Learning in Partnership: How Researchers and Practitioners Jointly Create and Apply Research Findings

This invited panel will present case studies from several partnerships that illustrate how research and practice influence each other in P-12 education settings, particularly when tackling outcomes other than student achievement.

The panel has three aims. First is to understand what makes a partnership, including the nuts and bolts of how to negotiate partnership roles and responsibilities, how to work with funders, ways to create research products that are rigorous and useful to practitioners, and how to manage timelines between researchers and practitioners facing different incentives and demands.

Second is to identify ways to promote research use. Pairs of researchers and state or district representatives will discuss how their policy and practice context shapes joint development of their research agenda. Each pair will highlight examples of the types of analysis and study findings that prompted use of the research findings to inform decision making.

Third is to explore how to advance both scholarship and practice, and to what extent partnerships can pursue causal research designs while sustaining interaction and joint decision making between researchers and practitioners.

Prof. Michael Stramblar of Yale University School of Medicine and Alana Callahan of Bridgeport Public Schools will describe how a partnership aimed at promoting social and emotional learning (SEL) used measures to inform the district-wide implementation of SEL programing and instruction. Dr. Nancy Erbstein of U.C. Davis and Ms. Victoria Flores, director of Sacramento City Schools’ Student Supports Division, will share how findings from an intensive study of disparities in chronic absence prompted shifts in district communication with families regarding attendance, new school-level approaches to planning attendance support, revised student support center referral practices, and additional related research. Dr. Faith Connolly from Baltimore Education Research Consortium and a representative from Baltimore City Schools will describe how findings from their analysis of the relationship between pre-K and early grade absence patterns informed district strategy.

The panel will be moderated by Rekha Balu, who has managed research-practice partnerships at MDRC.