

Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest is part of a network of 10 RELs funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. Each REL serves a designated region of the country and helps states and districts use data and research to address policy and practice issues to improve outcomes for students and teachers.

REL Midwest works through collaborative research partnerships in **Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin** to ensure what we do is relevant and useful to our region's stakeholders.



## Regional priorities

[Achievement Gaps](#) | [Early Childhood Education](#) | [Teacher Preparation](#)  
[Career Readiness](#) | [Knowledge Utilization](#)

We built stakeholders' capacity to access, conduct, interpret, and apply research by completing the following activities:



Over the past five years, REL Midwest helped states and districts use data and research to improve teaching and learning outcomes. The following are a few highlights from our partnership work.

## Conducted a Systematic Literature Review to Improve Black Students' Outcomes

### Midwest Achievement Gap Research Alliance



In 2018, REL Midwest published a [systematic review](#) that identified 20 evidence-supported interventions associated with improvement in Black students' academic outcomes, such as achievement on standardized tests in English language arts and math.

The report has been downloaded 2,043 times and remains one of REL Midwest's most viewed and downloaded resources. The REL Midwest team also produced a [companion infographic](#) to share the interventions and a [documentary](#) that showcases how educators at Racine Unified School District in Wisconsin are implementing several of the strategies. Partners shared these resources across the region, incorporated them into professional development sessions, and used them for school improvement planning.

REL Midwest **collaborated with members of five research alliances** and [one networked improvement community](#) to ensure our work addressed the data, research, and professional development needs of practitioners in our region. Members represent a diverse group of education stakeholders.

National-, state-, and regional-level leaders	42
District leaders, school leaders, and teachers	26
Higher education practitioners	6
Representatives from community-based organizations	3

## Identified Practices and Policies to Increase the Number of High-Quality Teachers in Michigan

Midwest Alliance to Improve Teacher Preparation

In 2021, REL Midwest published [a study that examines why so many certified teachers no longer teach in Michigan public schools](#). The study identified increased salary and simplification of certification requirements as desired incentives for teachers to consider returning to the classroom. REL Midwest created a [companion infographic](#) and [documentary](#) to communicate the study findings.

The Michigan Department of Education drew on the study findings and launched the “[Welcome Back Proud Michigan Educator Campaign](#),” an initiative that seeks to recruit individuals with expired teacher certificates back into the teacher workforce.



## Supported the Adoption of Evidence-Based Practices in Districts and Schools

Midwest Alliance to Improve Knowledge Utilization

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires school districts to use evidence-based strategies to support school improvement and student learning. In 2017, REL Midwest began [coaching staff from the Ohio Department of Education on the ESSA tiers of evidence](#) and developed a [crosswalk tool](#) that shows how ESSA evidence tiers align with ratings from popular research clearinghouses, such as the What Works Clearinghouse.

In response to requests from Midwest state education agency staff who accessed these resources, REL Midwest hosted a [webinar](#) and produced a [video](#) that explains the ESSA evidence standards and how they affect school and district leaders’ selection of school improvement interventions.



## Established Networked Improvement Communities to Improve High School Graduation Rates

Midwest Career Readiness Research Alliance

In 2019, REL Midwest staff worked with state and district partners in Minnesota to form a networked improvement community (NIC) of alternative learning center (ALC) practitioners in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

REL Midwest produced a [video](#) that illustrates how staff [coached NIC participants on how to implement Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles](#) to improve credit recovery strategies and, ultimately, raise high school graduation rates at ALCs. By February 2021, one ALC participating in the NIC reported that the center experienced a 27 percentage point increase in students completing one or more recovery credits.

During the 2020/21 school year, REL Midwest staff built upon this work by [developing a second NIC with a new cohort of ALC teachers and leaders from rural areas of Minnesota](#).



## Improved Kindergarten Teachers' Ability to Implement Evidence-Based Practices

**Midwest Early Childhood Education Research Alliance**



In 2018, REL Midwest developed [trainings](#) to help early childhood educators in Illinois use results from the [Kindergarten Individual Development Survey \(KIDS\)](#), a kindergarten entry assessment, to set education goals and action steps. In the [workshops](#), teachers analyzed their classrooms' KIDS data in collaboration with colleagues. REL Midwest also produced a short [video](#) that explains the uses and benefits of kindergarten entry assessments.

As a result of this work, Illinois State Board of Education KIDS coaches incorporated the KIDS data-use training into their portfolio and now regularly offer the training to districts across the state.

## Built High School Educators' Capacity to Integrate Technology into Instruction

**Iowa Learning and Technology Networked Improvement Community**

To learn more about our work, visit our website at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/default.aspx>.

The Iowa Learning and Technology Networked Improvement Community brought together high school educators from rural districts between 2017 and 2019 and used continuous improvement research practices to [identify effective ways of integrating technology into instructional practice](#).

REL Midwest coached practitioners on how to conduct a root-cause analysis, identify a problem of practice, develop a theory of action, and implement inquiry cycles. NIC participants reported that the coaching sessions helped improve their organizations' capacity to use research and data to solve problems in their organization.



We worked with stakeholders to create products that translate research into practice:

167

[Blog Posts](#)



51

[Infographics](#)



17

[Videos](#)



15

[Public Television Documentaries](#)



Our work garnered **221,784** website views, **131,596** YouTube views, **6,589** social media engagements, and **9,417** report downloads!