Symposium Proposal
Scaling-up: From the Laboratory to the Field Site to Multiple Sites

While some large-scale RCTs have found significant effects, some have not. In this symposium, the presenters will discuss steps that can be taken to ensure successful transitions from the laboratory to the classroom or from single-site studies to multisite studies. The first two presentations discuss the transition from the laboratory to the classroom. The second two discuss the transition from a single site to multiple sites.

In the first presentation, Dr. Ken Koedinger (Carnegie Mellon University) will describe in vivo experiments, a process for adapting general learning principles derived in laboratory studies to the specific curriculum of the classroom. The presentation will be illustrated with research examples from the Pittsburgh Science of Learning Center in the areas of mathematics and science learning.

In the second presentation, Dr. Mark Davison (University of Minnesota) will discuss the process of transitioning from laboratory studies which often involve teaching small domains of content to field studies of classrooms in which the domain of desired outcomes may be much larger. Using examples from research on an IES funding vocabulary intervention in grades 1 – 4, he argues that outcome measures become less sensitive as content domain size increases, and that this needs to be considered in planning the field study and in the data analysis strategy.

In the third presentation, Dr. Kristen McMaster (University of Minnesota) discusses the transition from a single-site study to a multi-site study. In the process, the researcher must decide how much discretion to give teachers in adapting the intervention to their particular site. She will show data from an IES funded study comparing treatment effect sizes in two conditions that varied in the amount of discretion given to teachers.

In our final presentation, Dr. Michael Harwell will note that the problem of transitioning to multiple sites has been considered extensively in the public health literature. Drawing on the literature in public health and two educational research studies (the Tennessee Class size study and the NSF-funded study of the MNMAP mathematics curriculum), he will discuss methods for planning and conducting multisite studies in ways that optimize what is learned and the generalizibility of results.