

Introductions, Updates & Goals

Members were welcomed and thanked for attending. Carl reminded members that WERAC has a website and Google drive in which members can collaborate and see related materials. If you cannot access the Google drive or need a reminder on how to access it, please contact Carl or Kerry for instructions. In addition, DPI's research agenda and an agenda project tracker are available for members to stay current on our DPI's progress on the projects identified during the WERAC meeting in September 2017.

Progress updates for several research agenda projects were given. For the UW-DPI collaborative project on student remediation, a data sharing agreement is currently under review at DPI. Progress has also been made on examinations of how performance on teacher preparation exams (FORT) predict student learning outcomes as well as the effect of students having a same-race teacher during their educational career.

Last, the goals for the day's meeting were discussed: discuss the qualities that make research artifacts actionable, describe a template for research artifact metadata, and outline next steps for the WERAC group. These goals directly relate to a main theme of making research easier to use.

NCRPP Survey on Research Use

Recently, the National Center for Research in Policy and Practice administered a survey on how educational leaders use research in decision-making, their attitudes towards research, and what research they consider useful to their practice.¹ Selected results from this survey were provided in order to introduce the topic of translational research and promote small-group discussion².

Translating Research: Current Efforts

Annalee Good, Tony Chambers, and Percival Matthews from UW-Madison described the Knowledge Mobilization project and Everyday Academics, two current efforts at UW-Madison focused on translational research.

Knowledge Mobilization project (KM): There is a need to tap into the intellectual strength of practitioners and the work they do but it's hard to access knowledge from the practitioner-side even if you want it. KM borrows from the Canadian model, KNAER (<https://www.knaer-recrae.ca/>), a dynamic and systemic model wherein teachers define the knowledge they need. The key focus of KM will be in building processes for equitable, bi-directional knowledge sharing between the research and practitioner communities.

¹ A link to the full report is available at http://ncrpp.org/assets/documents/NCRPP_Technical-Report_180302.pdf

² Notes from two of the three small groups are included in the document of uncategorized notes from the day, available here: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1g5wHdWOsriTrsz4cisLxnKZskIyaWjjik-iJ7IwGK0>

Everyday Academics: The focus of Everyday Academics is to bridge the communication gap between researchers and practitioners by “de-lingoizing” and “de-siloing” educational research. Key features of Everyday Academics include channels for community stakeholders to pose questions that are useful to them and a network of researchers and professional writers to address the questions and communicate the results in everyday terms.

In addition to the discussion of these projects, a group reflection on “knowledge” was facilitated. Questions addressed were: What is knowledge? How is knowledge generated? Where do people go for knowledge? What do people do with knowledge? To discuss these questions, the group was divided into four subgroups, with each assigned a question. The groups were asked to reflect on the question from five stakeholder perspectives: youth, families, researchers & evaluators, site-level educators, and administrators. Each group generated responses, wrote them onto sticky notes and posted them to a large wall note. Afterwards, everyone walked the room and considered their own agreement to the generated ideas. Annalee collected all the responses and will work to digitize and provide them to the group so they can inform future meetings.

Qualities of Actionable Research

Although not formally discussed as a separate topic, the question of what makes research actionable was informed indirectly throughout the day. Important factors to consider:

- What is the best format/modality for the research findings to be communicated for maximum clarity and impact?
- What should be the point of supply (from what sources should we encourage practitioners to find research)? There are at least two different strategies to take:
 - Put the research where practitioners are looking for it (professional organizations, CESAs, Ed Prep & Continuing Ed, Book Studies) -OR-
 - Produce small easily digestible chunks for direct consumption by practitioners
- Embed efforts in a system that can be evaluated for impact. For DPI, it is imperative that this system is our continuous improvement cycle.
- Be aware of, and engage your target audience. Research should serve the questions the target audience wants answered. Ideally, research will be done in concert with practitioners to inform topics identified by the practitioner community. with topics identified by the practitioners.
- Marketing will be important. The CESA network was identified as a group that can assist with marketing and helping get relevant research into the hands of practitioners when they need it.

Curating Research: Metadata/Discoverability

First, Carl provided an overview of the DPI's continuous improvement process and two tools we provide to districts to facilitate the use of data and research in continuous improvement efforts: the Data Inquiry Journal (see [this slide deck](#) for a comprehensive overview)³ and WISELearn (<https://wresources.dpi.wi.gov>). These demonstrations were intended to help the group understand how DPI plans to put translational research ideas into production.

After this overview/demo, the group discussed metadata. For DPI's translational research efforts, the metadata associated with research artifacts will dictate how successfully the WISELearn system provides relevant information to practitioners at the point of need and is therefore of critical importance. It was emphasized that, when creating a metadata schema, a balance must be struck between comprehensiveness (so that all topics are covered) and specificity (too much specificity and each tag will only have one study). For example, everything being equal, a tag of "Elementary Grades" will perform better than "Grade 5".

An additional consideration is what domains of metadata should be included in the schema. For research artifacts, DPI proposed the following:

- Intervention Description (e.g., Program to bring beginning readers up to grade level)
- Population(s) Served (e.g., late elementary school; rural district)
- Who
 - has tried this before (to enable a practitioner network around common problems/experiences)
 - produced the evidence (copyright)
- Strength of Evidence / Methodology
 - [ESSA Evidence Tiers](#)

Presenting the ESSA Evidence Tiers as a metadata domain evoked a spirited discussion about how various types of research are valued and whether it was appropriate for DPI to make a judgement on strength of evidence and, if so, who would make this judgement and on what criteria would it be based?

The following were identified as potential advantages of not rating strength of evidence:

- Easier, fewer resources needed for maintenance, greater sustainability
- Allows practitioners to use their own judgement
- Is consistent with the crowd-source model of WISELearn and Open Education Resources

³ <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1m44cGV3Q7-9DWF5Rqe5PZUJfdh650EAFtxm2JQH7qLI/>

A key advantage of rating strength of evidence is that it seems more attuned to DPI's core objective: providing practitioners with guidance on interventions that are *more likely to be successful* than solutions generated through brainstorming of a particular group of individuals.

A consensus on this topic was not reached during the discussion. Of particular concern was how to address the power dynamics inherent to a curation process and ensure that one methodology is not unnecessarily privileged over others. It was argued that, in many cases, the results of a practitioner-led action research project or a qualitative narrative produced through a rigorous methodology may be more helpful and applicable than the results of a random-controlled study. Carl will convene a subset of WERAC members to continue the discussion and gain a consensus decision on strength of evidence criteria.

Wrap-up and Planning

The next full meeting will be scheduled in the fall of 2018. In the meantime, there may be an opportunity during the summer to discuss our progress on curation and translation. The format is TBD but will not require travel to an in-person meeting.

The following were suggested topics for the next official meeting: a) sustainability of the DPI/UW partnership, b) members provide sounding board for DPI's research projects, c) progress on DPI's revamping of the data request process.