



REL Midwest announces new director!

Please join us in extending a warm welcome to **Kyle Fagan, PhD**, the new director of REL Midwest. A principal researcher at the American Institutes for Research, Dr. Fagan specializes in equity-focused and collaborative research, evaluation, and technical support. He has eight years of experience in the REL program leading the [Midwest Achievement Gap Research Alliance](#) and the [Making Equitable Schools Audit partnership](#). Looking ahead to the new school year, Dr. Fagan said, “I am excited for the opportunity to support our teams as they continue to strengthen and build upon meaningful partnerships with educators and educational agency staff to improve learning across the region.”

Our work



Blending cultural assets and research-based strategies to support educators in an Indigenous school

Red Lake Elementary Complex in Minnesota is committed to creating a learning environment that celebrates students' Ojibwe language and culture. [In this blog post](#), learn how school leaders partnered with REL Midwest on a yearlong professional learning series designed to strengthen cultural proficiency among the school's staff.



Supporting a culture of safety and belonging: A conversation with Akron Public Schools district leaders

For the past two years, REL Midwest has worked with Akron Public Schools to implement the Making Equitable Schools Audit approach. [In this Q&A](#), Dr. Carla Chapman, chief diversity officer, and Dr. Wanda Lash, director of student and family services, discuss how the approach aligns with district efforts to develop a culture of safety and belonging.

REL roundup: Chronic absenteeism



Back to school: Ensuring strong attendance for a successful year

Engage students and families with these REL strategies and tools for addressing chronic absenteeism.

- A **REL Northwest** [blog post](#) highlights strategies for using personalized family messaging to increase attendance. A study found that parent messaging lowered the absentee rate by seven percentage points for students with a history of chronic absenteeism.
- Learn how three rural districts in California's Central Valley are boosting attendance in **REL West's** [video series](#) *Attendance Matters!* Then check out this REL West [infographic](#) for tips on using data visualization to identify attendance patterns and target supports.
- **REL Mid-Atlantic** offers a suite of resources for combating chronic absenteeism in the pivotal early grades. A [webinar](#) and [blog post](#) summarize what research says about reducing chronic absenteeism. Two fact sheets identify [risk factors](#) and [proven strategies](#). A [Go-Learn-Grow Toolkit](#) and [video](#) focus on increasing attendance in prekindergarten and kindergarten. And for students who are absent, a [blog post](#) highlights virtual tools to support continued learning.

From the U.S. Department of Education



Districts are invited to join the Attendance Solutions Network

The [Attendance Solutions Network](#) supports school districts in their efforts to reduce chronic absenteeism and deepen student engagement. As network members, districts gain access to events, learning communities, technical assistance, research, and other supports at no cost. To express interest, complete [this form](#).



Parent and family engagement toolkits

Two new toolkits from the **National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition** support students of various backgrounds in succeeding in school in the United States.

- **English Learner Family Toolkit**: Created to help families choose education services that meet their children's needs (in English, Arabic, Chinese, and Spanish).
- **Newcomer Toolkit**: Created to help U.S. elementary and secondary teachers, principals, and other school staff who work with immigrant students—including asylees and refugees—and their families (in English).



Learning recovery efforts interactive map

Use this [interactive map](#) from the **RESTART Network** to find pandemic-related education research and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) plans related to learning recovery efforts across the nation. The RESTART Network is funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, which also funds the REL program.



State policy heat map: Navigating career pathway opportunities

A new [state policy heat map](#) from the interagency initiative **Unlocking Career Success** details state policies that affect four strategies that prepare students for their futures: dual enrollment, work-based learning, workforce credentials, and career advising and navigation.

Events

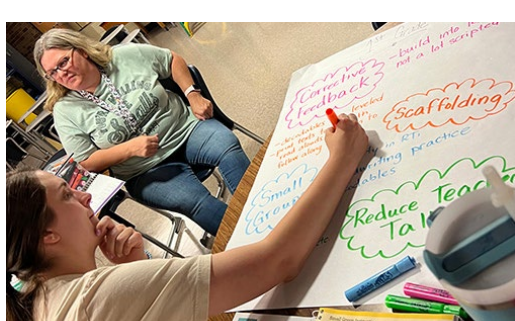
8/29: Mentoring for Diversity: Webinar, Region 8 Comprehensive Center (4:00–5:00 p.m. ET). [Register](#)

9/26: Learners Wear PRADDA: Using Computational Thinking in Math Classrooms to Support Students to Shine! REL Midwest conference session, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Annual Meeting & Exposition 2024 (8:00–9:15 a.m. CT). [Learn more](#)

REL Midwest in the field



REL Midwest's [ENGagement and Achievement Through Computational Thinking](#) (ENACT) partnership held a Summer Institute for a team of 6th grade math teachers in Milwaukee Public Schools on July 31 and August. 1. The focus was on integrating computational thinking strategies into classroom instruction. Pictured are two math teachers presenting a microlesson on the use of abstraction.



Teachers analyze their literacy curricula for opportunities to enhance instruction using REL Midwest's [Strategies to Improve Reading](#) (STIR). The activity was part of the STIR partnership's two-day Summer Institute, held in Fruitport, Michigan, on August 12, and Battle Creek, Michigan, on August 14.

Contact us

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

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