Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships: Supporting Early Childhood Education in Connecticut

George Coleman, Clare Irwin, Ph.D., Michael Strambler, Ph.D.
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Objectives

• Provide an overview of researcher-practitioner partnerships and their benefits

• Discuss regional resources related to researcher-practitioner partnerships

• Highlight the work of a Connecticut researcher-practitioner partnership and how participants can become involved in this work
What is C.E.S.?

- Cooperative Educational Services, one of CT’s six Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs)
About C.E.S.

- **Mission:** To identify and provide quality educational opportunities for educators, students, families, and communities in coastal Fairfield County, Connecticut.
C.E.S. Early Childhood Education Goals

1. Develop a model in-house School Readiness program as part of a regional ECE professional development and technical assistance services to schools, programs and families.

2. Establish a program of scientifically informed preschool professional development that is accessible to providers in the region.

3. Engage higher education and regional teacher preparation programs in developing professionals prepared to educate children and students who generally enter the public educational system behind their statewide age cohort.
C.E.S.’s interest in Collaborative Research

• Collaborative research can:
  – Give public educational systems better scientific knowledge that allows them to affect systems accountability and goal-oriented learning for young children.
  – Increase public investment in and expectations for substantial growth and reduced initial learning disparities.
  – Provide the tools to produce early educational gains that can be sustained throughout the public school experience.
What is a Regional Educational Laboratory?

- Network of 10 RELs across the country
- Help states and districts use research and data to inform policy and practice with the goal of improving student outcomes
- Funded by USED Institute of Education Sciences

[ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/]
REL Northeast & Islands (REL-NEI) States and Territories

- Connecticut
- Maine
- Massachusetts
- New Hampshire
- New York
- Puerto Rico
- Rhode Island
- US Virgin Islands
- Vermont
REL-NEI Outreach: 2014 Year-End Statistics

CONTACT LIST

+13% mailing list growth
+37% contacts beyond the NEI region

603 FOLLOWERS (+62%)
28 BLOG POSTS

TOTAL EVENTS AND CONVENINGS
2166 TOTAL EVENT PARTICIPANTS
3254 TOTAL EVENT REGISTRANTS
+22% FEEDBACK SURVEYS PROCESSED
webinar technology use +46%
What is a REL-NEI Research Alliance?

Practitioners and researchers, supported by a REL-NEI facilitator, work together to craft a shared research agenda and learn from one another. The research agenda guides alliance work to ensure that rigorous research is aimed at addressing questions of practice that will ultimately impact student learning.
REL-NEI Research Alliances

Each alliance addresses one or more regional priorities:

- Early Childhood Education Research Alliance
- English Language Learners Alliance
- Northeast College and Career Readiness Research Alliance
- Northeast Educator Effectiveness Research Alliance
- Northeast Rural Districts Research Alliance
- Puerto Rico Research Alliance for Dropout Prevention
- Urban School Improvement Alliance
- US Virgin Islands College and Career Readiness Research Alliance
REL-NEI Resources

- Publications
- Bridge Events
- Skill-Builder Webinars
- Online Professional Development
- Reference Desk
- Blogs and Newsletters

http://www.relnei.org/
Origin of PEER

EDC Learning transforms lives. + COOPERATIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES + Yale SCHOOL OF MEDICINE = PEER Partnership for Early Education Research
What is PEER?

• Alliance among early childhood stakeholders in Bridgeport, Norwalk, and Stamford
  – Classroom-level practitioners
  – Administrators
  – Child advocates
  – Policymakers
  – Researchers

• Funded in 2014 by U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences
Alignment among Management Team Members

- Shared emphasis on *practitioner*-oriented research that can drive policy and practice

- C.E.S. and PEER serve the same three priority school districts

- Roles of core partners:
  - C.E.S. serves as convener/liaison
  - Yale contributes research expertise
  - EDC contributes collaborative research expertise
PEER Organizational Structure

Affiliate Members
Primary Responsibilities: Input on Alliance research agenda and direction of Alliance & assist with knowledge utilization/dissemination activities. Expert advisors will also review study reports prior to publication.

Larger EC Community
- Additional School District Representatives
- EC Centers
- Home-based Childcare Providers
- EC advocates
- Community-based organizations
- University Depts. of Education and EC preparation programs
- Community funders
- State Head Start

Expert Advisors
- Walter Gilliam
- Mike Lopez

Participating Members
Primary Responsibilities: Input on Alliance research agenda, facilitate data collection (primary & secondary) and provide data, participate in Alliance workshops (as appropriate), & assist with knowledge utilization/dissemination activities.

Community Teams Include (at a minimum): School Superintendent or designee, school district director of early childhood, school district data management representative, Head Start representative(s), and School Readiness representative(s).

Bridgeport, Norwalk, & Stamford Community Teams
- School District Superintendent or designee
- Director of Early Childhood
- Director of Data Management
- Head Start
- School Readiness

Core Members
Primary Responsibilities for Key Members: Develop Alliance research agenda, facilitate data collection (primary & secondary), review reports, & assist with knowledge utilization/dissemination activities.

Alliance Management Team
- Yale University
- C.E.S.
- EDC

Key Members
- CSDE Reps
- OEC Reps
- Community Team Reps
PEER Goals

1. Build infrastructure for conducting collaborative research
2. Collaboratively develop a research agenda
3. Conduct and use high quality research to guide practice and policy
PEER Capacity Building Progress

- Engaged with potential partners
- Developed communication structures
- Held two agenda-setting workshops with stakeholders
- Applied for research grant involving PEER partners
- Developing data sharing agreements
- Planning to fund research agenda
Potential Research Topics

- Dual Language Learners
- Pedagogy & Curriculum
- Disparities
- Compensation
- Family & Community Services
- Kindergarten Entry & Transitions
- Education Policy
- Teacher Training & Professional Development
- Special Needs
- Social-Emotional and Non-Cognitive Skills
- Data Systems & Data Use
- Absenteeism
- Parents & Families
- Quality
- Hiring & Retention
Potential Types of Research

• Review of scientific literature on best practices
• Examining links between practices and outcomes
• Examining effects of policies
• Exploring predictors of student success/failure
What’s Next for PEER

• Finalize research agenda
• Administer early childhood educator survey on assessment practices
• Organize early childhood conference (Spring 2016)
• Secure funding for pursuing research agenda
Benefits of Local Partnerships Like PEER

• Bridge the gap between researchers and practitioners

• Use resources more efficiently

• Make data more relevant and useable

• Give research a key role in guiding practice and improving outcomes for children

• Example: Consortium on Chicago School Research
How can you get involved?

• Advocate for research partnerships in your district and in Connecticut

• Support data-sharing with research partners

• Suggest ideas for possible funders
Thank you!

Learn more about PEER at http://peer.yale.edu