The Landscape of Research-Practice Partnerships:
Partnership Approaches, Challenges, and Strategies for Success

This session will survey the landscape of partnerships between researchers and school districts. Partnerships are seen as promising venues for connecting research and practice, but the field requires stronger knowledge of how to design successful collaborations. Panelists will discuss various partnership approaches, the challenges they face, and strategies for success. Partnerships are defined here as long-term collaborations between researchers and districts that focus on persistent problems of practice.

Bill Penuel will present a typology of partnerships and describe the key challenges and potential benefits of various approaches. His presentation will draw on a paper commissioned by the William T. Grant Foundation and based on a literature review, informant interviews, and case studies. The typology includes the longstanding Chicago Consortium for School Research and partnerships based on it, more recent “design research” models such as the Strategic Educational Research Partnership (SERP) and the Middle School Math and the Institutional Setting of Teaching (MIST), the Carnegie Foundation’s Networked Improvement Communities, the new Regional Education Lab alliances, and others.

District leaders, Adina Lopatin and Michael Sorum, will extend the discussion of challenges to and benefits of partnership work. They will recommend strategies for successfully collaborating with districts and pitfalls to avoid by drawing on their experiences working with the Research Alliance for New York City Schools, MIST, SERP, and others. Collectively, the panelists will offer research and practice viewpoints on how to address thorny partnership challenges such as building trust; developing research agendas that meet multiple stakeholder interests; producing research that is rigorous, relevant, and timely; and applying it to improve educational systems.

Panelists

Chair: Vivian Tseng, Vice President of Programs, William T. Grant Foundation

Presenters: Bill Penuel, Professor of Education, University of Colorado at Boulder
Adina Lopatin, Deputy Chief Academic Officer, New York City Public Schools
Michael Sorum, Deputy Superintendent for Leadership, Learning, and Student Support, Fort Worth Independent School District