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# Update From the Director

Although the weather outside my window doesn't always say it – it's spring!

REL Northwest staff attended and presented at the Washington Educational Researchers Association (WERA) Symposium last month. We spoke about the kinds of support the REL provides to state and local partners and shared two example partnerships and projects.

The session sparked great conversation. We heard about topics ranging from student mental health to dual language programs to eighth grade math. Conversations at WERA were a good reminder to continue to exchange broadly about the work of [REL Northwest](#) and the larger REL program.

In February, Matthew Soldner, commissioner of the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, detailed how RELs can support a wide range of state and local initiatives in [a letter](#) to chief state school officers. He offered specific examples of REL

activities, such as helping analyze student outcome data, identifying existing evidence-based practices, and evaluating the impact of state or local interventions on student outcomes.

RELs also collaborate with Regional Comprehensive Centers (Region 16 and 17 in the Northwest) to help educators and decision-makers apply research evidence to policy and practice. A new [fact sheet](#) describes how RELs and Comprehensive Centers address high-priority needs in states and territories.

We look forward to continuing our work as we enter Quarter 2 of 2023.

**Katie Drummond**

Director, REL Northwest

## New Fact Sheet: Addressing Working Conditions to Improve Teacher Retention

Across the United States, large and small school districts face challenges with recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers.

As part of our partnership with Alaska's Lower Kuskokwim School District, REL Northwest reviewed and summarized research on working conditions and teacher retention. Lower Kuskokwim faces unique challenges of retaining and recruiting teachers, including serving 23 remote villages.

Our [new fact sheet](#) describes eight aspects of working conditions that may influence a teacher's decision to stay or leave. District leaders around the nation may consider developing strategies to address these factors.

Each of the eight working conditions includes examples of what success might look like for each area. For example, in the "Use of Time" category, school leaders could protect teachers' time to work together to share ideas and develop materials for instruction and provide release times for teachers to observe each other and improve instructional practices.

We encourage you to share the fact sheet with your colleagues and read about Lower Kuskokwim's efforts to increase teacher retention in [our latest blog](#).



## Blog: Implications of a Four-Day School Week

As Kate Williams, principal of Alaska's Cordova Junior/Senior High School, and her team reflected on the benefits of their current four-day school week schedule, they also wondered about its potential costs and implications. What's the latest research say?

Cordova City School District, a rural district in southeast Alaska, first implemented the four-day school week in the 2020-21 school year out of necessity due to pandemic-related challenges. The district maintained the four-day school week for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years to provide continued flexibility for teachers, students, and families.

Williams asked REL Northwest if we could provide her with available research on four-day school weeks and its effect on student outcomes. REL Northwest responded to Williams' request through the new Ask an Expert service, which provides evidence-based information to questions that address high-leverage needs in the region.

[Read the blog on our website for full details...](#)



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## REL Recommended Reads

**REL Midwest:** Strategies for using data to deliver differentiated reading instruction to students in early grades

Strong reading skills in early grades are essential for students' academic success. [Read more](#) about using assessment data to identify young readers' instructional needs, organize small groups to meet those needs, and deliver effective reading instruction in small groups.

**REL West:** Exploring Evidence-Based Practices in Teacher Recruitment and Retention Efforts To ensure students are prepared for the future, they need an effective teacher in every classroom. [REL West compiled](#) teacher recruitment and retention initiatives by other Regional Educational Laboratories for lessons learned, data, and research.

**What Works Clearinghouse:** Assisting Students Struggling with Mathematics: Intervention in the Elementary Grades Practice Guide Summary

A [new summary](#) of the practice guide, *Assisting Students Struggling with Mathematics: Intervention in the Elementary Grades*, highlights six evidence-based recommendations educators can use when teaching elementary students with low test scores in mathematics.

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## In Case You Missed It ...

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