Creating Partnerships

A summary of the scientific literature on creating partnerships between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.



How This Impacts Children's Development

Gaps exist between research and practice, with some researchers expressing frustration that practitioners do not use or misuse research findings, and some practitioners saying research is not relevant to their work or not easily accessible or understood. Research-practice partnerships are long-term, mutual collaborations between practitioners and researchers to investigate problems of practice and identify solutions to improve children's developmental outcomes.

READ THE BRIEF: Creating Partnerships among Researchers, Practitioners, and Policymakers to Maximize Evidence Use, 2024

READ THE BRIEF: RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS: BUILDING ENGAGEMENT TO BENEFIT CHILDREN AND YOUTH, 2017

READ THE BRIEF: Using Research in Policy and Practice, 2012

Talking Points from the SRCD Briefs

- This is an exciting time to make child and family policies (laws, programs, and practices) more evidence-based.
    - Researchers are becoming increasingly interested in sharing and maximizing the use of their findings.
    - Practitioners and policymakers are becoming increasingly interested in evidence-based decision making.
- There are multiple types of research-practice partnerships with three principles to set them apart:
    - Mutualism: researchers and practitioners work together to define a research agenda that addresses issues important to practitioners' work and simultaneously fits researchers' interests and expertise.
    - Commitment to long-term collaboration: knowledge is built over time and partners can examine complex problems and improve implementation of policies, program, or practices.
    - Trusting relationships: partners communicate reciprocally and can continue working together even when evaluations and data analyses provide unexpected or disappointing results.
- Efforts to improve the quality of research have boosted scientific rigor in testing what works and synthesizing that evidence.
- The use of research is hindered by researchers', practitioners', and policymakers' differing definitions of research and criteria for evaluating its trustworthiness and utility.
- Fulfilling the promise of research-practice partnerships will require taking a long view on research and practice improvement with learning and innovation required on all sides.

Policy Considerations in the Briefs

- Remove unnecessary bureaucratic barriers so that research and program offices can effectively collaborate within agencies and with external partners.
- Design organizational conditions so that evidence can more routinely and seamlessly be brought to bear in program deliberations, planning for practice improvements, and budgeting decisions.
- Provide incentives and support for studies on the use of research to increase knowledge about the intended users of research, what types of research are relevant to their needs, and when and how research is used.

- Develop training programs to equip researchers with nontraditional skills, including designing research agendas from a practice perspective and communicating research with diverse audiences.

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