



# Structures for Research Use in Schools

A Report from the Center for Research Use in Education

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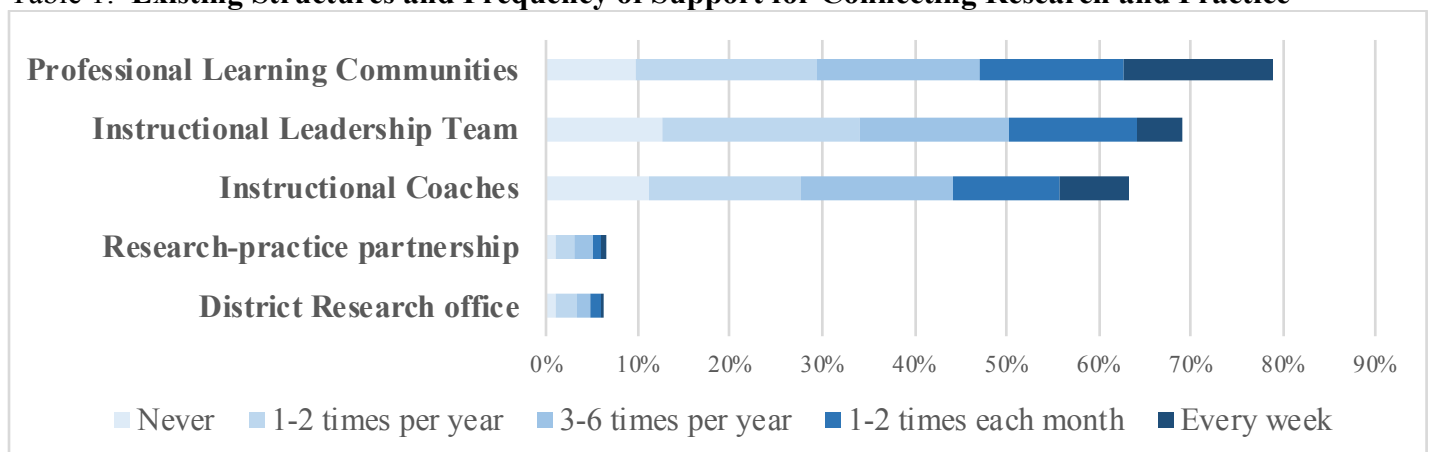
## Research Use in Schools

To better understand how research makes its way into the hands of educators and how educators then use the research they receive to influence their practice, educators in three mid-Atlantic states were surveyed to learn more about the structures in their schools that connected them to education research. 633 teachers and administrators were surveyed from 33 schools in the 2017-2018 school year. The ultimate goal is to be able to identify the factors that can be manipulated to improve the use of research in education practice. Findings related to structures in place to disseminate research are described here.

## School Structures supporting research use in practice

Educators were asked about five common school structures schools and districts utilize to influence the use of research when making decisions about classroom practice, school-based decisions, and district-level decisions. These structures were 1) **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**, groups of teachers within a school who meet regularly to discuss their teaching practices; 2) **Instructional leadership teams**, groups of teachers and a principal who collaborate to improve learning within a school; 3) **instructional coaches**, mentors who support teachers in honing their teaching skills; 4) **research-practice partnerships**, a formal partnership between schools and researchers to conduct collaborative research on shared interests; and 5) **district research office**, district staff assigned to research tasks. Participants were also asked to indicate how often

Table 1: Existing Structures and Frequency of Support for Connecting Research and Practice



PLCs, instructional leadership teams, and instructional coaches were the most prevalent structures available to educators. Half of the educators responding were able to receive support from these structures at least monthly with many of them accessing PLCs and instructional coaches weekly. These findings indicate the potential for frequent discussion of research and evidence-based practices through these commonly experienced structures.

## Implications for Policy and Practice

There are several structures with at least a decade of “best practices” knowledge already in existence that schools can use to incorporate research into their practice to improve teaching and learning. Based on survey results, many teachers and schools are already using existing structures in this way. Schools can find ways to improve the effectiveness of the structures they are already using to reach more teachers and students in their school. Similarly, researchers should use existing school structures to connect with educators about research and resources that could help improve schools.

## Incorporating Research into Structures

**Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)** foster teacher learning of evidence-based practices, improves the professional culture of a school, and adds coherence and continuous learning to professional development. For more information about PLCs, perhaps start with some information from the What Works Clearinghouse: [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/REL\\_SE\\_Improving\\_Instruction\\_through\\_Professional\\_Learning\\_Communities.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/REL_SE_Improving_Instruction_through_Professional_Learning_Communities.pdf). Work Works Clearinghouse has also produced PLC Facilitator Guides on several topics.

**Instructional Leadership Team** is a group of teacher leaders and a principal who collaborate to focus on improving teaching and learning within a school. Principals and teachers share the responsibilities of instruction and supporting teacher growth, based in research and evidence-based practices. For more information about Instructional Leadership Teams, see information at the Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington: <https://www.k-12leadership.org/>

**Instructional coaches** are those whose main professional responsibility is to bring evidence-based practices into classrooms by working with teachers and other school leaders. While the role may vary by school, instructional coaches usually provide professional development, mentoring, advice, solutions, and perhaps, publicizing effective and new programs and strategies.

**Research Practice Partnerships** take many forms. Partnerships can be formed for different reasons. For educators, it may be to benefit from evidence-based practices from researchers, for researchers, it may be to address relevant research questions and communicate findings in a way that practitioners find useful.

**Research Offices** within a school district can have a variety of responsibilities. The function can range from providing schools with data about their students’ performance to approving research projects to be conducted within the districts’ schools. In districts which do not have a Research Office, the functions performed by a Research Office are likely to be absorbed by other district administrators.

The Center for Research Use in Education (CRUE) is producing a holistic picture of what drives the use of research from production of knowledge by researchers to the application of research in schools. We also seek to identify strategies that can make research more meaningful to classroom practice. We believe that rigorous evidence, whether qualitative or quantitative, can foster better opportunities and outcomes for children by empowering educators, families, and communities with additional knowledge to inform better decision-making.

To learn more about CRUE and Research4Schools, find us:

[www.research4schools.org](http://www.research4schools.org)



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The research reported here was supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305C150017 to the University of Delaware. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Institute or the U.S. Department of Education.