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## SMTI 2015 Proposal

### *Implementing a Networked Improvement Community for Learning Math in Middle Grades*

The purpose of this proposal is to report on progress in focusing the work of a major school – university – community college partnership in Oregon on mathematics as a pivotal subject supporting high school completion and transition to post-secondary education. The Mid-Valley Mid-Coast Partnership (the Partnership) has joined the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in the Networked Improvement Community (NIC) Design Learning Lab Project funded by NSF. Partnership members were introduced to “improvement science” and NICs through participation in SMTI’s Mathematics Teacher Education Project and the Carnegie Foundation Summit on Improvement in Education in 2014. The proposed presentation will include (a) a brief sketch of NIC concepts and tools applied to Partnership work, (b) description of our team’s learning and planning for launching a NIC initially focused on middle grades 5-9 spanning two major school transitions, and (c) responses from Partnership leadership.

The Partnership views math performance in school a community problem. Dimensions of the community include but are not limited to (1) the school culture as it impacts attitudes towards and conceptions of math by all teachers, administrators, students, and parents, (2) all aspects of math classroom instruction including math anxiety, and (3) the community’s attitudes toward the value and use of mathematics on the job and in everyday life. Math performance in school is also a transdisciplinary problem that includes but not necessarily limited to the disciplines of mathematics, curriculum & instruction, English language learners, counseling, administration, public relations, and sociology.

Through the formation of a networked improvement community or NIC, the Partnership will engage in a process of *organizational learning* how to incorporate the concept of improvement into the *system* of educating. To do this the Partnership will come to understand the work of educating as a *system* that has many interrelated parts. Ubiquitous *variation* in how education is delivered across participating classrooms and school districts will inform the design and implementation of innovations. Tools of a NIC will support maintaining focus on the target problem as we study how innovations perform differently across contexts. Sharing knowledge of variation across the organization will be anchored by practices that empirically test innovations in rapid cycles of “plan – do – act – study” where data is analyzed against metrics the Partnership has agreed form proxies for our shared goals.

Organizing for scale up has taken the following form to date. The project director worked with the partners to select a NIC Learning Lab Team who will travel to four meetings at the Carnegie Foundation over the next 6-9 months. The Team is comprised of network (project) director, senior-level sponsor (guards time for the team and removes barriers), front-line expert (faces target problem on daily basis), and improvement lead (analytically tracks data and metrics). Still under construction is a NIC Initiation Team comprised of representatives of all components of the networked improvement community.

### Connect with us



