

OUR RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Co-Designing Responsive and Actionable PL Research



The RPPL Research Framework is a practical tool for strengthening the quality, relevance, and impact of professional learning (PL) research. It helps research teams and partners align on priorities, clarify roles, and make shared decisions so evidence is more likely to inform meaningful improvements in learning—particularly for students most affected by inequitable opportunities. By structuring collaboration across design, implementation, and use, the Framework ensures partners meaningfully influence the research process, resulting in findings that are more actionable, trusted, and usable across diverse contexts.

The Framework is designed to strengthen the impact of PL research conducted through research-practice partnerships or research practice projects. RPPL envisions dynamic collaborations that bring together diverse partners—**spanning schools, districts, universities, independent research firms, and/or PL organizations**—to co-design research that advances educational improvement. Research is more likely to influence policy and practice in a way that improves outcomes for all students when it emerges from interconnected processes that **build connections, respect perspectives, and maintain transparency**.

At RPPL, rigor is defined by the combination of study design and study methodology, rather than by design type alone. We define rigor as using research methods that are well-suited to the research questions of interest and carrying out those methods in line with best practices in the field.

For example, answering causal questions may require well-implemented experimental or quasi-experimental designs, whereas studies seeking to understand teachers' experiences in professional learning should leverage well-executed qualitative approaches. Strong inferences—about what we can and cannot say—derive from how well the chosen methods fit the purpose of the study and are implemented with integrity.

This Framework is both a tested and evolving tool—intended to grow as we collectively learn more about what drives effective, actionable PL research. It is **adaptable across contexts, recognizing that districts, PL organizations, and researchers vary in capacity, resources, and readiness to engage in its implementation**. The Framework offers prioritized, high-leverage practices to help teams to start with what's most feasible and grow capacity over time.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN USING THIS FRAMEWORK

Audience	How to use the Framework
RPPL-Funded Researchers	→ Use to align study design, methods, and collaboration with RPPL's rigor and social impact goals.
Districts and PL Orgs Conducting Research with RPPL	→ Focus on practices that strengthen partnership structures, communication, and use of findings , adapting guidance to local context and capacity.
Districts, PL Orgs, & Researchers Not Regularly Engaged in Research	→ Start with the most feasible, high-leverage practices and build over time.



The Framework is adaptable—start small, adapt to capacity, and engage from your unique entry point.

The RPPL Research Framework was informed by a synthesis of national research frameworks, peer-reviewed scholarship, and established best practices for conducting research in partnership. See reference list [here](#).

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The tenets below are interconnected and designed to be enacted and revisited across all phases of the research process, allowing teams to begin where it makes the most sense and return to each tenet as their work evolves.

