Tales from a Gate-keeper: Strategies for Successful Research Partnerships in K-12 Schools

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ABSTRACT

Successful completion of research in K-12 schools requires more than just access, it also requires cooperation of school personnel. This presentation will share the story of a successful research partnership that was formed during an NSF funded project to improve science learning of middle school students with learning disabilities (LD).

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

- "Gatekeepers are those who give access to a research field. Their role may be in allowing investigators into a given physical space, or it may go further in granting permission for research to be conducted in a particular way" (Homan, 2001, p.1).
- Researchers often approach administrators who understand and support the complexities of conducting research in school settings (Elpers & FitzGerald, 2013).
- Principals who serve as gatekeepers for research projects act as the direct link to the parents and students; their position enables them to forge the road between theory and practice (Elpers & FitzGerald, 2013).
- "Scientific fields trust gatekeepers to evaluate the quality of their research, both its methodological and ethical aspects" (Leahey, 2008, p. 4.).
- When considering the role of gatekeeper, there is a difference between “formal legal power to require compliance and informal social power to influence behavior in the schools and districts” ( Wanat, 2008, p. 205).