Dates: September 4 – 6 2014

SREE Session Title: Leading Complex District Transformation Efforts: Integrating research, performance management and evaluation to ensure quality.

Participants:

Derek Mitchell, Chief Executive Officer, Partners in School Innovation, Moderator
Mary Jo Kulhman, Assistant Superintendent, Organizational Learning, Grand Rapids Public Schools
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Dana McCurdy, Research & Evaluation Manager, Partners in School Innovation
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Implementing school and district reform efforts has been a major priority for the U.S. Department of Education and state education agencies for the past 12 years. Since the passage of No Child Left Behind, federal and state policy leaders have worked to manage the consequences of not meeting standards through one of two key drivers: by providing various incentives to instill ‘best practices’ or by working with districts and schools to replicate ‘successful’ models of school reform. Unfortunately, neither the research in NCLB, nor the intellectual forbears to the Race to the Top legislation considered what is already known about the difficulties of managing change in complex systems at scale and the barriers to sustaining such efforts through significant leadership transitions. Successfully fusing educational research, performance management system development and evaluation methods, offers a framework for resolving this research vs. practice conundrum. Partners in School Innovation has integrated these elements into an approach that provides on-the-ground support to under-performing urban districts and schools by focusing on building the capacity of teachers and leaders to implement research-proven methods that improve student learning outcomes. After achieving breakthrough results in California schools, Partners in School Innovation has recently scaled its strategies to districts in Michigan. This session offers the perspectives of the Partners staff and district leaders engaged in deep systems transformation partnerships, shares the key lessons and results of these emerging efforts, and offers recommendations to those seriously considering diving into the district transformation waters.