Challenges of Urban Teacher Professional Development

High quality professional development and support for professional communities are both powerful levers for supporting the transition to the Next Generation Science Standards. However, schools in urban settings face significant challenges in fully implementing all of the features of high quality professional development and professional learning communities due to small school sizes, high teacher turnover, and shifting leadership. In this presentation, McGee will describe two science professional development programs that have taken different approaches to addressing the challenges of urban professional development by fostering the development of science teacher leadership. First, the Early Elementary Science Partnership (E2SP) program is a 4-year professional development collaboration with The Field Museum, the Nature Museum, and the Big Shoulders fund to support prek-3rd grade teachers' transition to NGSS in ten Chicago Catholic schools. Second, the NU Leadership Academy for Science Improvement is an ongoing professional development collaboration with Network 11 in the Chicago Public Schools. In both programs, there are early indicators that the nature of social interactions among teacher is shifting along with shifts in teaching practices. McGee will discuss the implications of this work for how we develop and sustain long-term, place-based partnerships and use robust indicators that take advantage of the natural variation in implementation as evidence for theory building.

Steven McGee (PhD 1995, Learning Sciences, Northwestern; BS 1988, Human Development and Social Policy, Northwestern) is a Research Associate Professor of Learning Sciences in the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University. McGee's areas of research are science education reform, teacher leadership, assessment and educational technology. He currently serves as the director of the NU Leadership Academy for School Improvement, which provides teacher leadership support for Chicago elementary and high school science teachers involved in curriculum reform projects. McGee is an active faculty member in the design and implementation of the new masters in teacher leadership program at Northwestern. He is the former director of the Meaningful Science Consortium, which facilitated transformation of high school science departments in Chicago through project-based curricula, professional development, coaching, and aligned assessments. He is also a former director of the NASA Classroom of the Future program, which brings the excitement of NASA science to K-12 schools through the use of advanced technologies.