

Each edition of *REL Midwest Research Update* offers information on resources available from the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Program and from REL Midwest at Learning Point Associates. REL Midwest is one of 10 RELs funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Under the direction of Matt Dawson, Ph.D., REL Midwest serves the educational needs of Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. A nonpartisan resource, REL Midwest provides expert advice to help educators and policymakers apply scientifically valid research to their decision making. Learning Point Associates has operated the region’s educational laboratory since 1984.

Our Work

Events Connect Research to Practice

From now through 2010, REL Midwest is bringing high-quality research to educators and administrators through events designed to help ensure that IES and REL research gets to the field while providing opportunities for practitioners and policymakers to deepen their understanding of evidence-based research. These events range from full-day seminars to shorter technical assistance sessions. There are no registration fees. Participants must make their own travel arrangements.

To preview and register for upcoming events or to browse the event archives, visit www.learningpt.org/REL/events.php. Here is a sampling of what’s ahead:

- **Educator Compensation: Performance Pay, Pensions, and Promising Practices, October 15–16, 2009, Chicago.** This two-day event features nationally respected presenters who will address the many aspects of educator compensation, including its historical context, evaluation implications, technical assistance issues, pension ramifications, and evidence of promising reform strategies. Presenters include Michael J. Podgursky, Ph.D., of the University of Missouri–Columbia and James W. Guthrie, Ph.D., Patrick J. Schuermann, Ed.D., and Matthew G. Springer, Ph.D., of Vanderbilt University. **Registration is closed; call to request waiting-list status.**

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- **Successful Strategies for Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Language Learners, December 11, 2009, Grand Rapids, Michigan.** Teachers, administrators, and curriculum directors who work with English language learners in Michigan's Kent Intermediate School District will hear firsthand about applying the research of the IES Practice Guide on effective instruction for English language learners in the elementary grades. Presenting is practice guide coauthor Tim Shanahan, Ph.D., of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

For additional information, please contact Peggie Garcia by e-mail (peggie.garcia@learningpt.org) or telephone (312-288-7642).

Visit the online archive (<http://www.learningpt.org/rel/eventsArchive.php>) for materials related to the following completed events:

- *Increasing Access to Higher Education*, October 2, featuring Thomas Bailey, Ph.D., director of the National Center for Postsecondary Research; Freeman Hrabowski III, Ph.D., president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County; Nicole Farmer Hurd, Ph.D., executive director of the National College Advising Corps; Robert Shireman, deputy under secretary of education at the U.S. Department of Education; and William Tierney, Ph.D., director of the Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis.
- *Understanding Formative Assessment and Utilizing It to Improve Classroom Instruction*, August 14, featuring James Pellegrino, Ph.D., of the University of Illinois at Chicago and James Popham, Ed.D., and Margaret Heritage of the University of California, Los Angeles.
- *Improving Student Achievement Through Expanded Learning Opportunities*, July 8–9. This research strand was developed especially for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers 2009 Summer Institute to showcase the work of Robert Granger, Ed.D., president of the William T. Grant Foundation and former chair of the National Board for Education Sciences, and Fred Doolittle, Ph.D., principal investigator on the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance Impact Evaluation of Academic Instruction for After-School Programs study.
- *Data-Based Decision Making and Access to Evidence-Based Practices*, June 5, with Mark Berends, Ph.D., of the University of Notre Dame.

- *Working With State Data Sets: A Working Session on Methods in Data Handling and Report Generation*, May 29, featuring Barbara Schneider, Ph.D., of Michigan State University.
- *Interpreting Test Score Trends and Gaps*, May 8, with Andrew Ho, Ph.D., of the University of Iowa.
- *Evaluating Teacher Effectiveness*, April 28–29, featuring Dan Goldhaber, Ph.D., of the University of Washington–Bothell.

REL Midwest Reports on Indiana's Full-Day Kindergarten

After the Indiana Legislature increased funding for full-day kindergarten, the Indiana Department of Education and the Indiana State Board of Education requested assistance from REL Midwest to analyze administrative data so that the agencies could report to the Legislature on changes in full-day kindergarten enrollment and funding. In late July 2009, IES published the REL Technical Brief *Snapshots of Indiana's Full-Day Kindergarten Programs Before and After the State's Funding Increase for the Program* (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/pdf/REL_2009013.pdf). Overall, full-day kindergarten enrollments in Indiana increased 20 percentage points over the study period, and the number of school corporations that provided full-day kindergarten to more than 80 percent of their kindergarten students rose 26 percentage points.

New Report Focuses on Teacher Supply and Demand Studies

In a report published in the IES Issues & Answers series (*Methodologies Used by Midwest Region States for Studying Teacher Supply and Demand*), REL Midwest describes how state education agencies (SEAs) in the region monitor teacher supply, demand, and shortage; details why they monitor these data; and offers estimates of the monetary costs incurred in performing such studies (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/pdf/REL_2009080.pdf).

The study grew out of a request from SEAs to learn more about teacher supply and demand studies conducted in neighboring states. States' approaches to studying teacher supply and demand vary in complexity and cost. In a trade-off between information and cost, more comprehensive studies cost more and produce more policy-relevant analyses.

Among the study's findings are the following:

- SEAs conduct teacher supply and demand studies to comply with federal laws and regulations and, in some cases, to comply with state statutes. Studies

conducted to obtain only the information required by federal laws or rules and state statutes and rules with the same requirements as the federal reporting were estimated by the study and by SEA staff to cost less than \$4,000. More comprehensive studies cost \$25,000 to \$35,000.

- At least three states in the region go beyond compliance and gather information from multiple sources to cross-validate their data and to obtain richer types of data to aid policymakers in ensuring adequate staffing.
- While several states project student enrollment or teacher retirements, only two states produce a forecast of teacher demand.

News, Events, and Activities

- Congratulations to Tony Bennett, Ed.D., on becoming Indiana's superintendent of public instruction and, by virtue of that election, joining the REL Midwest Board of Directors. Dr. Bennett has served Indiana students and families for more than 20 years, including nine years as a classroom teacher and athletic coach.
- Congratulations to Tony Evers, Ph.D., who is Wisconsin's new superintendent of public instruction. Dr. Evers also automatically holds a seat on the REL Midwest Board of Directors. He has served Wisconsin students and families for more than 34 years as an educator and has held the post of deputy state superintendent since 2001.
- Welcome to new REL Midwest board members Jim Bartholomew, education policy director for the Minnesota Business Partnership; Walter L. Burt, Ph.D., assistant professor of educational leadership in the Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology at Western Michigan University; and Michael Sawyers, superintendent of the Perry Local Schools in Lake County, Ohio. All were elected at the May 2009 board meeting.
- Working with America's Promise Alliance, REL Midwest is providing assistance to states and cities across the region for their high school dropout prevention summits. We have created geographic data displays of graduation rates and other key demographic data for dissemination at the events and provided access to research resources such as the IES Practice Guide on dropout prevention (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/dp_pg_090308.pdf).

- REL Midwest is assisting the Iowa Department of Education by conducting a review of the research on evaluating teacher and administrator effectiveness and analyzing and reporting results of surveys designed to assess school administrators' and teachers' perceptions of Iowa's administrator evaluation training.
- Michigan's Department of Education is receiving planning assistance from REL Midwest to evaluate the impact of seat-time waivers—a program designed to disassociate seat time with learning requirements and student funds by waiving administrative rules requiring full-time equivalent students to occupy a seat in the classroom. Objectives of this program are to increase attendance rates, improve student learning as measured by statewide assessments, and increase graduation rates.
- REL Midwest is providing technical assistance to the Indiana Department of Education in their data collection for a study of the impact of increases in full-day kindergarten funding.

Resources to Explore

- Reports that result from short-term projects of the RELs are published as Issues & Answers and REL Technical Briefs. To browse and download all REL publications, visit the regional educational laboratory website (ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs).
- Practice Guides from the What Works Clearinghouse (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/>), an IES initiative, address instructional challenges and assess the rigor of research evidence on the effectiveness of interventions. Among the topics of Practice Guides available now are dropout prevention, reducing behavior problems in elementary classrooms, and turning around chronically low-performing schools. To learn more about integrating evidence-based practices into classroom instruction, visit the partner site for Doing What Works (<http://dww.ed.gov/index.cfm>).
- Learning Point Associates, which operates REL Midwest, offers educators and policymakers a single site (<http://www.learningpt.org/recovery/>) to help locate the resources needed to navigate the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. Features of the site include a "fund finder" that identifies total distribution of funds to your state.

Ask A REL!

Educators and policymakers across the country can tap a new resource from the REL Program for information on current education issues. Ask A REL (ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/askaREL/) is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the REL Program and sponsored by IES.

Ask A REL functions like a technical reference library and provides referrals, references, and region-specific education information. In responding to requests, the RELs use their in-house experts and other resources, including the National Library of Education and the Education Resources Information Center (known as ERIC). Submit your question today!

Contact Us

For more information about any of the items in this newsletter or to discuss ideas for technical assistance with a member of our staff, please contact us by telephone (866-730-6735) or by e-mail (RELmidwest@learningpt.org). We look forward to hearing from you.

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