



Message from the partnership facilitator and research liaison

One of Michigan's top education priorities is equitable access to effective teachers for all students. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) recognizes that, to achieve this vision, the state needs to ensure that the educator preparation pipeline produces high-quality teachers whose competencies align with local expectations. The Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest Alliance to Improve Teacher Preparation (MAITP) was created out of that need. The alliance members will develop a deeper, shared understanding of factors that influence the educator pipeline in Michigan and will use this knowledge to inform decision making at the state and local levels.

We look forward to working with alliance members to use applied research, technical support, and public engagement projects to drive the development of tools and resources for alliance member organizations, district leaders, teacher preparation institutions, and policymakers in Michigan. The research agenda for the alliance is designed so that projects are directly useful to alliance members, supply research that informs policy and practice, and increase the capacity of alliance members to conduct and use research. To that end, the alliance will focus on three topics in 2017:

1. Investigating the potential of clinically oriented teacher preparation programs (i.e., teacher residencies) for Michigan
2. Examining teacher shortages in Michigan
3. Exploring the retention of novice teachers in Michigan

We would like to acknowledge and thank the following members of the alliance who have been engaged in key roles:

Leah Breen, Michigan Department of Education
Abbie Groff-Blaszak, Michigan Department of Education
Erika Bolig, Michigan Department of Education
Corey Drake, Michigan State University
Dale-Elizabeth Pehrsson, Central Michigan University
Doug Braschler, Hope College
Paul Helder, Michigan Education Association
Emily Pohlonski, Novi Community School District
Angi Beland, Michigan Association of Public School Academies
Jason Mellema, Ionia Intermediate School District
Dave Campbell, Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency

In addition, we are enlisting the partnership of state education agencies in Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin in a community of practice to inform the work and provide more resources. Read through the articles in this newsletter for information about the exciting work that this group of dedicated individuals will engage in during the months ahead.—**Steve Dibb**, **partnership facilitator**, and **Natalya Gnedko-Berry**, **research liaison**

New projects investigate teacher pipeline and residency programs

REL Midwest will lead two projects in 2017 that support MDE's focus on ensuring equitable access to effective teachers for all students in the state.

For the first project, REL Midwest researchers will analyze data from schools and districts to identify trends in teacher shortages and surpluses in Michigan. The researchers will examine whether trends vary by license area, region of the state, school characteristics, or teacher pay. REL Midwest researchers also will create projections of teacher shortages and surpluses for the next 5 and 10 years to inform the work of alliance members and other stakeholders as they develop new programs and policies.

The other REL Midwest project will examine clinically oriented teacher preparation programs. Much like a medical residency program, clinically oriented teacher preparation programs offer prospective teachers both classroom experience and opportunities to work directly in a classroom under the guidance and direction of an experienced teacher. The programs typically include ongoing coaching, supervision, and support from the mentor teacher. MDE has identified clinically oriented teacher preparation programs as a potential strategy to develop highly effective new teachers and to remedy the teacher shortage problem.

In light of this interest, REL Midwest will research and develop a series of profiles of clinically oriented teacher preparation programs throughout the United States. In addition, REL Midwest will host a series of trainings to connect MDE staff and alliance members with representatives from clinically oriented programs with demonstrated effectiveness in teacher retention, student learning, and other outcomes if reported. MDE looks to use the in-depth information about clinically oriented programs to consider the feasibility and value of implementing such programs in Michigan.

Partners use interactive workshops to establish research agenda

At REL Midwest, our researchers work with practitioners—state education agency staff, teachers, principals, and school administrators—to figure what is important to them to ensure the research is necessary and useful. It is not as easy as asking, "What is important to you?" For the past few months, as the new REL Midwest contract has ramped up, alliance partnership facilitators and research liaisons have facilitated research agenda-setting workshops for the four REL Midwest alliances.

The goal of each workshop was to lead research alliance members through a process to identify a set of priority topics and draft research questions related to the alliance's topic of interest. For example, MAITP developed research questions related to teacher preparation. Workshop participants collaborated to determine five priority topic areas under teacher preparation, including teacher preparation programs, teacher shortages and surpluses in Michigan, teacher retention, teacher recruitment, and teacher compensation. Participants then developed research questions under each of these topics, which resulted in a draft research agenda that will drive the alliance's work for the next five years.

Alliance members find the process to be very useful. MAITP member and teacher Emily Pohlonski appreciates the ability to provide input on research topics that matter to her state. She said, "While there is national research about the teacher pipeline, we need specific information about our needs in Michigan. We want to make sure that every child in Michigan has access to great teachers in all grades and subjects. I am thrilled that our alliance has prioritized research questions around teacher shortages and the quality of teacher preparation in our state."

REL Midwest adapted workshop materials from [REL Northeast and Islands resources](#). If you are a researcher looking to collaborate with practitioners more deeply and meaningfully, REL Midwest highly recommends using these resources, which include an adaptable slide deck and facilitator and participant guides. Please reach out to Carrie Scholz (cscholz@air.org) for more information and advice about facilitating research agenda-setting workshops.



Meet the Alliance Member: Leah Breen

Leah Breen is a member of MAITP and serves as the director of the Office of Professional Preparation Services at the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). Breen is no stranger to REL Midwest; she was a member of the Educator Effectiveness Research Alliance under the previous contract. At MDE, the Office of Professional Preparation Services supports teachers at every stage of their careers, but, in recent years, questions about the state's staffing pipeline came to the forefront.

Says Breen, "We wanted to collect data and understand the research around teachers entering and exiting the profession. Since I started with MDE, the department's language has shifted from saying that we have a 'surplus' of teachers to saying that we have a 'critical shortage' of teachers. Currently, these statements are only supported by anecdotal language, and now there's a real push to find data to support the conversation around teachers."

For Michigan, the language regarding the teacher workforce had real policy implications. "Some policy was based on the 'surplus' statement, like more certification requirements," says Breen. "This changed the number of people entering the teaching profession." Breen notes that national conversations related to teacher shortages also have an impact at the state level.

Breen hopes that participating in MAITP will help answer questions about the teacher pipeline. "Our K-12 and higher education partners on the alliance helped us form the original research questions, and they're individuals who can provide wide perspectives—from urban and rural schools, small and large districts." In working with REL Midwest, MDE can connect with other states that are examining their teacher pipelines. "As it turns out, a lot of the topics we selected were hot topics—recruitment and retention are highly publicized. We're closely connected to Midwest partners, who are having many of the same issues across the region," says Breen.

MDE has begun to answer some teacher pipeline questions on its own. Although it is difficult to track teachers who leave the state, MDE has found ways to capture some interstate mobility by tracking teachers who move back to Michigan. In addition, MDE is exploring alternative teaching program entry exams, alternate certification programs, and stronger higher education partnerships to recruit more high-quality teachers. MDE also is exploring ways to support current teachers. "Globally, we realize that induction and mentoring are key parts of retaining teachers. We can focus on strengthening these programs so teachers know that they're supported."

When not working hard at MDE, Breen is a voracious reader. In 2016, she read 124 books, and she hopes to read just as many in 2017.

Michigan-based networked improvement community featured in public television program

In the last year of the 2012–17 REL Midwest contract, REL Midwest partnered with Detroit Public Television to create a 30-minute, documentary-style program on continuous improvement research. Specifically, the program covers the work of the Michigan-based networked improvement community facilitated by REL Midwest, which sought to close achievement gaps in Focus schools. The program includes fascinating interviews with Michigan-based practitioners, including a school leader, intermediate school district representative, and state department of education representative, as well as with researchers with expertise in continuous improvement research. Watch the program on the [IES YouTube channel](#).

Resources and events

A number of high-quality resources related to teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention are available online. We curated the following, including several REL resources.

Teacher shortages and surpluses

- [Strategies for Estimating Teacher Supply and Demand Using Student and Teacher Data](#) (2017) describes the process REL Midwest used to redesign Minnesota's teacher supply and demand study so that it provided more useful findings for specific research questions.

Teacher preparation research and models

- In the REL Northeast and Islands archived event [Educator Preparation: Research, Regional Challenges, and Implications for Policy](#) (2016), Dr. Kelly Donnell, dean of Roger Williams University School of Education, shares findings from her own and others' research as she discusses policies and strategies to better prepare teachers.
- The [Changing Face of Teacher Preparation: Aspirations, Designs and Evidence Conference](#) (2016), hosted by the Education Policy Center at Michigan State University, brought together some of the nation's top researchers and education leaders to discuss teacher preparation in the United States.
- REL Central's study [Understanding Field Experiences in Traditional Teacher Preparation Programs in Missouri](#) (2016) found that the field experiences of first-year teachers in Missouri vary substantially. A [related webinar](#) explores the implications of the findings.

Teacher retention: Support for novice teachers

- In [Induction and Mentoring of New Teachers](#) (2015), a REL Mid-Atlantic Ask an Expert online chat, Ellen Moir and Jennifer Bloom of the New Teacher Center discuss successes and challenges in implementing induction and mentoring programs.
 - [Teachers-in-Residence: New Pathways Into the Profession](#) (2013), from the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, explores six core strategies for designing a teacher residency program based on a systematic review of leading programs in the field.
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Getting students on track for graduation: Impacts of the Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System after one year

Check out our latest report! This study examined the impacts of the Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System (EWIMS), a systematic approach to early identification and intervention with

students at risk of not graduating on time. The study randomly assigned 73 schools to use EWIMS or to continue with their usual practices for supporting at-risk students. To learn about the findings, access the report on the [IES website](#).

Contact Us

Please contact us for more information about any of the items in this newsletter or to speak to a member of our staff. We look forward to hearing from you.

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