to enroll.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>School Leader Standards</th>
<th>Performance/Knowledge Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Participants will study the research confirming that access to early college credit is an equity issue.</td>
<td>1 – Facilitating a Vision of Learning 2 – School Culture and Instructional Program</td>
<td>1A – has knowledge and understanding of learning goals in a pluralistic society 1D – understands information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies 1N – analyzes and interprets educational data, issues and trends 2B – understands the continuum of students’ growth and development 2I – understands diversity and its meaning for educational programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. Participants will use the research for offering a variety of early college options for students. | 1 – Facilitating a Vision of Learning  
2 – School Culture and Instructional Program | 1N – analyzes and interprets educational data, issues and trends  
2Z – bases curricular decisions on research, applied theory, informed practice, the recommendations of learned societies, and State and federal policies and mandates  
2HH – studies best practices, relevant research, and demographic data to analyze their implications for school improvement |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 3. Participants will use the Illinois Report Card School Data Tool to analyze the students earning early credit and compare to schools of similar size, location or demographics. | 1 – Facilitating a Vision of Learning | 1D – understands information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies  
1M – conducts needs assessments and uses qualitative and quantitative data to plan and assess school programs  
1N – analyzes and interprets educational data, issues, and trends |
| 4. Participants will research the effect of early college coursework in ISBE’s ESSA College and Career Ready Framework and Postsecondary and Career | 3 – Management | 3N – understands federal, state and local statutory and regulatory provisions and judicial decision governing education |
Exploration (PaCE) Framework.

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<th>Strand</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>5. Participants will survey students and then plan for more early college opportunities aligned to the results of the survey.</td>
<td>1 – Facilitating a Vision of Learning</td>
<td>1B – comprehends the principles of developing and implementing long term plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Participants will determine the benefits and consequences of using dual credit as a problem of practice within a Research Practice Partnership</td>
<td>5 - Building and Maintaining Collaborative Relationships</td>
<td>5d. Demonstrates an understanding of the change process and uses leadership and facilitation skills to manage it effectively</td>
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Course Materials

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<td>How Data Demands Early College Coursework</td>
<td>Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network</td>
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<td>Early College Opportunities: Reflecting and Planning Tool</td>
<td>Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network</td>
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**Copyrighted Materials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Copyrighted Material</th>
<th>Contact Person</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network Documents and Website</td>
<td>Sara Finnegan</td>
<td>815-753-1272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America’s Divided Recovery: College Haves and Have Nots</td>
<td>Debbie Pixton</td>
<td>815-753-1898</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illinois Report Card</td>
<td>Kerry Ralls</td>
<td>815-753-0978</td>
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**Research References**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Material</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year of Publication</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Page No(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td>On the Fast Track: Understanding the opportunities and Challenges of Dual Credit: ASHE higher Education Report, Volume 42, Number 3</td>
<td>Barbara Tobolowsky, Taryn Allen</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
<td>62-80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Material</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Study</td>
<td>At the Crossroad of Access and Opportunity: Funding and Dual Credit Participation in Illinois <a href="http://occrl.illinois.edu/docs/librariesprovider4/dual-credit/crossroads.pdf">Link</a></td>
<td>Eboni Zamani-Gallaher, Janice North, John Lang</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>ALL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Report</td>
<td>SY17 Dual credit enrollment numbers</td>
<td>Township High School District 211</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>ALL</td>
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<td>Booklet</td>
<td>Northwest Educational Council for Student Success</td>
<td>NECSS</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>ALL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subtopic</td>
<td>Recommended Activity</td>
<td>Application Component</td>
<td>Duration Time</td>
<td>Direct Contact</td>
<td>Indirect Contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problems of Practice within Research Practice Partnerships</td>
<td>Individual survey on use of research, discussion and venn diagram on RPPs</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the Case for Dual Credit – research support and issues with equity.</td>
<td>Video, Individual Reading Activity, Large Group Discussion</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is our school’s Illinois Report Card data telling us about Dual Credit and Advanced Placement?</td>
<td>Review Websites for Data Small Group Activity Large Group Discussion</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Introducing a variety of early college options</td>
<td>Individual Reading Small Group Discussion</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning for ESSA and the new CCR indicators along with the PaCE Framework</td>
<td>Large group discussion on the CCRI and PaCE work</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruit members of the P-20 Network NIC on Dual</td>
<td>Small group - create pro/con t-chart on RPP approach to Dual Credit</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Credit Problem of Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Getting students ready for early college options – early identification and remediation</th>
<th>Individual Activity (unless they attend with a school team – small group activity)</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Outcome #1-2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete a plan that includes school data from a student survey on dual credit and dissemination of RPP information</td>
<td>Individual activity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Outcome #5 -#6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Application/Dissemination Component

Submit a plan that includes the results of a student survey on early college options focused on one or more of these topics from the book

1. Increasing equity in dual credit options
2. Exploring other early college coursework options than just dual credit
3. Increasing student skills in early high school so that all students have early college coursework options as upper classmen.

Complete a discussion with central office staff about the pros/cons of joining the P-20 Network’s Networked Improvement Community on Dual Credit.

### Certified or Trained Presenters

The course must be presented by certified/trained presenters. YES

### Trained Presenters

- Who to contact for list of trained presenters: Sara Finnegan 815 753-1272
- Names of all Trained Presenters
  - Amy Jo Clemens, Danielle Hauser, Jason Klein
Minimum requirements: Complete train the trainer with Amy Jo Clemens and include a research partner in the delivery.

Administrator Academies – Northern Illinois Regional P-20 Network

Course #3696 – Transitional Math

Course Summary

H. Title Illinois Transitional Math: All students ready for postsecondary math courses in their field of study.

I. Description –
High schools are working in partnership with their local community colleges to create courses whose curriculum includes a demonstration of required Transitional Math competencies. The Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act ensured guaranteed placement in a credit-bearing math class at Illinois community colleges and many Illinois universities for high school students successfully demonstrating these state-approved competencies. These courses emphasize authentic learning experiences aligned with students’ chosen career paths as well as a student’s life and future coursework. The goal is to provide high school seniors with a new mathematical experience that is motivating as well as valuable because of the guaranteed college placement achieved. Participants should bring an internet-connected device

J. Professional Development Time 6 hours

K. Leadership Area School Improvement

L. School Leader Standard School Culture and Instructional Program

M. Target Group Principal/Assistant Principal

N. Professional Learning Standards
   a. Leadership
   b. Resources
   c. Learning Designs

Participants’ Outcome(s), school leader standards, and performance/knowledge indicators

Problem of Practice - thousands of students are placed into non-credit bearing math in postsecondary, only to lose momentum, consume scholarship money and then become one of the 75% who end up leaving postsecondary before persisting through the developmental coursework to the credit-bearing course.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>School Leader Standards</th>
<th>Performance/Knowledge Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Participants will understand the research confirming that few students complete a degree or credential if identified for remedial math in postsecondary.</td>
<td>1 – Facilitating a Vision of Learning</td>
<td>1A – has knowledge and understanding of learning goals in a pluralistic society 1D – understands information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies 1N – analyzes and interprets educational data, issues and trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Participants will recognize the Transitional Math requirements in the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act and know the effect of completing this coursework.</td>
<td>3- Management 6- The Political, Social, Economic, Legal and Cultural Context</td>
<td>3N – understands federal, state and local statutory and regulatory provisions and judicial decision governing education 6H – recognizes the dynamics of policy development and advocacy under our democratic political system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Participants will know the difference in transitional math curriculum vs traditional math curriculum including math pathways at postsecondary.</td>
<td>1 – Facilitating a Vision of Learning 2-School Culture and Instructional Program</td>
<td>1N – analyzes and interprets educational data, issues, and trends 2I – understands diversity and its meaning for educational programs 2O – promotes an inclusive educational culture 2R – promotes an environment where all individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect 2S – develops a culture of high expectations for self, students and staff’s performance where accomplishments are recognized 2V – develops collaboratively curriculum and developmentally appropriate instruction for varied teaching and learning styles as well as specific needs of students, considering gender, ethnicity, culture, social class, and exceptionalities. 2Z – bases curricular decisions on research, applied theory, informed practice, the recommendations of learned societies, and State and federal policies and mandates 2HH – studies best practices, relevant research, and demographic data to analyze their implications for school improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Participants will be knowledgeable about the transitional math resources including curricular maps, lesson plans and professional development modules available.

2-School Culture and Instructional Program

2CC - uses resources to support instructional programs and best practices and incorporates a variety of supervisory models to improve teaching and learning

2KK – uses technology, telecommunications and information systems to enrich curriculum and instruction

5. Participants will complete their communication strategy and identify their timeline for implementation by meeting with their math teachers, counselors and community college representatives to implement for transitional math.

1 – Facilitating a Vision of Learning

1B – comprehends the principles of developing and implementing long term plans

6. Participants will determine the benefits and consequences of using transitional math as a problem of practice within a Research Practice Partnership

5 – Building and Maintaining Collaborative Relationships

5d. Demonstrates an understanding of the change process and uses leadership and facilitation skills to manage it effectively

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Course Materials</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Material</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Power Point Presentation</td>
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<td>Handouts</td>
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<td>Type of Material</td>
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<td>Video</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report</td>
<td>Developmental Education Strategies for Reform <a href="https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opepd/education-strategies.pdf">https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/opepd/education-strategies.pdf</a></td>
<td>US Department of Education</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
<td>11-13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Overview</td>
<td>The Study of Pre-College Math Remedial Program in Tennessee <a href="https://cepr.harvard.edu/files/cepr/files/sails-research-project-overview.pdf">https://cepr.harvard.edu/files/cepr/files/sails-research-project-overview.pdf</a></td>
<td>Vanderbuilt and Harvard University</td>
<td>2015</td>
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<td>1-10</td>
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</table>
## Course Syllabus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtopic</th>
<th>Recommended Activity</th>
<th>Application Component</th>
<th>Duration Time</th>
<th>Direct Contact</th>
<th>Indirect Contact</th>
<th>Outcome (Indicator No.)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems of Practice within Research Practice Partnerships</td>
<td>Individual survey on use of research, discussion and venn diagram on RPPs</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Outcome #6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defining the problem- using data to tell the story</td>
<td>Video, Data collection and data display</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Outcome #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research what is known about the problem</td>
<td>Reading activity, large group discussion</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Outcome #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognizing the difference in Transitional Math vs Traditional Math</td>
<td>Individual problem solving and small group discussion</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Outcome #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math pathways in postsecondary</td>
<td>Lecture, application</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Outcome #3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overview of the rules/law</td>
<td>Lecture, small group instruction</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Outcome #2 and #5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit members of the P-20 Network NIC on Dual Credit</td>
<td>Small group - create pro/con-t-chart on RPP approach to Dual Credit problem of practice</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Outcome #1 and #6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding and using Transitional</td>
<td>Website review, small group and</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Outcome #4</td>
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<td>Math Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete communication materials and meet with stakeholders and dissemination of RPP information</td>
<td>Individual activity at home building/district</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Outcome #5</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Application/Dissemination Component**

1. Complete communications materials for math teachers and meet with building/district high school math teachers to plan for implementation
2. Complete communications materials for counselors and meet with building/district counselors
3. Complete communications materials for parents
4. Communicate with community college partners for an update on the local MOU process/approval
5. Complete a discussion with central office staff about the pros/cons of joining the P-20 Network’s Networked Improvement Community on Dual Credit.

**Certified or Trained Presenters**
The course must be presented by certified/trained presenters. **YES**

**Trained Presenters**

- Who to contact for list of trained presenters: Kathy Almy or Kristin Brynteson
- Names of all Trained Presenters
  - Kathy Almy kalmy@niu.edu
  - Kristin Brynteson kbrynteson@niu.edu
  - Anji Garza agarza@roe47.org
- Minimum requirements: Complete the academy with a trained presenter and include a research partner in the delivery