Improving Educational Equity through Research-Practice Partnerships & University-School Collaborations in the Post-Pandemic Era

Kristen C. Wilcox & Maria I. Khan
February 20, 2023
CORE PRINCIPLES OF IMPROVEMENT

1. Be problem-focused and user-centered
2. Attend to variability
3. See the system
4. Embrace measurement
5. Learn through disciplined inquiry
6. Organize as networks

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
Key Definitions:

**Research Practice Partnerships (RPPs)**

“long-term mutualistic collaborations between practitioners and researchers intentionally organized to investigate problems of practice and solutions for improving outcomes”

(Coburn et al 2013)

**Networked Improvement Communities (NICs)**

“intentionally designed social organizations with shared aims and process for knowledge generation and utilization for continuous improvement”

(LeMahieu et al 2017)
Two Levels of Collaboration

Level 2: National Network
  Collaboration with other institutions in four states across the country via AIR

Level 1: Local RPP Network
  NYKids supports partner schools
Level 2: National Collaboration

Purpose and Objectives

Leveraging Partnerships to Support the Equi...
Level 1: Partnership with American Institutes for Research (AIR), Tech Valley High School & Chatham Central School District

TEAM MEMBERS

- Kristen C. Wilcox, R&D Director NYKids and Associate Professor, Educational Policy and Leadership, the University at Albany-SUNY
- Maria I. Khan, Postdoctoral Associate, NYKids
- Jessie Tobin, Research Assistant, NYKids
- Lisa Ruud, Director of Academics, Chatham Central School District
- Kate Jarrard, Coordinator for Grant Funded Programming and Accountability, Chatham Central School District
- Amy Hawrylchak, Principal and Chief Academic Officer, Tech Valley High School
- Sara Fiess, Coordinator of School Outreach and Data Analysis, Tech Valley High School
Chatham Central School District, NY

- Chatham’s district motto is Everyone, Everyday

- Small rural community with willing partners that work with students in and outside of school, but unsure about untapped resources to support the advancement of equity and inclusion.

Priority Equity Issue

- How to start and structure mediated, productive conversations that allow for community voice where there is a very vocal minority with polarizing viewpoints?
Tech Valley High School, NY

- Regional STEM-focused, PBL school with strong business partnerships
- Small school environment with established supportive environment for risk-taking and learning

Priority Equity Issue

- Why is attrition rate higher for students of color?
Pandemic Related Innovation and Priority

**Overarching Goal:** Generating equity-oriented aim statements and aligned improvement plans to improve diverse student and community belongingness and engagement.

**Shared Aim:** We will address the barriers to learning and engagement for children, staff, and community members through our diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and mental health initiatives.
How has our RPP addressed educational equity issues in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic?

01 What behaviors are exhibited by local network members showing indication of the building of improvement infrastructure?

02 How does the collaboration with the larger national network foster the generation of change ideas and accelerate learning across educational institutions?

03 What are the consequent outcomes of this collaboration aiming to address educational equity issues in the post-pandemic?
Participatory Action Research

How do we work across a local and national level to build improvement infrastructure for equity?
NYKids
Using our Collective Capacity to Plan and Act
Strategically
AIR RPP Collaborative

Chatham Central School District, Tech Valley High & NYKids

June 30th, 9-12 pm, 2022

Location: Tech Valley High School
Facilitators: Dr. Kristen C. Wilcox & Maria Khan, UAlbany

Problem Statement:
What is the problem you're experiencing?

Please mark each task as completed when applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Management</th>
<th>Project Step</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding the Problem</td>
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<td>Define problem</td>
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<td>Map Causality</td>
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<td>Building your Project</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Identify aim</td>
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<td>Driver diagram</td>
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<td>Identify measures</td>
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<td>Testing Changes</td>
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<td>Conduct PDSA testing</td>
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<td>Analyze and adjust measurement plan</td>
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<td>Taking Stock</td>
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<td>Evaluate results</td>
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Driver Diagram:

Create a theory of action for addressing your aim by adapting the template below or pasting an image of a driver diagram you have created elsewhere.

**AIM**

- **Driver 1**
  - Measure:
  - Change Idea
  - Change Idea
  - Change Idea

- **Driver 2**
  - Measure:
  - Change Idea
  - Change Idea
  - Change Idea

**Balancing Measure:**

**Questions. What questions do you have about what will happen when you implement your change ideas?**

(Q1)  
(Q2)  
(Q3)  
(Q4)  
(Q5)  
(Q6)  

**Details. Describe the who/what/when/where of what you plan to do.**
Structuring:
How have we worked together since fall of 2021?

Relational
Team Development
Structuring of Interactions over time

Organizational
Mapping expertise
- Research
- Improvement
- Leadership

Conceptual
Metal level explanation and modeling of improvement and implementation work

Logistical
Time and space for meeting
Agenda Setting
Record keeping

Practical
Fishbone Diagram
Driver Diagram
Empathy Interview
Measurement/Assessment
How does the RPP promote innovation and improvement?

- Inviting flaring conversations: Generate lots of plausible explanations for problems and possible targets for change.
- Using data: Inform improvement process and decision-making.
- Having “focusing” conversations: Hone in on the best places to start addressing a problem and move toward an aim.
1. What behaviors are exhibited by local network members showing indication of the building of improvement infrastructure?

- Evidence of the development of appropriate metrics to judge early progress toward aims (e.g. student interviews, parent surveys)

- Individual and organizational changes such as research use in initiative development and implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To diversify the student population who graduates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aim &amp; Motivation</td>
<td>Increase the number of diverse students attending TVHS and completing the program, in order to better represent our broader community and make our model more sustainable in the long term.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve the onboarding process to include more student and caretaker voice and to improve understandings of the TVHS commitment prior to attendance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Performance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Focus</td>
<td>We are in the process of transcribing the interviews. Once collected, we need to compare answers in order to determine the most effective engagement opportunities. We want to highlight our students in partnership with their local districts. We want 100 applications in the lottery this year. We want to gather parent feedback.</td>
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2. How does the collaboration with the larger national network foster the generation of change ideas and accelerate learning across educational institutions?

The COVID-19 longitudinal database provides a rich foundation for studying responses to the pandemic. It draws on datasets across the sectors of education, health, housing, social services, employment, and technology access. Researchers can explore the database through a search engine and a mapping/graphing interface. The database includes data for six focus states (California, Florida, New York, Tennessee, Texas, and Washington). It covers the 3 years prior to the COVID-19 outbreak (2016–17, 2017–18, and 2018–19) and the 4 years (2019–20, 2020–21, 2021–22, and 2022–23, as planned) after the pandemic began. The database includes data at state, county, census tract, district, and school levels.

- The database allows for cross state (and district, school, county, and census tract) comparisons.
- Researchers can search and download data elements in the database (data tutorial).
- The mapping/graphing interface also allows analysis of education indicators by other characteristics or over time (see map tutorial and graph tutorial).
3. What are the consequent student and family outcomes of this collaboration aiming to address educational equity issues in the post-pandemic?

The consequent outcomes will be examined at the end of the school year.

Systematizing opportunities for all levels to have voice and take action through improvement science.

Students feel comfortable with peers and staff members.

Staff is invested in ensuring a positive learning environment for all.
Implications within CIE

Inform
innovative change ideas for equity in diverse educational settings through a grounded and collaborative approach to inquiry

Improve
conversations around systemic issues

Inspire
collaborative improvement research
Connect with Us

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Know Your Schools-For NY Kids

nykids

nykids@albany.edu

https://ny-kids.org/

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