NNERPP | EXTRA

Delivering fresh ideas from the intersection of ed research, policy & practice

Welcome to Our Summer Edition

By Paula Arce-Trigatti | NNERPP

Welcome to the second issue of NNERPP Extra of this year! We hope your summer is going well and you have been able to get some rest amidst the continuously tumultuous times. In this edition, we are excited to share four new articles with you for some summer reading – and a reminder of the important work RPPs are continuing to do.

In this edition, we bring you the following articles:

- **Research Insights**: We examine what four different NNERPP members have found when investigating teacher retention and teacher evaluation.

- **RPP Deep Dive**: We explore what the words "communication," "dissemination," and "engagement" mean to various RPP-ers and how they are conceptualizing and operationalizing these words with respect to their RPPs.

- **Extra Credit**: We examine how early career academic scholars wishing to engage in RPP work can navigate the tension between the two goals of supporting early stage RPP work and also pursuing tenure.

- **Improving Improvement**: We hear how Proving Ground is seeking to address the biggest barrier to improvement: The lack of time on the part of already overburdened school districts to engage in improvement work.

- **Research Headlines**: We share a roundup listing all of our members' research from the past quarter.

Happy reading!

NNERPP | Extra Online
Be sure to check out the NNERPP | Extra website if you'd like to explore this issue's articles (and more!) online.

About NNERPP
NNERPP aims to develop, support, and connect research-practice partnerships in education to improve their productivity. Please visit our website at nnerpp.rice.edu and find us on Twitter: @RPP_Network.

IN THIS ISSUE

Examining Teacher Retention and Teacher Evaluation With NNERPP Members

By Nina Spitzley | NNERPP

IN THIS "RESEARCH INSIGHTS" EDITION

In this edition of our "Research Insights" series, we examine what four different NNERPP members have found when investigating teacher retention and teacher evaluation. We first highlight two studies on teacher retention, including one that examines how working conditions are related to teacher retention in Richmond, VA, and the other examining which teacher supports are associated with teacher retention in Michigan. We then highlight two studies on teacher evaluation, which take a close look at potential inequities in how teachers are evaluated in their home states of Tennessee and Wisconsin by exploring which teachers tend to receive higher or lower evaluations. Let's dive in!

WHY THIS ARTICLE

Teacher shortages in the U.S. are leading to serious problems in ensuring all students have access to qualified teachers, negatively affecting student achievement. Understanding how to retain and support high quality teachers is therefore critical. Generally speaking, teacher evaluations are intended to provide evidence supporting pedagogical improvement; improving teacher quality is then assumed to also improve student learning. Evaluations have the potential to encourage teachers' professional growth by providing feedback on their strengths and weaknesses, but may also function as a mechanism to remove teachers who are performing poorly. Evaluations can thus have serious consequences for teachers, as they can lead to dismissal, placement, and compensation decisions. As much as teacher evaluations are intended to improve the quality of teachers and therefore the quality of student learning, they only work as such if they are robust, fair, and objective – and if they are not perceived as such by teachers, teachers may leave their profession.

Especially in the current environment where the challenges teachers experience on a day-to-day basis are particularly salient and leading to serious retention problems due to pandemic-induced burnout and turnover, we turn to research produced by RPPs on the topic of teacher retention and teacher evaluation to see what they've found.

OVERVIEW

Let's first take a quick look at the four artifacts included in this article. In Table 1 below, you'll find the partnership name as well as a brief description of the partnership in column 1 and the title and link to each research artifact in column 2.

Examining Teacher Retention and Teacher Evaluation With NNERPP Members, continued

Table 1. List of RPPs + Artifacts Included in This Article (Ordered by Region: West to Northeast)

Partnership	Artifact
Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium: MERC is a partnership between several Richmond-area school districts (Chesterfield County Public Schools, Goochland County Public Schools, Hanover County Public Schools, Henrico County Public Schools, Petersburg City Public Schools, and Richmond Public Schools) and Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Education.	Will They Stay or Will They Go? Analysis of the 2019 VDOE Working Conditions Survey
REL Midwest: Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest partners with educators and policymakers in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin to improve learner outcomes.	Supports Associated with Teacher Retention in Michigan
Tennessee Education Research Alliance: TERA brings together Vanderbilt University's Peabody College and the Tennessee Department of Education.	Exploring Race and Gender Gaps in Classroom Observation Scores in Tennessee
Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness Research Partnership: WEERP is a partnership between the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, the Socially Responsible Evaluation in Education center at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and the Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.	Evidence of Discrimination and Bias in the Effectiveness Ratings Assigned to Wisconsin Educators of Color

RESEARCH SNAPSHOTS: TEACHER RETENTION

We begin by introducing the two studies examining teacher retention. We encourage you to check out each individual study to dive deeper into the intricacies of the data and findings.

(I) RICHMOND, VA AREA

Research Questions

This study examined how teachers in the MERC region (seven Richmond-area school districts) reported on their working conditions and how reports varied by teacher characteristics, and whether teacher working conditions predicted teachers' intentions to stay or leave their current school building.

Context and Research Methods

The study is part of the larger MERC Teacher Retention study, which identifies patterns of teacher retention in the MERC region and determines the school and system-level factors driving them. With many existing efforts to address teacher shortages being based on improving teacher working conditions, this study presented the findings from an analysis of the 2019 Virginia Department of Education Working Conditions Survey and examined which working conditions predicted a teacher's intent to stay or leave their current school.

Examining Teacher Retention and Teacher Evaluation With NNERPP Members, continued

In the spring of 2019, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), in partnership with the University of Virginia, administered the working conditions survey to any teacher or school staff holding a license from the VDOE. All schools were required to participate, but individual teacher participation was voluntary. The survey operationalized working conditions within four broad constructs: (1) professionalism; (2) teaching, instruction, and student services; (3) school and community supports; and (4) safety. Each of the four main constructs was measured using a subset of scales, each composed of a set of items. Statewide, 1,678 (93%) schools participated in the survey with a total of 54,207 responses from teachers leading to a 67% response rate across all participating schools.

What Does the Research Show?

Compared to teachers across Virginia (the full sample), teachers in the MERC districts were slightly less likely to indicate an intention to stay in their current school (77.8% versus 82.1%). Middle school teachers were slightly less likely to indicate an intent to stay (75.9%) than any other group. Black teachers were less likely to indicate an intent to stay (70.6%) than any other group. Of all of the working conditions scales, teachers were most satisfied with collegiality and least satisfied with demands on their time. Strong school leadership emerged as the most important working condition for teachers in terms of predicting an indication to stay at their current school. Teacher autonomy also emerged as an important predictor to stay. On the other hand, teachers were least likely to indicate an intention to stay if they viewed the school as having insufficient support and insufficiently clear policies for managing student behavior.

How Was the Work Used in Practice?

We asked the RPP teams how the research studies were used by their practice-side partners. Here's what the MERC team shared: In addition to the report, there are several additional dissemination efforts connected to this work designed to inform district and school level practices. This includes a podcast with report authors and local school leaders, and presentation of the findings at local professional conferences. The research from this project is also being developed into professional learning modules for school leaders that encourage professional reflection on the research in relationship to leadership practices. The MERC team is currently working in collaboration with district professional learning offices to pilot the modules.

(II) MICHIGAN

Research Questions

To inform efforts by the Michigan Department of Education to improve the retention of effective teachers, especially in high-poverty, low-performing local education agencies, this study examined which teacher supports implemented by local education agencies (traditional school districts and charter schools) in Michigan were associated with teacher retention.

Examining Teacher Retention and Teacher Evaluation With NNERPP Members, continued

Context and Research Methods

The study examined the average annual retention rate for teachers who taught in Michigan public schools between 2013/14 and 2018/19 and used data from a survey administered by the Michigan Department of Education between September 18 and October 12, 2020 to a sample of certified teachers who had been teaching for three to five years in their local education agency. The survey responses indicated teachers' awareness and perceptions of the supports provided by their local education agency. The survey included 30 policies, practices, or programs. The final survey sample included 539 teacher respondents from 305 local education agencies for a response rate of 12.2% of teachers who were estimated to be eligible (note that due to the low response rate, findings from the study's analyses of survey data should not be viewed as representative). The sample for the teacher retention rate data included 114,283 teachers.

What Does the Research Show?

The supports that were associated with teacher retention varied by the type of local education agency and the percentage of students who were economically disadvantaged. Generally, teachers were **more likely to stay in local education agencies that had regular supportive communication between new teachers and school leaders,** those that implemented **mentoring programs** for new teachers and provided new teachers with an **orientation** to their school, those that gave teachers **opportunities to set goals in their evaluations**, those that provided teachers with sufficient **instructional resources**, and those that provided teachers with release time to attend **professional development** and training opportunities.

Teacher retention was **higher in local education agencies that served lower percentages of students who were economically disadvantaged**, higher percentages of students who were White, and higher percentages of students proficient in English language arts.

How Was the Work Used in Practice?

Here's what the REL Midwest team shared about how their practice-side partners are using the research findings:
The research findings were summarized in a 15-page report, a 4-page brief, and a 1-page brief that were shared with partners interested in learning about how they can improve their district's teacher retention efforts. In addition, REL Midwest developed a blog post and a companion infographic, which were designed to reach key practice partners to highlight the key takeaways and provide recommendations for what education leaders can do to improve teacher retention in their district. REL Midwest also conducted a training project building on the report to create practitioner-focused materials to help district leaders improve their teacher recruitment and retention strategies. In this training project, REL Midwest worked with Michigan Department of Education staff to translate research findings and recommendations into practitioner-focused resources that school districts can use to improve their teacher workforce. In particular, this work considered the needs of small districts that do not always have the local resources needed to tackle their recruitment and retention needs. The resources developed for this project include (a) a handout featuring definitions and examples related to educator total compensation plans, (b) an interactive practitioner's guide to the supports associated with teacher retention in Michigan, and (c) a resource guide for Michigan districts on nontraditional teacher career pathways to expand teacher recruitment and retention.

Examining Teacher Retention and Teacher Evaluation With NNERPP Members, continued

RESEARCH SNAPSHOTS: TEACHER EVALUATION

Next, let's take a look at the two studies on inequities in teacher evaluation. For more detailed information on the data and findings, please explore each individual study.

(I) TENNESSEE

Research Questions

This study examined Tennessee teachers' observation scores – which make up a large percentage of teacher's overall evaluation scores in Tennessee – from 2011/12 to 2018/19 by teacher characteristics, paying special attention to teacher gender and race.

Context and Research Methods

In Tennessee, teacher observation scores comprise 50–70% of a teacher's final overall evaluation rating. The most commonly used observation rubric is the TEAM rubric, which has four domains – instruction, planning, environment, and professionalism – with multiple indicators each, and uses a scale of 1 ("significantly below expectations") to 5 ("significantly above expectations") for each indicator. Note that this study examined teacher observation scores only, and not the overall evaluation scores. Approximately 460,000 teacher-by-year observations from 2011/12 to 2018/19 were included in the sample.

What Does the Research Show?

Black teachers consistently received lower classroom observation scores than their White counterparts in each of the examined years, across every observation rubric, and at every school level. This also held true when they had similar qualifications and their students achieved similar test scores and other outcomes. The racial gap in observation scores was largest in schools with few black teachers and grew smaller in schools with more racially diverse faculties. The gap disappeared in schools where a little more than half of the teachers were black. This study also looked at the role that the race of the teacher observer might play and found it had a very small impact on observation scores.

In terms of gender, the study found that male teachers received lower classroom observation scores than their female counterparts. This was the case in each of the examined years, across every observation rubric, and at every school level, even when they had similar qualifications and their students achieved similar test scores and other outcomes. There was no evidence that the gender of the teacher observer impacted the score.

How Was the Work Used in Practice?

TERA's findings raise concerns that the observation score gap reflects some form of systemic bias–that is, that Black and White (or male and female) teachers receive systematically different observation

Examining Teacher Retention and Teacher Evaluation With NNERPP Members, continued

scores even when they have similar student achievement growth scores. Importantly, bias in this sense does not require individual observers to be biased against particular groups of teachers. Nonrandom sorting of students within schools, which the research documents, could be a source of bias, if teachers tend to receive lower observation scores when they teach students who bring some challenges to the classroom–such as a history of disciplinary infractions, which may require a greater emphasis on classroom management–that other students do not bring. Another source of bias could be the observation rubrics themselves, which may give higher marks to teaching practices that some teachers are more likely to employ, even when other practices, employed by other teachers, are similarly effective.

Our findings will inform several follow-up studies that will seek to understand more about the source of the systemic differences we have uncovered, and identify possible solutions to mitigating these biases from the evaluation system in the future. Additionally, state-level advocacy groups are currently using TERA's findings to lead important conversations about race and diversity in Tennessee's teacher workforce.

(II) WISCONSIN

Research Questions

The study examined statewide effectiveness ratings data of Wisconsin educators from 2014/15 to 2019/20 for racialized and gendered differences.

Context and Research Methods

Wisconsin uses the Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness (EE) System, which requires that schools provide ongoing, standards-based feedback to educators about their professional practices. Districts may use the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FfT) or the Stronge Teacher Effectiveness Performance Standards (EP) as rating rubrics or can apply to use another equivalent rubric. The Danielson Framework for Teaching is the most commonly used rubric. It has four domains – Planning & Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities – and a total of 22 components and uses a one-to-four scale from Unsatisfactory (1) to Distinguished (4). The study included 93,299 ratings representing 55,963 educators who received effectiveness ratings at least once between the 2014/15 school year (the first year of statewide implementation) and the 2019/20 school year.

What Does the Research Show?

Looking at the intersection of gender and race, the study found that **Black and Asian male educators were rated as least effective** while **White female educators were rated as most effective**: 89% and 78% of White female educators were rated as more effective than the average Black and Latinx male educator, respectively. For educators matched by experience and credentials within the same school, the gap between ratings for White female educators and ratings for other educator groups grew smaller but persisted, and was still largest between White female and Black male educators.

Examining Teacher Retention and Teacher Evaluation With NNERPP Members, continued

How Was the Work Used in Practice?

The Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness Research Partnership is planning a number of follow-up studies to better explore the issues of bias and their sources as well as potential strategies, for example through identifying schools that have demonstrated less bias in their teacher evaluations to see what might be learned from these schools. The partnership hopes that taken together, findings from these studies can inform guidance to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction for how to make the Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness process fairer, better support educators and students of color, and reduce opportunity gaps.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Teacher retention: The two studies identified some teacher working conditions (Richmond, VA) and some teacher supports (Michigan) that were more predictive of teacher retention than others, helping to pinpoint approaches that can help bolster teacher retention going forward. In the Richmond-area school districts, continuing to build and support strong school leadership and giving teachers autonomy emerged as the most promising approaches. The finding that Black teachers were less likely to indicate an intent to stay than any other group is both troubling and harder to address, particularly since further investigations into the relationship between race, working conditions, and teacher retention were beyond the scope of this specific study. It does point to the need to investigate and address the barriers that teachers of color face – similar to what the findings of the two studies focused on teacher evaluation suggest. In Michigan, the following recommendations emerged: Prioritizing supports for new teachers, prioritizing adjustments to teacher evaluation systems to provide opportunities for teachers to set their own goals (note the connection between teacher retention and teacher evaluation here), and prioritizing professional development and instructional resources for teachers.

Teacher evaluation: Both studies found that teacher ratings were not consistently assigned. Teachers of color and male teachers were more likely to receive low ratings than their White and female counterparts even when other variables were controlled for. This may point to the need to improve the design, implementation, and monitoring of teacher evaluation systems in order for them to be a reliable and unbiased means of improving teacher quality and student learning. It may also be that bias runs much deeper: Ratings might reflect actual teacher performance in the classroom, but teachers of color might be consistently placed into schools or classrooms where it is more difficult to succeed. The studies make these observations when looking at drivers for observed gaps: The Tennessee study found that Black teachers tended to work in schools that served more students experiencing poverty, so the differing characteristics of students who are assigned to Black and White teachers might also play a role in observation scores – and paying more attention to student placement might help guard against such differences. The Tennessee study also examines the role that the racial composition of a school's faculty played. Additionally, both studies point to the need to further investigate potential sources of bias and drivers of the observed inequities, including disentangling interpersonal and systemic bias (Wisconsin). The Tennessee study puts forth a recommendation of regular training for school leaders on potential sources of bias in teacher evaluation.

CONCLUSION

Findings from these four RPPs provide insight into the challenges teachers face, from difficult working conditions that can lead to retention problems to evaluation systems that offer a context for discrimination on the basis of teacher race and gender. Teachers must be supported in targeted ways and evaluation systems must be set up to guard against systemic and interpersonal bias if we hope to address teacher shortages and set up all teachers –and their students– for success.

● *Nina Spitzley is Marketing Specialist at the National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships (NNERPP).*

Are Communications, Dissemination, and Engagement the Same Thing? How RPPs Distinguish Among These

By Paula Arce-Trigatti, with NNERPP members and friends | NNERPP
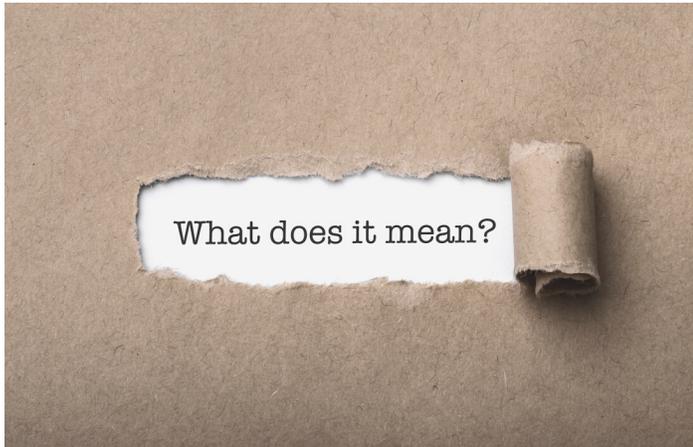
"Communication." "Dissemination." "Engagement."

These three words are often used to describe the collection of strategies aimed at supporting a research-practice partnership's (RPP) efforts to share their work with various constituent groups. In some cases, we've heard people use these three words interchangeably, suggesting that "dissemination strategies" are essentially the equivalent of "engagement strategies"…which are basically the same as "communications strategies." In other cases, we've heard RPP-ers argue that these three words are, in fact, quite different (and one of these words should not be used to describe partnership work at all!). Given this potential for disagreement, we thought it would be interesting in this Deep Dive to take a closer look at what these three words mean to NNERPP members and friends by inviting them to share how they are conceptualizing and operationalizing them. Although for some "words" may be just that, we have seen the importance of pausing and creating shared understanding of "words" generally in partnership work, since unexamined words can introduce misunderstanding and miscommunication. Because these three activities show up regularly in RPP work, we invite you to join us as we reflect more deeply on how these strategies are understood in the field.

Included in this discussion are: **Callie Womble Edwards** (Acting Director, Program Evaluation and Education Research, Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University), **Chelsea Farley** (Communications Director at the Research Alliance for New York City Schools), **Jessica Holter** (Communications Director at the Tennessee Education Research Alliance and at Nashville PEER), **Meghan McCormick** (RPP Lead based at MDRC), **Rachel Ruggirello** (Associate Director at the Institute for School Partnership at Washington University in St. Louis), **Stacey Sexton** (RPP evaluator + community facilitator for RPPforCS), **Sara Slaughter** (Associate Director of ERA New Orleans), and **Laura Wentworth** (Director of Partnerships at California Education Partners).

Questions We Posed

We invited a portion of our members and friends from the NNERPP community to respond to two questions via a survey:

1. "When thinking about your RPP's efforts to share its work, do you use "communication", "dissemination", and "engagement" strategies interchangeably?" Possible answers included "Yes", "No, I would never", and "Sometimes? Let me explain".

2. "How might these three words be the same? How might they be different? Do they all have a place in RPP work? Why or why not?"

Are Communications, Dissemination, and Engagement the Same Thing?
How RPPs Distinguish Among These, continued

From our eight respondents, **no one** said "Yes" in response to the first question, lending evidence towards confirming our working hypothesis that "communication", "dissemination", and "engagement" are likely **not** interchangeable. On the other hand, there was less unanimity in the breakdown of responses across the other two options: the group ended up evenly split among "No, I would never" and "Sometimes? Let me explain." Interestingly, as you'll see in the responses below, this grouping is not as divisive as it may initially appear, with RPP leaders from both groups offering similar perspectives.

"No, I Would Never"

From the group of four that responded "No, I would never", here is how they answered the second question listed above:

>> "I think of communication as a broad category that could encompass dissemination and engagement strategies. **Dissemination is getting your work out there, plain and simple**. It's spreading the news of work being done. **Dissemination alone does not mean that you're going to have engagement**. If we sent out an email newsletter that no one opened, we'd be disseminating lots of information, but we wouldn't have any basis for expecting engagement because we wouldn't have reached our audience. Metrics-wise, engagement can mean the number of times your links are clicked, the number of times a user spends looking at your report, or the number of times your website is visited, but I think **for RPPs, it's vital to think beyond the metrics and consider how researchers and stakeholders are engaged in the work in an ongoing way** (from a project's inception to the finished product). Also, what opportunities does the broader community have to publicly engage with the work? **Engagement requires an openness and willingness to have conversations and create opportunities to listen to others' perspectives on the work you've done (and the work you could be doing)**. I think **they all have a place in RPP work** because the strategies and purposes are different: spread the work widely v. dig a little deeper with stakeholders.

[Sara Slaughter, Associate Director, Education Research Alliance for New Orleans]

>> "To me, the terms "communication" "dissemination" and "engagement" all deal with sharing RPP information, resources, knowledge, and skills. **While they all express similar messages, the difference for me is which stakeholder group you are considering**. Of course, every individual stakeholder is different; however, in my experience, certain terms are more commonplace for different audiences and are more celebrated in particular spaces.

For example, **when describing internal efforts - whether within my RPP teams or their affiliated organizations - I tend to use the term "communication"**. Communication is essential for an effective RPP. It's a part of the glue that holds an RPP together. Partners must establish and maintain open and frequent communication channels.

On the other hand, **when I am sharing RPP insights and lessons learned more broadly with external research audiences, I tend to use the term "dissemination"**. Often **research grants ask us to disseminate our findings** via formal venues such as peer-reviewed manuscripts, technical reports, and conferences. **Dissemination helps grow the field of RPPs by sharing beyond those directly impacted.** Those who are curious to begin RPPs or wish for improvement strategies for their existing RPPs can benefit from dissemination efforts.

Are Communications, Dissemination, and Engagement the Same Thing? How RPPs Distinguish Among These, continued

Finally, **when I am sharing RPP learnings more broadly to external practice audiences, I tend to use the term "engagement". The heart of engagement is working together for a common goal,** and I find that my practitioner partners are most excited by our shared labor towards educational equity for their/our students. **Engagement is the daily work of an RPP - it's how we show up.** It's how we make decisions. It's how we leverage our different skill sets. It's hard for me to consider how a RPP can be effective if the R-side and P-side are not perpetually engaged.

While this categorization helps me to make meaning of these terms, I think it's important to share that **these terms don't always fit into these neat boxes,** and I have experienced the "blurring" of those lines, too. For instance, I recently earned an "Outreach and Engagement" grant at my university to further investigate RPP work. In the grant language, "engagement" referred to the research community partnering with the people and places that surround it. So, while it's helpful to have a common practice for when to use these terms, like many things in life, it can evolve and shift depending on the context."

[Dr. Callie Womble Edwards, Acting Director, Program Evaluation and Education Research, Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University]

>> "In general, I think of **these terms as being quite different.** To me, "**communication strategies" is the overarching term that encompasses both engagement strategies and dissemination strategies,** with the goals of effectively engaging the right stakeholders at the right time to impact policy and practice, and also to systematically raise the public profile of the partnership.

In my mind, **engagement strategies are more narrow, and encompass the relationship-building with partners and facilitating the use of research with specific stakeholders.** This ranges from setting up regular meetings with specific teams within the partner institution so that they are regularly engaged in all aspects of the research work, to building and maintaining relationships with advisory council and steering committee members who consult on strategy along the way and who help serve as messengers for the work, to targeting specific stakeholders who would benefit from knowing, understanding, and using the research outside of the primary partnership (in TERA's case, this is often district leaders, and with PEER, this might be community leaders). We see this as more deep engagement with the research and researchers by those who can use and implement findings directly, and **our job is to help facilitate and nurture that engagement in ways that ultimately impact policy and practice.** In other words, this is everything that leads up to the research brief and public release of findings that involves lots of communication, collaboration, and discussion with partners.

On the other hand, **we tend to think of dissemination strategies as not necessarily specific and targeted engagement with the research, but strategies that help raise the public profile of the organization to establish credibility in the research and policy communities.** This comes in the form of the public release of research briefs and other types of publications, our website, press releases, Twitter, e-newsletters, podcasts, blog posts, presenting at research conferences, and other more public venues to reach wider audiences about who we are, what we do, and what our research is

Are Communications, Dissemination, and Engagement the Same Thing?
How RPPs Distinguish Among These, continued

showing. Building the public profile is important for funding and generating wider interest in the work we do so we are seen as the go-to experts for education research."

[Jessica Holter, Communications Director, Tennessee Education Research Alliance and Nashville Partnership for Educational Equity Research]

>> "Communication is the **exchange of ideas** as it relates to partners in the RPP working on research together (development, conducting, using research) at the different phases. **Communication is like a subset of engagement, which is all the different parts involved with working together on research**. Also involved in engagement is developing and designing research and sense-making of findings, among other behaviors. **In my opinion, dissemination is an RPP dirty word**. It means you are sharing some form of written report summarizing research findings at the end of a research project or making a presentation about those findings **in a more of a "one way" act**. For example, **dissemination involves thinking of the practitioners as empty vessels** and the researchers "disseminating" the research into the practitioners "empty" minds."

[Laura Wentworth, Director of Partnerships, California Education Partners]

From the responses shared in this group, several themes emerge:

- **The three words are related in some way.** Most of the RPP leaders described an **underlying relationship** between the three terms, although in somewhat different ways. For example, both Sara and Jessica shared that "communications" seems to be the overarching strategy that includes "engagement" and "dissemination", while Laura thought of this relationship a little differently, in that "communication" might be thought of as a subset of "engagement."

- **The intended audience for each strategy differs.** In terms of differences among the three words, a few of our respondents suggested that the **intended audience** for a particular strategy is the deciding factor. Callie presented this distinction very clearly, for example, describing how each share-out effort taken on by her partnership relates to a different constituent group (e.g., internal partners = communications, external research partners = dissemination, and external practice partners = engagement).

- **The proposed goals for each strategy also differs.** Relatedly, some of the respondents also pointed to the difference in **goals** that are typically associated with each of the three strategies. For example, "engagement" seems to be a more complex, nuanced term than the other two and can involve a variety of partnership-support activities such as relationship building, exchanges of information, working together, facilitation of conversations, and two-way exchanges. On the other hand, "dissemination" seems to be much simpler, commonly involving a one-way sharing out of information, according to our respondents. Generally, all seemed in agreement that "dissemination" was **not** a strategy they would use with those considered to be "partners" in the work, but that it nonetheless had its place. For example, an RPP might consider dissemination goals when required by a grant, when working to raise the profile of the RPP with the larger education ecosystem (or beyond), and/or to ensure that those "not in the know" of the RPP have an opportunity to hear about information that may be of interest.

Are Communications, Dissemination, and Engagement the Same Thing? How RPPs Distinguish Among These, continued

"Sometimes? Let me explain"

From the group of four that responded "Sometimes? Let me explain", here is how they answered the second question listed above:

>> "All of these have a place in RPP work but our team views these differently, although there are places of overlap. To us dissemination feels one-way - focused on sharing information out to a particular audience. Engagement, instead, is something very common in our RPP work. In this effort there is collaboration and intentional engagement in creating and sharing products with various stakeholder groups. With engagement there is a purposeful focus on getting stakeholders involved in this effort, informing, creating and providing feedback on the products and outcomes. Communication is more broad, yet a necessary component of RPP efforts. Open, honest, consistent, and clear communications are needed to make the work of an RPP happen. This encapsulates communications necessary for initiating and maintaining partnership activities, as well as communicating results of engagement with research along the way."

[Rachel Ruggirello, Associate Director for the Institute for School Partnerships at Washington University in St. Louis]

>> "Everything that I'm about to write should be prefaced that I tend to use the language of the people around me. As an evaluator, I typically don't want to alienate my partners right off the bat by being a stickler about specific words. Over the life of a partnership, though, I may start to interrogate with a team the implications of using certain words over others. Communication seems to me the most basic of the three terms. It covers everything in my mind from meeting invitations getting out on time and to all of the right people, as well as any platforms like Slack or email -- where information is reciprocally shared among members of a group. You can also communicate needs and preferences, ask questions, etc. Communication isn't always about influencing or driving a particular action. Communication can be updates, can be check-ins. It's also a tool for relationship maintenance.

Dissemination does feel very distinct from communication and engagement -- a distinctive outward-facing connotation. I would disseminate a journal article from RPP to the world, but I would communicate within my RPP. Dissemination also seems like there is some amount of randomness or anonymity to who will engage with the thing you put out there. You can't always know who will read a publication of yours, but you can be reasonably certain about who you communicate with in your RPP.

Engagement is less about the substance of the thing that you are trying to get across, and more the how, the process for how that gets done. You may want to communicate with parents, and you think the best way to do that will be to engage them in a family game & learn night. Engagement is much more energized than simple communication. Communicating is an email, engagement is a facilitated conversation. Whereas communication the way I framed it above is about sharing information, engagement might also be about changing someone's mind. Another sense around the word engagement is that it is the action step of communication – if you have a purpose for communication, then you would need to come up with a strategy for engagement that enables your communication to have the impact you want."

[Stacey Sexton, RPP evaluator + community facilitator for RPPforCS]

Are Communications, Dissemination, and Engagement the Same Thing? How RPPs Distinguish Among These, continued

>> "I think these words and concepts are context-specific. When working closely with a partner we are very focused on meaningful and authentic communication. However, this type of communication is critical to effective engagement and collaboration. When we have results and are trying to share findings we are engaged in the work of dissemination but communication is a critical component of that."

[Meghan McCormick, RPP lead at MDRC]

>> "At the Research Alliance, we think of communication not simply as the publication of findings, but rather as a continuous process that actively engages stakeholders in all phases of our work, from setting research priorities, to developing studies, to interpreting and reporting results. Thus, for us, communication includes dissemination (i.e., sharing information about study results), but it also includes engagement (e.g., getting input from stakeholders about important research questions and feasible study designs, making sense of findings together, soliciting feedback on public communications, etc.). I would say delivering on this vision is a work in progress. A key strategic priority for us in coming years is ensuring that a wider range of stakeholders inform –and are informed by– our research."

[Chelsea Farley, Communications Director at the Research Alliance for New York City Schools]

As mentioned earlier, although this group answered the first question (i.e., whether the three terms can be considered "interchangeable") differently, they nonetheless echoed many of the themes we heard from the first group. For example, "engagement" strategies seem to be central and critical to RPP work, while also including the widest range of possible activities to choose from, relative to communications and dissemination. We heard once again the idea that dissemination tends to involve a "one-way" avenue of information exchange and is probably best reserved for people outside what is considered the core partnership. Activities involving "communication" for this group also appeared to be similar to what the previous group identified, including the "basics" or foundational approaches to working with others.

The similarity in responses across the two groups on question two is indeed interesting, despite the two groups being in some disagreement about question one. As Stacey mentions above, they tend to adopt the language that is utilized by partners, which partially explains their answer to the first survey question, even if they think otherwise. I had a chance to ask the rest of the group what they thought of this difference as well. Sara suggested that although folks may have answered the first question differently, what unites the answers across both groups is a recognition that communication and collaboration are integral to any RPP, despite the semantics of what each individual term might mean to a given person or organization. Rachel and Chelsea both agreed that the "NEVER" qualifier from question one is what dissuaded them from selecting it. In Rachel's case, she mentions that she sometimes intentionally interchanges these words when describing her RPP's communication efforts, depending on the context or knowledge of the partner. Chelsea additionally emphasized the importance of acknowledging the similarity in responses to question two, given the substantive nature of that inquiry. Finally, Chelsea also

Are Communications, Dissemination, and Engagement the Same Thing? How RPPs Distinguish Among These, continued

shared a number of additional questions that she and her team are puzzling over at the Research Alliance, including (i) What does it take to effectively do both public-facing communication/dissemination and the engagement work that is so central to RPPs?; (ii) What are the challenges of trying to do both things simultaneously, and how can these be overcome?; (iii) What does it mean for an RPP to have multiple stakeholder groups (who may have very different perspectives) at the table and engaged as true partners in the work? How does this complicate communications and engagement efforts?; and (iv) How important is transparency for the long-term credibility of an RPP's work?

How About You?

As we learned in this exploration, it is very likely that "communication", "dissemination", and "engagement" do not mean the same things for those involved with RPPs, suggesting we should be careful when using these to describe RPP work. On the other hand, it seems all three strategies might play a role in partnership work, albeit with different purposes and for different audiences. A follow up round of exploration on this topic should certainly include the questions shared above by Chelsea. We might also probe further how worthwhile an activity "dissemination" is for RPPs, given that most of our respondents seemed to indicate that this strategy was almost exclusively reserved for "one-way" information delivery to people outside of the partnership, which seems in tension with what many RPPs strive for: "two-way" exchanges of information with close partners.

We'd love to hear from you as well! How do these three words relate in your opinion? Let us know here!

● *Paula Arce-Trigatti is Director of the National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships (NNERPP).*

Early Career Academic Scholars + RPPs: How To Support Early Stage RPP Work

By NNERPP

RPP efforts, especially in early phases, typically require large time commitments to building, developing, and strengthening relationships with partners before projects can truly launch. For early career academic scholars that are on the tenure track, these types of activities may not be aligned with university-based tenure guidelines, which often require a minimum publication record in peer-reviewed academic journal articles in order to be awarded tenure. These two goals, RPP relationship development and the pursuit of tenure, may thus pose a challenge for early career scholars who wish to engage in RPP work since both aims require a lot of time for activities that may be distinctly different. At NNERPP, we have often fielded questions on navigating this possible tension, with this most recent question contributed by a member leading a newly launched RPP: What are some strategies for early career academic scholars to demonstrate progress on a first year RPP -- especially when publishing carries so much weight but launching an RPP is typically not as readily recognized?

In this "How To" article, we share wisdom from several NNERPP members and friends who have been on this journey to provide concrete examples and helpful strategies in response to this important question.

Joining us for this conversation are Hilda Borko from Stanford University and part of the Stanford-San Francisco Unified School District Partnership; Sarah Lenhoff from Wayne State University and principal investigator for the Detroit Education

Research Partnership; David Naff from Virginia Commonwealth University and associate director of the Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium; Emily Ozer from the University of California, Berkeley; Nicole Patton Terry from Florida State University and founding director of The Village at FCRR; Maggie Reeves from Georgia State University and founding senior director of the Georgia Policy Labs; and Erica Van Steenis from the University of California, Irvine and part of the Orange County Educational Advancement Network.

Q1: WHAT ARE SOME EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES EARLY CAREER TENURE-TRACK SCHOLARS CAN EMPLOY TO DEMONSTRATE PROGRESS ON A FIRST YEAR RPP?

Our respondents have several pieces of advice to share in response to this question, based on their own experiences. As a basic rule, Erica recommends **documenting all activities taking place during the first year of the RPP, including the less tangible work** involved in finding partners and supporting initial relationship building exercises. This also includes documenting any data collected during that first year. On the topic of data, Sarah similarly recommends **prioritizing data sharing** by securing a multi-year data-sharing or data access agreement with a school or district in that first year. Sarah also points to the importance of **demonstrating support from the practice-side partner** and suggests that a letter of support for the partnership from a leader of the partner organization on the practice side can be a useful strategy.

Additionally, several respondents share strategies that may help support initial research activities within the RPP and may even yield publications, which might help with tenure processes. One way to approach this, as Sarah shares, is to **get one smaller scale study out there to start with**, for example by publishing a small-scale descriptive study on the primary problem the partnership will be working on, "maybe even using publicly available data to start." Similarly, Emily shares that it has been helpful for her to **publish even when there aren't any research findings to discuss yet by focusing on conceptual papers**, which may include measurement

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development and model development papers that can all be published even when the RPP work itself is still in its infancy. "For example, my first publication when starting [my] new YPAR partnership was about dissemination/capacity building," Emily says. Similarly, Hilda also recommends focusing on aspects of developing and nurturing partnerships in early publications, including the negotiation of roles and responsibilities between partners, the creation of infrastructures that support RPP work, and the development and co-design of professional learning experiences. Hilda points out that the options for publishing these kinds of papers are increasing as **more journals are becoming interested in publishing about RPPs**. Erica adds that another strategy to increase the amount of RPP work and writing that can be done in the first year is to **link other efforts to RPP work as well**, such as connecting course papers and department presentations to the partnership work. When engaging students in your partnership work, Nicole adds that this should go on your CV to build your tenure case. For example, whether you served as a mentor or sponsor or on doctoral degree dissertation committees, all of these demonstrate how you are helping build the next generation of scholars.

On the other hand, Emily also recommends **continuing to do other, non-RPP work at the same time**. This is helpful for growing early career scholars' publication portfolios. Specifically, Emily recalls collaborating with bigger projects that had existing datasets while building her partnerships as an assistant professor, "so that I wasn't dependent on the challenges and timing of the partnered work". Nicole agrees, saying early career scholars should do "both-and" and "get credit for it all." Emily shares another tip here: **Keep in mind tenure and promotion guidelines when deciding what other work to pursue**. For example, in order to demonstrate independence, she made sure that those bigger projects were not with her grad school mentors.

Another good way to demonstrate progress is to **attend and present at conferences**, Erica, Nicole, and Hilda share. In particular, presenting at conferences that publish proceedings can be helpful for building early career scholars' publication records, as Hilda shares. Nicole says that presenting in both

academic and non-academic spaces is beneficial. It can also be helpful to **connect with others in the RPP space to share work**, Erica adds, including with organizations like NNERPP.

Finally, it is helpful to **get started with securing funding – at least on a small scale**. Sarah recommends trying to secure a small seed grant for the partnership or for one project the partnership will be working on during the first year, which will go a long way in demonstrating progress. At the same time, Nicole reminds us to keep in mind that funding is absolutely necessary to sustain RPP work but not to begin: "It is not what brings us to the table and it's not what keeps us there."

While current university incentive structures do require early career scholars to approach early partnership work in these strategic ways, David reminds us to **not lose track of why we are engaging in RPP work in the first place:** Always start with the needs of the practitioner in mind, never impose a research agenda on the practice side partner, prioritize relationship and trust building, and "do not take the partnership for granted."

Q2: MORE GENERALLY, HOW CAN UNIVERSITIES BETTER SUPPORT RPP WORK? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS?

Not surprisingly, our respondents agree that major **changes need to happen in the tenure and promotion guidelines** at universities in order to support RPP work, as these are currently "the biggest barrier to supporting RPP work at the university level" (David). David elaborates: "It can be difficult to attract committed faculty members to participate in RPP projects because it is not always clear that their effort will translate into a higher likelihood of achieving tenure when they are up for promotion." Erica adds that current university tenure and promotion guidelines represent "antiquated ways of thinking about research." Necessary changes include **moving away from the focus on peer-reviewed publications only,** as Emily suggests, and **recognizing RPP work in tenure and promotion reviews**, as Sarah suggests, adding that establishing a formal research partnership should "count" as at least two peer reviewed publications in tenure and

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promotion reviews. David agrees, saying that universities must **place higher value on community engaged scholarship and impact on practice.** David adds that universities should **reconceptualize the meaning of rigor** by acknowledging that work produced in RPPs is arguably just as rigorous as peer reviewed national scholarship "due to the accountability systems and corresponding scrutiny by partnering stakeholder groups from the practice side". Additionally, RPP work has a more immediate and intentional impact on practice – something universities should value highly.

In fact, Sarah reminds us that many universities do have a focus on their local communities and regions and thus should **recognize RPP work as core to the university's mission.** At the same time, universities must be **cognizant of the growth timelines of RPPs:** Partnerships are slow to start, but they also "tend to expand opportunities for research exponentially as time goes on." Importantly, universities also have to be aware of and **reckon with their history as it relates to the community** where they are located, Nicole points out. If done well, RPP work can lead to the kind of collaborative research that can restore ties with the community and position the community as an equal partner – but first, universities must acknowledge their often harmful histories.

What needs to happen, Emily says, is culture change. If universities **create a culture that acknowledges the benefits of and actually supports RPP work,** then the junior faculty members "can have their paths to collaboration smoothed," benefiting the overall RPP enterprise and university research portfolios. Examples of university supports would be training for faculty on RPP methods and classes and programs for students on RPPs, Erica says. Graduate student milestones could also be organized in a way that accounts for longer timelines of building relationships and research partnerships. Emily adds that other **practical support** with RPP start-up issues would help tremendously as well, such as those related to MOUs, data-sharing, or funding for graduate students. Maggie agrees that supports that **help reduce barriers for early career faculty to engage in RPPs** are critical, including **freeing up time for faculty to engage in RPP work** through **leadership support and financial resources.** Maggie emphasizes that these types of

institutional changes require changed structures and systems, and "therefore aren't quick fixes".

However, there are ways to jumpstart such institutional change: Maggie describes the creation of an Engaged Research Competition (ERC) at Georgia State University through an Institutional Challenge Grant awarded to Georgia Policy Labs by the William T. Grant Foundation, Spencer Foundation, and Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. As part of the award and the ERC, **the university is expected to actively reduce barriers for early career faculty to engage in RPPs,** for example through freeing up time for faculty and graduate students to engage in RPP work and through providing funds that are explicitly intended to fund early-stage RPP work such as building trust through meetings with stakeholders, relationship building activities, and generating data sharing agreements. Hilda shares how the Stanford Graduate School of Education (GSE) provides funding to faculty and graduate students each year who are involved in two RPPs between Stanford GSE and local school districts: the Stanford-San Francisco Unified School District Partnership and the Stanford-Sequoia K-12 Research Collaborative. Funding is competitive, and proposals are reviewed by a committee that includes both Stanford researchers and district personnel. Through these types of intentional efforts, cultural and institutional changes may very well be possible for universities.

IN CONCLUSION

If you are an early career scholar at a university who is passionate about or currently engaging in the difficult work of launching an RPP – we hope these strategies are helpful to you. To everyone: Please reach out and let us know if there are additional ways NNERPP can support this important pathway to RPPs.

Improving Improvement: What's the Biggest Barrier to Improvement?

By David Hersh | Proving Ground

This is the seventh installment of Improving Improvement, our quarterly series focused on leveraging the power of research-practice partnerships (RPPs) to build schools', districts', and states' capacity to improve. So far this school year, we've laid out the work ahead for our partnerships, the questions we hoped to answer, reflected on how to answer those questions, and evaluate the success of improvement efforts. While we won't have data to report out on our current improvement efforts for another year or so, we do have some takeaways worth sharing after a full school year working with 15 new partners. In this installment, we start with a well-known but rarely addressed barrier to engaging in improvement best practices: Time.

Doing Too Much May Be the Biggest Barrier to Improvement

The idea that people who work in education have busy days is not novel. Everyone who has worked in or with a school district or charter management organization is familiar with the time pressure of days filled with meetings, emails, and endless "fires" to put out. In the battle of urgent versus important, urgent usually wins. This is so common that it is expected. It is taken as part of the context of the work, fixed and unavoidable. We design our RPPs to work around it as best we can, limiting what we ask of practitioners and fitting this work into the few cracks of daylight in their workdays. Here is the novel realization the Proving Ground team recently had: that makes us part of the problem. We are part of the problem because we are not addressing the problem's cause. Our partners do not have time to work with us because they are doing too much already. Working with us means doing more, at least in the short term. We knew going into this year that we had to address this. We partnered with states to make the improvement work part of the work our partners were already required to do. We kicked off our efforts by hosting sessions on creating the conditions for continuous improvement, one of which was "clearing the path," which is a shorthand for carving out time. We encouraged partners to select interventions to pilot that aligned with existing plans. A year in, we are confident that our efforts fell short.

We know this because we work closely with our partners. We see them pulled away from working sessions. They email us to cancel check-ins. They transparently admit when the team has not had time to meet to work on their problems of practice. We also have survey data to back this up. After every session with us, our partners provide feedback that we use to improve future sessions. The feedback is telling: Across 14 sessions, more than 80% of participants –and usually more than 90%– agree or strongly agree that the sessions were valuable and that their knowledge of the content in those sessions improved. However, there is one item that consistently falls below 80% : "This session was a good use of time." The open-ended responses to the survey are the most telling. The most common comments involve some version of, "It's hard to be away for a full day." Also tellingly, participants routinely acknowledge the realization that doing quality improvement work requires spending more time unpacking and planning than they ordinarily spend on typical work tasks. However, they question how they could ever possibly spend this much time on more than one initiative.

Improving Improvement: What's the Biggest Barrier to Improvement?, continued

This is a problem that needs to be solved if we hope to have long-term impact. In the short term, our partners will likely succeed in completing this improvement cycle – they always have. Despite the burdens they face, they have engaged in the work; they have attended seven day-long workshops and they are executing the process in between. They will launch their thoroughly planned interventions next year, gather evidence and decide whether to stop, adapt, or scale. But we cannot be confident that they will continue this process after our engagement ends, let alone make it part of the ordinary course of business. It's not because they have not embraced the process. It is because they do not have time. And they don't have time because they are doing too much.

Doing Less is the Solution and the Result of Good Continuous Improvement

To improve, our partners need to do less. Practicing what we preach, we need to start solving the problem by understanding its cause. Here is our hypothesis: Our partners do too much because much of what they are doing does not advance their goals. They do a lot of ineffective or inefficient work because they do not have sufficient evidence of what is actually working and because the default is continuing everything unless it is proven ineffective (or enough stakeholders complain). This creates a vicious circle: Doing a lot of work that does not improve outcomes means outcomes are not improving – creating pressure to try more things. This is of course not the only reason education agencies do too much. There are structural and institutional factors that make education the preferred solution to a wide range of societal ills. But our hypothesis is that the most leverage comes from addressing the tendency to do too much that is not effective.

The proposed solution is therefore to turn this from a vicious circle into a virtuous one. The core of good improvement practice, like the core of the scientific method, is to systematically generate evidence and use it to decide whether to abandon or continue with a hypothesis. In this context, the education agencies' hypotheses are that their chosen interventions – policies, practices, or programs – will improve outcomes. If education agencies routinely generated quality evidence to test their hypotheses and used that evidence to stop doing anything where the impact was insufficient to justify the effort and cost, they would do less. With the extra bandwidth, they could improve the fidelity of the process, stopping more ineffective interventions and devoting more resources to effective ones. As the composition of interventions improves, so do outcomes, decreasing the demand for additional interventions. Moreover, the process gets easier and faster the more they do it and it can therefore be applied to more problems of practice in any given timeframe.

None of this is to suggest that generating quality evidence is easy, especially where outcomes are difficult to measure. But this is the work researchers and RPPs exist to do. The key is to make this more efficient and easier for practitioners to do on their own. Proving Ground has put a lot of energy into this and in some ways, we have succeeded. But this analysis also suggests that evidence is a necessary not a sufficient condition. Shifting the vicious circle to a virtuous one requires both evidence and a fundamental shift in the default decision. Rather than continuing everything unless proven ineffective, education agencies should be continuing interventions only when they are proven cost effective. This would require a huge shift in culture, countering inertia and several decision-making biases. We are currently working on ways to do just that.

We are also working on addressing the "chicken-egg" problem implicit in all this. We need to help our partners clear enough space to get started and feel confident they can continue the work in the time the process requires. We are therefore working on a protocol to help them identify activities they are already doing that do not align with priorities and can be stopped to create a little bandwidth so they can get started. Stay tuned for more on that protocol.

Improving Improvement: What's the Biggest Barrier to Improvement?, continued

Looking Ahead

In the next installment of Improving Improvement, we will share more detailed updates on the progress of our intrastate networks, the Georgia Improvement Network and the Rhode Island LEAP Support Network, including lessons learned from partnering with states to support districts on their improvement journeys.

We are also always open to additional suggestions for topics for future editions of Improving Improvement. Reach out to us with any questions you have about our networks, continuous improvement process, or ideas you'd like to see us tackle.

● *David Hersh (david_hersh@gse.harvard.edu) is Director of Proving Ground.*

Research Headlines From NNERPP Members: Last Quarter

COVID-19

EDUCATION POLICY INNOVATION COLLABORATIVE
examines students' progress toward learning goals during the fall of 2021

GEORGIA POLICY LABS
examines student achievement growth during the pandemic in a fall 2021 update

ILLINOIS WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE examines
-- instructional modality in Illinois during the 2020-21 school year
-- how instructional modality predicted average school achievement in Illinois during the 2020-21 school year
-- how in-person attendance at the student level contributed to student learning in Illinois during the 2020-21 school year

METROPOLITAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CONSORTIUM
examines the mental health impacts of Covid-19 on PK–12 students

UCHICAGO CONSORTIUM
examines school-family engagement during the pandemic

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

BOSTON P-3 RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIP examines
-- district-wide rollout of instructional alignment across pre-k and kindergarten
-- the kindergarten factors that sustain the Boston pre-k boost

MADISON EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP
evaluates full-day 4k program

STANFORD-SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP
examines how kindergarteners' experiences of hunger, tiredness, and sickness relate to kindergarten readiness

ENGLISH LEARNERS

HOUSTON EDUCATION RESEARCH CONSORTIUM
examines which English learner students may be at risk of becoming long-term English learners

REL SOUTHWEST
examines American Indian English learner students' progress toward proficiency

EQUITY

GARDNER CENTER
examines how San Mateo county students experience housing instability and how to support these students

HIGH SCHOOL

OFFICE FOR EDUCATION POLICY
examines Arkansas high school freshmen course failures

INSTRUCTION

UCHICAGO CONSORTIUM
examines standards-driven instructional improvement in Chicago

POSTSECONDARY

GEORGIA POLICY LABS
examines graduation, college, and employment outcomes for CTE students with disabilities

METROPOLITAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH CONSORTIUM
examines who takes dual enrollment classes

URBAN EDUCATION INSTITUTE examines
-- the effect of dual credit on college enrollment and degree completion
-- initial implementation of a virtual college advising system

SCHOOL CLOSURES

EDUCATION RESEARCH ALLIANCE FOR NEW ORLEANS
examines supports for families impacted by school closures

STUDENTS

OFFICE FOR EDUCATION POLICY
examines relationship between building transitions and students' value-added growth scores

TEACHERS

ILLINOIS WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE
examines teacher shortages by elementary, middle, and high school grades

UCHICAGO CONSORTIUM
examines teacher evaluation and its role in instructional improvement

End Notes

NNERPP | Extra is a quarterly magazine produced by the National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships (NNERPP), a professional learning community for education research-practice partnerships (RPPs) housed at the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University. NNERPP's mission is to develop, support and connect RPPs in order to improve the relationships between research, policy, and practice.

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