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What Teachers and Districts Most Need from Research and Researchers

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exploratorium®

Who We Are

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Who Are Practitioners, Anyway?

Educators	Educational Leaders
Teachers Informal educators Youth development specialists Volunteers Parents Peer leaders/explainers	Principals Coaches District curriculum specialists Principal supervisors Museum education directors Youth program managers

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Who Are Practitioners, Anyway?

Educators	Educational Leaders
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The problems/needs of each of these practitioner roles vary greatly.

When communicating, recognize that what resonates with one might alienate another.

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Know Your Audience

Example: Some considerations regarding assessment

- Central office

  – Resources for district-wide assessments

- Principal

  – School-wide performance

- Teacher

  – Individual student performance
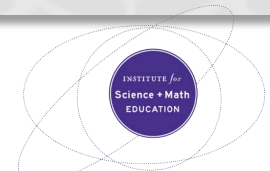
Know Your Audience

What do you have to offer to meet practitioners' needs?

- Curriculum?

- Professional Development?

- Assessment Tools?

- Program Evaluation?

Teachers Need Reliable Support

- Be realistic in how much support you can provide – be weary of overcommitting
  - Example: Co-planning instruction requires time, skill, and responsiveness to teacher scheduling
- Have a communication plan
  - Be timely in following up with teachers
  - Establish norms in your group for communicating with teachers – make it easy for teachers to work with you

Teachers Need Reliable Support

- The people (researchers, graduate researchers, etc.) providing on-the-ground support:
  - Know and can speak to teaching practices and working with a classroom of students
  - Are skilled in relationship-building
  - Can actually do the work with teachers – more than collecting / analyzing data, theorizing, connecting to research
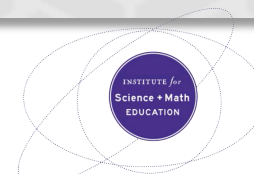
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Teachers Need "Your Thing" to Fit in Their World

- Initial Planning
  - What are the existing initiatives and demands on teachers' professional time?
  - How did teachers receive and integrate the last big PD?
  - What improvement efforts are teachers already engaged in?
  - Include teachers in the planning team

Teachers Need "Your Thing" to Fit in Their World

- Ongoing
  - How will you systematically collect feedback from teachers? How will you include less formal feedback?
  - How will you demonstrably incorporate teacher feedback throughout the project?
  - If teachers are hesitant to buy-in to the project, don't dismiss their concerns – there are probably problems in your design that will inhibit scaling

Be Conscious of How You Talk With Practitioners

- Minimize use of jargon

- Know that your position as a researcher carries a type of intellectual authority and power

- When talking about theory, recognize that it may not match up with practitioners' well-developed theories based on their experience

Summary

1. Know your audience.
2. Be realistic in the time and expertise your team can contribute to on-the-ground teacher support.
3. Be cognizant of how your work fits into teachers' unique context. Include teacher voice whenever possible.
4. Be conscious of how you talk with practitioners