

## Overview of Research and Evaluation at Learning Point Associates

**Learning Point Associates** is a nonprofit education research and consulting organization that delivers high-quality, client-focused research, policy, evaluation, and professional services in the areas of afterschool, district and school improvement, leadership, literacy, and teacher quality. We provide knowledge, strategies, and results so that research-based decisions produce sustained improvement in teaching and learning.

Our short- and long-term research studies increase the body of high-quality information on the most pressing issues in education today. We deliver research findings that add to the national discussion, informing funding, policy, and programming decisions that can lead to improved student achievement. Our clients include federal, state, and local education agencies as well as businesses, nonprofit organizations, and foundations.

Evaluations conducted by Learning Point Associates help clients articulate the performance questions they want to address and use rigorous social science research methodologies to investigate those questions. Our evaluations appraise the performance of an overall education system and its components, providing clients with data they can use to make informed decisions.

Following are four examples of education research and evaluation conducted by Learning Point Associates.

### College Readiness Study

Learning Point Associates worked for The College Board on a study of the college readiness of middle and high school students in the United States. The College Board is committed to providing products and services that improve college readiness.

Conducting a review of the literature on college readiness since 1997, Learning Point Associates evaluation staff identified experiments, quasi-experiments, and meta-analyses of studies that focused on the impact of education interventions on the academic performance of students in Grades 6–12 and their readiness for success in college. Staff members analyzed the findings and developed reports for each of six areas and a synthesis report. These reports provided guidance to The College Board’s program development efforts and laid the groundwork for future mining of the research literature to identify best practices.

### Research Conducted by REL Midwest at Learning Point Associates

**REL Midwest at Learning Point Associates**, under contract with the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education, is conducting two long-term studies using randomized controlled trials: one study on adolescent literacy and another on the impact of formative assessment on improving instruction and student performance. REL Midwest also conducts short-term studies that use descriptive, survey, correlational, and quasi-experimental research designs. These projects result in *Issues & Answers*, a series of reports that meet the Institute of Education Sciences standards for scientifically valid research. Information about REL Midwest’s current research projects is available online (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/projects.asp>). Following are descriptions of three of those studies.

## **REL Midwest’s Randomized Controlled Trial on Adolescent Literacy**

*Improving Adolescent Literacy Across the Curriculum in High Schools*, REL Midwest’s three-year literacy study, focuses on a literacy-across-the-curriculum approach at the high school level. The teaching intervention is the Content Literacy Continuum (CLC) from the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, which was selected after a rigorous review of current adolescent literacy instructional programs.

The CLC program, based on 25 years of research, includes both teacher-focused and student-focused interventions that are delivered throughout the high school day. REL Midwest’s study addresses the extent to which CLC improves students’ reading skills, content knowledge, and other academic outcomes (e.g., attendance, persistence in school, course-taking patterns); the effect of a literacy-across-the-curriculum approach on literacy instruction (among both English teachers and teachers of other subjects); and the factors that promote or impede successful implementation of this approach in high schools. Participating schools meet certain size, need, and demographic requirements.

## **REL Midwest’s Short-Term Studies on Teacher Evaluation Policies and Data Systems**

*Examining District Guidance to Schools on Teacher Evaluation Policies in the Midwest Region* provides a snapshot of teacher evaluation policies across a demographically diverse sample of districts in the Midwest. Among the patterns that emerged from the findings, REL Midwest found that many district policies distinguish between beginning and experienced teachers; few policies spell out consequences for unsatisfactory evaluations; most evaluations are summative reports used to support decisions about retaining teachers and granting tenure, rather than for professional development; and vague terminology leaves evaluation policies open to interpretation.

*Getting the Evidence for Evidence-Based Initiatives: How the Midwest States Use Data Systems to Improve Educational Processes and Outcomes* shows that despite a wealth of data at the school, district, state, and federal levels, the objectives of data-based decision making in education have not been fully realized. REL Midwest found that common challenges include outdated and incompatible systems for collecting and storing information, inefficient systems for accessing and using data, and constraints on resources and capacity. The report also suggests that states would benefit from technical assistance to improve the quality of data, support with technical challenges, and guidance on how to use information effectively to inform decision making and planning.

## **About Learning Point Associates**

Learning Point Associates is a nonprofit education research and consulting organization that helps clients to achieve breakthroughs that improve teaching and learning. Our research, policy, evaluation, and professional services provide critical support to build and sustain high-performance learning environments. Learning Point Associates manages a diversified portfolio of work ranging from direct consulting assignments to major federal contracts and grants, including REL Midwest, National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center, Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center, and The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement.

[www.learningpt.org](http://www.learningpt.org)

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### **Chicago**

20 North Wacker Drive, Suite 1231  
Chicago, IL 60606-2901  
312-288-7600

### **Naperville**

1120 East Diehl Road, Suite 200  
Naperville, IL 60563-1486  
800-356-2735 • 630-649-6500

### **New York**

22 Cortlandt Street, Floor 16  
New York, NY 10007-3139  
212-419-0415

### **Washington, D.C.**

1100 17th Street NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20036-4632  
877-322-8700 • 202-223-6690