NARST Partnership Workshop
Questions developed by Pittsburgh Team to consider when organizing partnerships between practitioners in community-based organizations and researchers

<u>Selecting partners</u>
- How do you find a viable partner?
- What features would you look for to create or recommend partners? Is there a "good partner" rubric?
- How do researchers identify partners that want to be learning organizations and engaged in substantive change? How can collaborative work help organizations embrace a commitment to improvement? How do you change the thinking so that it is seen as risky explorative and potentially transformative, rather than safe implementation of what worked before? [Organizations have to want to be learning organizations and change. They can't just be looking to validate current practice or to implement most efficiently.]

<u>Identifying problems of practice</u>
- What are the characteristics of interesting/good problems of practice (i.e. the problems that will lead to interesting work)?
- When is a problem too big or too little to work on?
- What strategies can researchers use to understand a problem of practice in context?
- How can a well-specified problem of practice help to focus and scope the role of researchers? [Researcher roles are sometimes not scoped well initially which leads to creep. This gives more access to the organization when you are invited to be part of lots of things, but it is potentially distracting.]

<u>Negotiating partnership goals</u>
- How do you align research goals with the practical needs of the organization you are working with? What routines support constant negotiation to align goals?
- Design-based research versus research-based design:
  o What is the difference between design-based research and research-based design? How can a collaborative project meld these two goals (design-based research and research-based design)? How do you talk about these different approaches so there is clarity about the purpose of collaborative work?
- Research versus evaluation (Partners often don't see the difference):
  o How do you separate your research from evaluation work?

<u>Building will with the people who will do the work</u>. Partnerships are often negotiated with organizational leaders, but front line staff is critical to accomplishing collaborative projects. Front line staff have a great deal of autonomy and because they haven't been involved in the negotiation of the collaboration, they haven't internalized the vision for the work. This is further complicated by the fact that there is high turnover and limited experience among front life staff in informal educational organizations.
- How do you build will for collaborative work among staff that weren't part of the decision making process?
- How can front line staff be included in negotiations about research-practice

partnerships?

Role of data in research-practice partnerships
Data has multiple use in a research-practice partnership: Inform collaborative work; support discussion with the partner; advance experiments in practice; enable partners to offer "proof" to stakeholders, etc.

- How to support a culture where data is used as part of decision making throughout practice?
- How can data collection opportunities be worked into natural activity in informal learning organizations? [When working with informal orgs, data collection can be challenging because there aren't a lot of assessment opportunities built into the activity and organizations sometimes resist testing because it can ruin the informal feel of the context.]