

# Bridging the Research-Practice Gap through Professional Development and Research-Practitioner Partnerships

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# Introduction

1. The research-practice gap
2. Overview of some of my relevant research
3. Steps for forming partnerships: from finding potential partners to maintaining meaningful collaborations
4. Common challenges faced and how to avoid them
5. Processes used for successful partnerships
6. Opportunities partnerships can provide both partners
7. Questions

# The Research-Practice Gap

- The majority of school and district leaders report using research to inform decisions (Penuel et al., 2016), but
  - About half think researchers are biased, and that published findings are too old.
  - Few contact researchers.
  - Have gaps in their knowledge about research design.
- To help make research more relevant,
  - Practice and policy leaders need to help drive research agenda,
  - not just researchers addressing disciplinary debates.
- Overview (Shafer, 2016) at <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/16/06/research-practice>
- Full Penuel et al. report at [http://ncrpp.org/assets/documents/NCRPP\\_Technical-Report-1.pdf](http://ncrpp.org/assets/documents/NCRPP_Technical-Report-1.pdf)

# The Research-Practice Gap

- Where is it?
  - Lack of implementation of evidence-based practices (EBP), implementation with low fidelity or that is not sustained (Lucyshyn, 2016).
- Why does it persist?
  - Poor training for practitioners, fit between practices and organization, and support by admin, as well as teacher resistance.
  - Most practices tested in efficacy studies rather than effectiveness or dissemination studies.
- See <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/psyched/201608/bridging-the-research-practice-gap>

# The Research-Practice Gap

- Implementation science (Fixsen et al., 2010) is study of how EBP can be promoted or hindered.
- Researchers need to help make implementation happen by
  1. Working with organizations that can empower practitioners to implement.
  2. Clearly defining the components of the EPB.
  3. Using training methods to teach practitioners to implement with fidelity.
  4. Obtaining organizational support to implement.
  5. Having organization leaders who champion change and provide technical support to sustain change.

Fixsen, D. L., Blasé, K. A., Duda, M. A., Naoom, S. F., & Van Dyke, M. (2010). Implementation of evidence-based treatments for children and adolescents: Research findings and their implications for the future. In J. R. Weisz & A. E. Kazdin (Ed), *Evidence-based psychotherapies for children and adolescents* (2nd ed), pp. 435-450). New York: Guilford.

# The Research-Practice Gap

- Additional thoughts on reasons for gap.
  - Little time for research training in teacher education programs.
  - Prioritization of traditional journal publications behind paywalls.
  - Lack of time and access to research(ers) by teachers and school leaders.
  - Practitioner and researcher attitudes.
  - Lack of communication and collaboration.
- My invitation to practitioner audience:

Roehrig, A. D. (2015). You pull the strings: An invitation to teachers to share their expertise. Heinemann Digital Campus Reference Library.  
Online professional development tool for teachers. Available at: <http://www.heinemann.com/digitalcampus/>

# Overview of Some of my Relevant Research

- Large scale programs (Reading First, Florida Reading Initiative, & Reading Recovery)
  - Difficult to assess quality/nature of PD quantitatively.
  - PD works in complicated systems with many levels that change over time.
  - Sometimes effects of programs lend themselves well to other areas of practice and sometimes they don't.

Roehrig, A. D., Turner, J. E., McElhaney, S., Dorsey, M., Holder, J., Swearingen, M. K., & Bedford, L. (2009, December). *Exploring the process of implementing a whole-school reform effort for comprehension strategies instruction*. Paper presented at National Reading Conference, National Reading Conference, Albuquerque, NM.

Roehrig, A. D., Brownell, M. T., Freedman, K., Guo, Y., Petscher, Y., Guan, Q., Cakir, R., Swearingen, M. K., & Ganson, K. (2008, March). *School-level and teacher-level variables related to Reading First student outcomes: The impact of professional development*. Paper presented at American Educational Research Association, New York, NY.

Pressley, M., & Roehrig, A. D. (2005). Reading Recovery as professional development: Looking at classroom teachers. *Journal of Reading Recovery*, 4(2), 12-15.

# Overview of Some of my Relevant Research

- Teacher leaders (lesson study & mentoring)
  - Can provide effective PD through their discourse and modeling.

Kuleshova in progress dissertation research: Teacher Leader as as a Facilitator of Teacher Knowledge Integration during Lesson Study Professional Development

Roehrig, A. D., Bohn, C. M., Turner, J., & Pressley, M. (2008). Mentoring beginning primary teachers for exemplary teaching practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24, 684-702.
- Reading coaches (online & Reading First)
  - Coaches have to reach out to teachers and help them make connections between data, curriculum, and training to help solve problems.

Rawls, E. S., & Roehrig, A. D. (2014, April). *Discursive positioning between literacy coaches and teachers in an asynchronous virtual environment: A case study*. Paper presented at American Educational Research Association, Philadelphia, PA.

Roehrig, A. D., Brownell, M. T., Swearingen, M. K., Griffin, D., & Bray, J. (2011, April). *Coaching for data-driven decision making in Reading First schools*. Poster presentation at American Educational Research Association, American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Roehrig, A. D., Duggar, S. W., Moats, L., Glover, M., & Mincey, B. (2008). When teachers work to use progress monitoring data to inform literacy instruction: Identifying potential supports and challenges. *Remedial and Special Education*, 29, 364-382. Available at <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0741932507314021>



# Overview of Some of my Relevant Research

- Role of teacher beliefs
  - For PD to be effective, it is important to consider
    - What teachers believe works.
    - Whether teachers are aware their own practices.
    - Whether teachers believe they can have an impact.
  - If not, why would one be motivated to change?

Tekindal, S., Roehrig, A. D., Jakiel, L. M., Arrastia, M. C., Rawls, E. S., & Izci, B. (2017). Differences in American and Turkish preservice teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of classroom management practices. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, 12, 101-116. Retrieved from <http://www.adamhousepress.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2Roehrig.pdf>

Roehrig, A. D., Turner, J. E., Grove, C. M., Schneider, N., & Liu, Z. (2009). Degree of alignment between beginning teachers' practices and beliefs about effective classroom practices. *The Teacher Educator*, 44, 164-187. Retrieved from <http://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu%3A207243>

# Overview of Some of my Relevant Research

- Role of policy

- State level levers intended to create change in practice may not work as expected.
- Pekrun's control-value theory may help explain why not.

Pressley, T., Roehrig, A. D., & Turner, J.E. (2018). Elementary teachers' perceptions of a reformed teacher evaluation system. *Teacher Educator*, 53(1), 1-22. Available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/q5W6Rt4U76PcucsXlh7s/full>

- Building relationships

- Have to take a critical eye toward your own expectations and behaviors.
- What educational psychologists have to offer practitioners and teacher education is often questioned.

Roehrig, A. D. (2015, December). *(Re)imagining research-practice partnerships in high-poverty rural schools to enhance diverse students' literacy learning opportunities*. Paper presented at Literacy Research Association, Carlsbad, CA.

# Steps for Forming Partnerships

1. Treat practitioners with respect.
  - Teachers/professionals are experts in their practice.
  - Treat them as authorities and learn from them!
2. Try to understand their working situation.
  - Try to prevent the research from creating roadblocks to their practice.
3. Share what potential benefits the research may have to them.
  - Acknowledge limitations of research.
  - Make research accessible to lay readers.
  - Promise in rise of public scholarship.

# Steps for Forming Partnerships

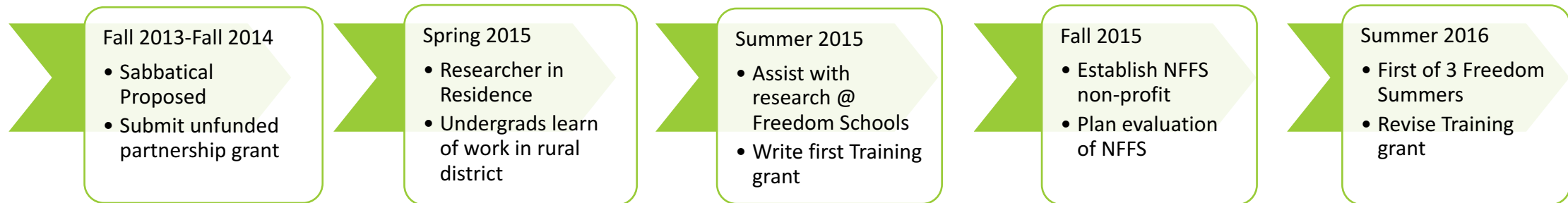
4. Cultivate working relationships with
  - University students who do/will work in the local school system
  - Colleagues who are doing teacher training in local schools
  - Colleagues/students who work in/with depts of ed and local non-profits
5. Volunteer with local schools and non-profits
6. Be dependable and consistent (maintain contacts and work over multiple years)
7. Ask practitioners about what they want to have researched
8. Provide something perceived as value-added through research
9. Engage practitioners as co-researchers
10. Share findings with organizations and stakeholders involved in research

# Common Challenges & How to Avoid Them

- Overcoming being seen as an outsider
  - Prior bad experiences with researchers give all researchers a bad reputation.
    - Connections help get initial access through gatekeepers.
  - Researchers without practitioner experience perceived with doubt.
    - Find practitioner partners. Demonstrate what have to offer.
- Turnover in school leadership and teachers
  - Have to rebuild connections and renegotiate terms of work.
  - Be flexible and persistent.
- Policy initiatives and changes
  - Can take priority over or conflict with work of researchers.
  - Find ways that your work can align with current policies and efforts.

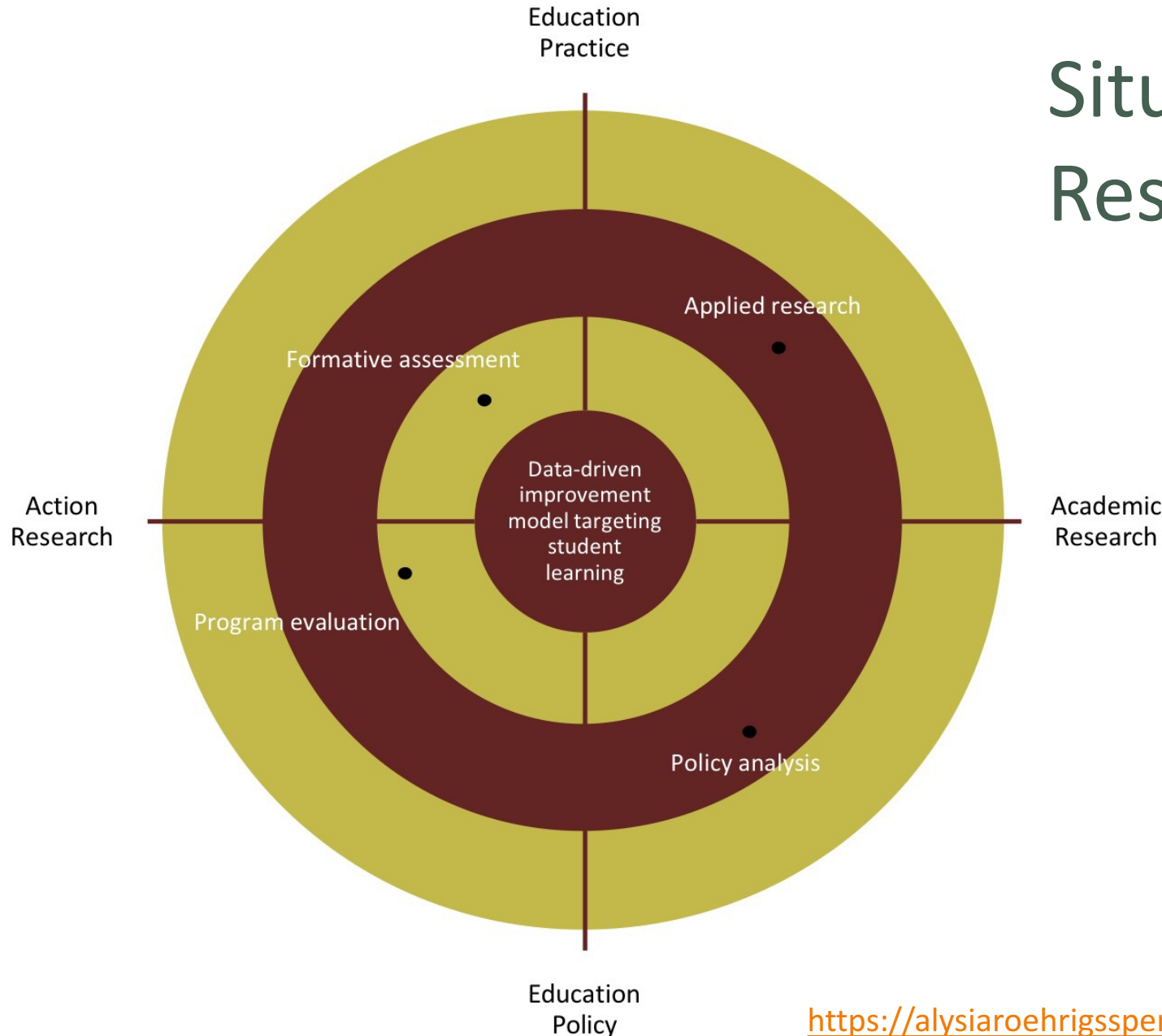
# Processes Used for Successful Partnerships

- Never try to do it alone!
- Be in it for the long haul.
  - Timeline for North Florida Freedom Schools (NFFS) work



- Think holistically in terms of
  - Systems in which research occurs.
  - Processes/steps of conceiving to disseminating research.
  - Overlapping your research, service, and teaching as much as possible.

# Situating the work: Research Practice Axis



Rather than focus on the dichotomy between research and practice, let's focus on the intersection between the two and how sustained dialogue between those acting in each vector is needed to home in on make meaningful change in the world

(<http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-praxis.htm>). Many types of practices can be placed in each vector. I provide only some preliminary examples here.

# Opportunities Partnerships can Provide Both Partners

- Reciprocal benefits of research-practitioner partnerships
- Closing gaps between theory and practice
  - Theory shapes practice, but only if training occurs in ways that practitioners will take up.
  - Practice shapes theory, but only if researchers remain open to all sources of evidence.
- Achieving mutual goals
  - Improving achievement, diversity, etc.
  - Improving training processes and curricula
  - Bring in resources for both partners



# Grant Opportunities

- Small grant opportunities
  - American Educational Research Association Education Research Service Project grant
  - Dollar General, and other small foundation grants
- Institute of Education Sciences' Researcher-Practitioner Partnership grants
  - Probably be most successful with fully formed partnership rather than to support development of nascent partnership.
- IES Research Training grants

# Questions?

- Thank you for participating!
- Contact me at [aroehrig@fsu.edu](mailto:aroehrig@fsu.edu)
- Learn more about the PURPOSE Training program (aka Partners United for Research Pathways Oriented to Social Justice in Education) at [www.PURPOSEtraining.org](http://www.PURPOSEtraining.org)