Today there exists a gap between educational research and educational practice. While some maintain that gap has narrowed over the last several decades, it is clear there remains a great deal of work to be done to close it (Levin, 2004; Fullan, 2009). Educational research does impact practitioners in the field. However, it is also clear that only a small amount of that research makes it to practitioners and what does make it takes a very long time to get there (Green, 2008).

One mechanism that has been shown to help speed up and widen the funnel that brings good evidence-based practices to practitioners and school leaders are research practice partnerships (RPPs). While RPPs take many forms, school-university partnerships are one specific type that has been shown to have the potential to positively impact school improvement outcomes (Coburn & Stein, 2010).

The Oregon Research Schools Network (ORSN) got off the ground with great energy early in 2018. The brainchild of Dr. Randy Kamphaus, Dean of the University of Oregon’s College of Education, the ORSN is founded on the principles of the long-successful Agricultural Extension model. For centuries Agricultural Extensions have helped to transfer knowledge from research to the field, advised farmers in determining goals and decision-making processes, and encouraged new agricultural innovation and development. Based on the successful history of this work with and for the agricultural community, Dr. Kamphaus and The University of Oregon’s College of Education invested in a 5-year pilot university-school research practice partnership connecting educational researchers with practitioners and educational leaders on a local level. The aim is to help identify and address chronic challenges in high schools to improve academic and behavioral outcomes, and to ultimately increase their graduation rates.

The ORSN extends service, instruction and research statewide by enlisting expert UO faculty in the field to help improve academic and career outcomes for Oregon’s youth. The ORSN is currently working in partnership across Oregon with North Eugene High School (4J), Roosevelt High School (PPS), Pendleton High School (PSD) and Coquille High School (CSD).
One teacher from each high school was identified through joint discussion with Dr. Kamphaus, Dr. Nancy Golden (Director of the ORSN) and district leadership. Those classroom practitioners, titled Courtesy Assistance Clinical Professors (CACPs) with courtesy appointments through the COE’s Department of Educational Methodology, Policy and Leadership, have release time to use a part of each school day towards ORSN goals.

The ORSN’s work is rooted in the Oregon Equity Lens and improvement and implementation science. It uses an improvement cycle, leveraging localized data to examine school culture, systems, structures, and outcomes in order to establish key school-specific, evidence-based improvement goals and strategies that will help positively impact academic outcomes, student behavior and graduation rates. The partnership includes a continuous and robust evaluation process to help ensure the effectiveness of ORSN and the school-specific interventions.

The four network teachers and leadership teams, in partnership with UO researchers, are taking on some of the biggest systemic challenges faced by Oregon educators today as localized problems of practice with their university partners. At the same time, our network partner schools are engaging in field-initiated research to measure the impact of the intervention as a whole. Areas of focus currently include aspects of chronic absenteeism, 9th grade on-track, culturally-informed and trauma-informed practices in building student resiliency, classroom management and engagement strategies, math success, elevating student voice, and teacher mentorship.

Dr. Nancy Golden and Sol Joye are working closely with Dr. Kamphaus to increase the ORSN from four to ten high schools across Oregon to help foster a stronger network and increase opportunities for a greater number of Oregon students. This work will be evaluated over the 5-year pilot period to assess its impact on diverse high school populations, their academic and behavior outcomes, and graduation rates. The ORSN also includes concrete processes to ensure transparency in the work being done, and accountability to the goals set and to all stakeholders involved. We are looking forward to what the next few years bring to all of our ORSN partners.

**SB 739 & ORSN**

**SB 739** will allow ORSN to geographically expand across Oregon within its five-year pilot, serving an additional six high schools identified as high need, highly impacted, and geographically diverse. This will bring the ORSN to a total of ten high schools. Schools will be added through an open process, identifying geographically spread schools across Oregon with the highest need. ORSN holds strong promise for creating an improvement model to increase K-12 performance statewide. This pilot will be expanded and evaluated over a five-year period to assess its impact on diverse high school graduation rates and better participation in and completion of post-secondary education.