**Social Emotional Invited Session**

**Title:** Using Developmentally-Informed Measures of Classroom Settings, Students’ Behavior, and Teacher Networks to Enhance Educational Practice from Preschool to Middle School

**Chair:** Bridget Hamre; **Discussant:** Stephanie Jones

**Abstract:**

As we look into the classrooms, hallways, and playgrounds in which children and adolescents spend their days, there are numerous examples of disconnect between the latest developmental research and typical practice. Although developmental science provides a wealth of information about how children develop and learn, and educators have rich knowledge of the information and tools they find useful in fostering successful practice and approaches to students, the disconnect between developmental science and educational practice is a tremendous limiting factor on realizing the promise of new knowledge for fostering human potential.

A growing body of work documents the reasons for this disconnect as well as the most effective methods for addressing it (Finnegan & Daly, 2014; Tseng, 2012). One approach with particular promise is the creation and use of measures. Educationally relevant and developmentally informed measures promise to increase our understanding of features of school settings that contribute to youth development. Ultimately, application of relevant and sound measures within schools may help to transform these settings in ways that better reflect developmental science. As stated by the Institute of Education Sciences director John Easton (2012):

*Good measurement brings conceptual clarity by precisely defining the phenomena that we are trying to change. It enables researchers to build frameworks or theories that integrate multiple concepts. It helps us better test and then understand the mechanisms and pathways to improved outcomes. Good measurement also gives educators frameworks to help them place the phenomenon in context as they plan or seek improvement strategies.*

Ideally measures not only inform theory and practice, but they are integrated into the daily work of schools. Measures are already used in school contexts to assess student learning (e.g., standardized tests, report cards), measure teacher performance (e.g., principal observations), and inform school improvement efforts (e.g., discipline referral records). Yet few of these measures reflect the state of art in developmental science or setting-level measurement, particularly when we broaden our lens to include areas of development beyond cognition and settings beyond classrooms.

The three papers in this session demonstrate the ways in which measures can be used to provide actionable data to teachers in ways that directly inform classroom practice. Each of the papers highlights the ways in which school-based interventions can use measures to draw teachers’ attention to important aspects of children’s development as well as the contexts that
support this development. The first paper uses an observational measure of children’s interactions with teachers, peers, and tasks to help guide preschool teachers’ selection and implementation of evidence-based interventions with children demonstrating challenging classroom behaviors. The second paper uses measures of students’ behavior, teacher-student interactions, and teacher social networks to help mental health professionals provide more meaningful feedback and support to elementary school teachers. The third paper summarizes the use of measures in an intervention focused on helping middle school teachers manage the instructional, behavioral, and social aspects of the classroom ecology in a synergistic manner that is responsive to the strengths and needs of specific schools, classrooms, students, and teachers. Taken together the papers showcase the potential power of developmentally-informed and well-designed measures in settings from preschool through middle school.