

# Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest Data-Informed Leadership for Equity Partnership

**Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest** is partnering with school districts in Iowa to build school leader capacity in using data to **reduce disparities in sense of belonging, disciplinary actions, and attendance** among middle school students.



To achieve this goal, the **Data-Informed Leadership for Equity (DILE)** partnership will develop, test, and refine an approach that incorporates professional learning in **culturally responsive practices** as well as training and tools designed to **support the use of data** to act upon disparities in student experiences and outcomes.



**Culturally responsive practices** are educator practices that recognize, value, and incorporate students' lived experiences and cultures into teaching, learning, and the overall school environment.<sup>1</sup>



**Sense of belonging** refers to the extent to which students feel personally accepted, included, and supported at school,<sup>2</sup> and includes school-based experiences, students' relationships with teachers and peers, and students' general feelings about school.<sup>3</sup>

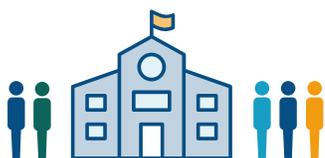


**Supporting the use of data** involves building school leader and staff knowledge and capacity to use data effectively in determining the root causes of disparities that may result from current policies, practices, or systems.<sup>4</sup>

## Why is this topic important?

Students with a stronger sense of belonging are less likely to be absent, less likely to engage in disruptive or risky behavior, and more likely to perform well academically.<sup>5</sup> Strategies that improve sense of belonging could help reduce disparities in disciplinary actions and attendance.

Iowa students of color<sup>6</sup> tend to report **fewer positive feelings** about their school relationships and physical safety relative to White students.<sup>7</sup>



In 2019, students of color made up **25 percent** of Iowa's public school enrollment but **49 percent** of all suspensions and expulsions.<sup>7</sup>



Students of color enrollment



Students of color suspensions and expulsions

In 2019, **19 percent** of students of color in Iowa public schools were chronically absent compared to **10 percent** of White students.<sup>7</sup>



Students of color chronically absent



White students chronically absent

## Planned partnership activities

In collaboration with middle school leaders, REL Midwest will partner with **Iowa City Community School District** to develop, implement, test, and refine the DILE approach. The work will take place in phases over 5 years, and the partnership will expand to other Iowa districts over time.

Visit our [website](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#) to learn more as the work unfolds.

## Contact us to learn more!



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**REL Midwest is part of a network of 10 regional educational laboratories** funded by the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education. REL Midwest works in partnership with practitioners in seven midwestern states to support the use of research and data to improve student outcomes, with a focus on students who are farthest from opportunity.

### REL Midwest

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- <sup>6</sup> Includes students who are Asian, Black/African American, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Multiracial, and Native American.
- <sup>7</sup> Authors' calculations are based on data from 2019 and 2020 Iowa Department of Education reports.