

Presented by REL Pacific at McREL:
A Summary of Cross-Regional
Educational Laboratory Studies



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Regional Educational Laboratory
At Mid-continent Research
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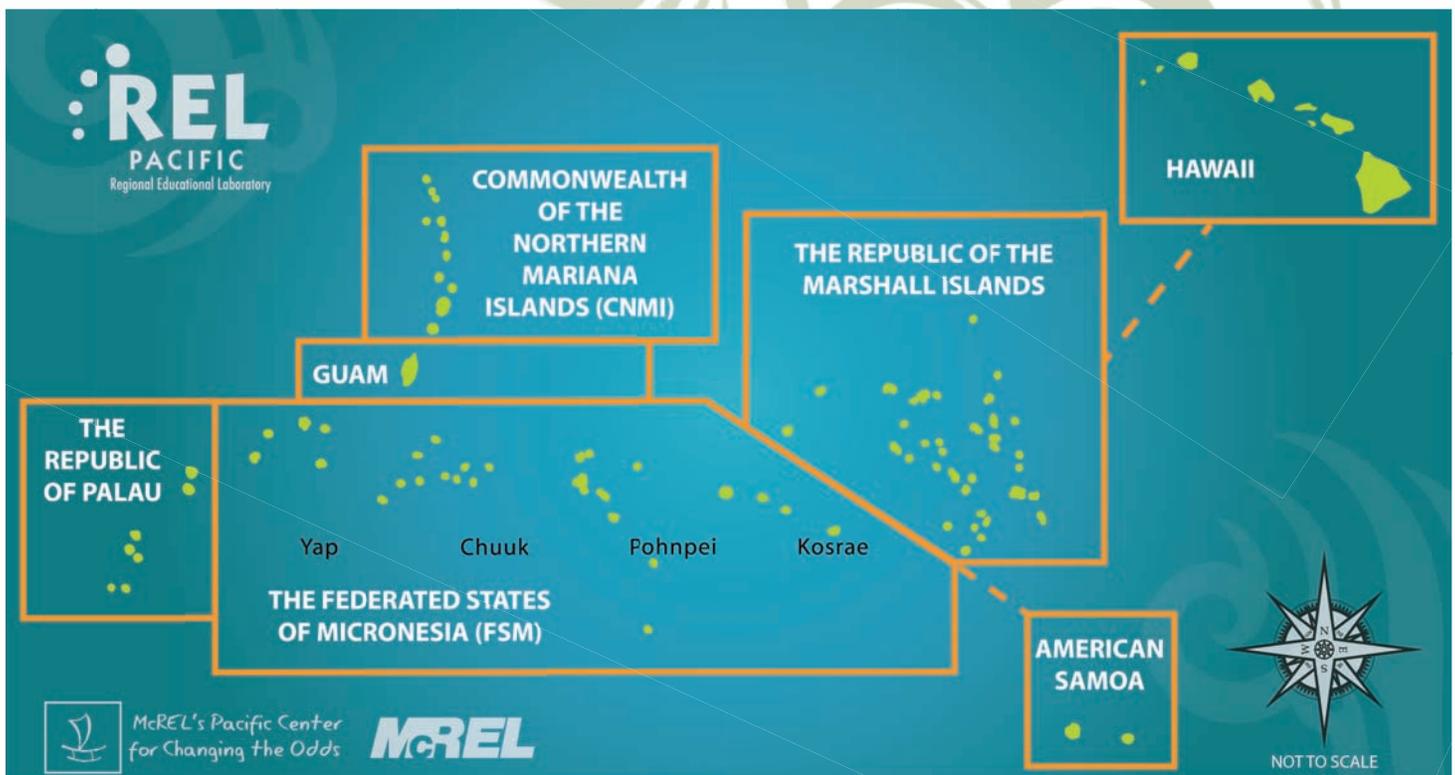
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Introduction to Regional Educational Laboratories

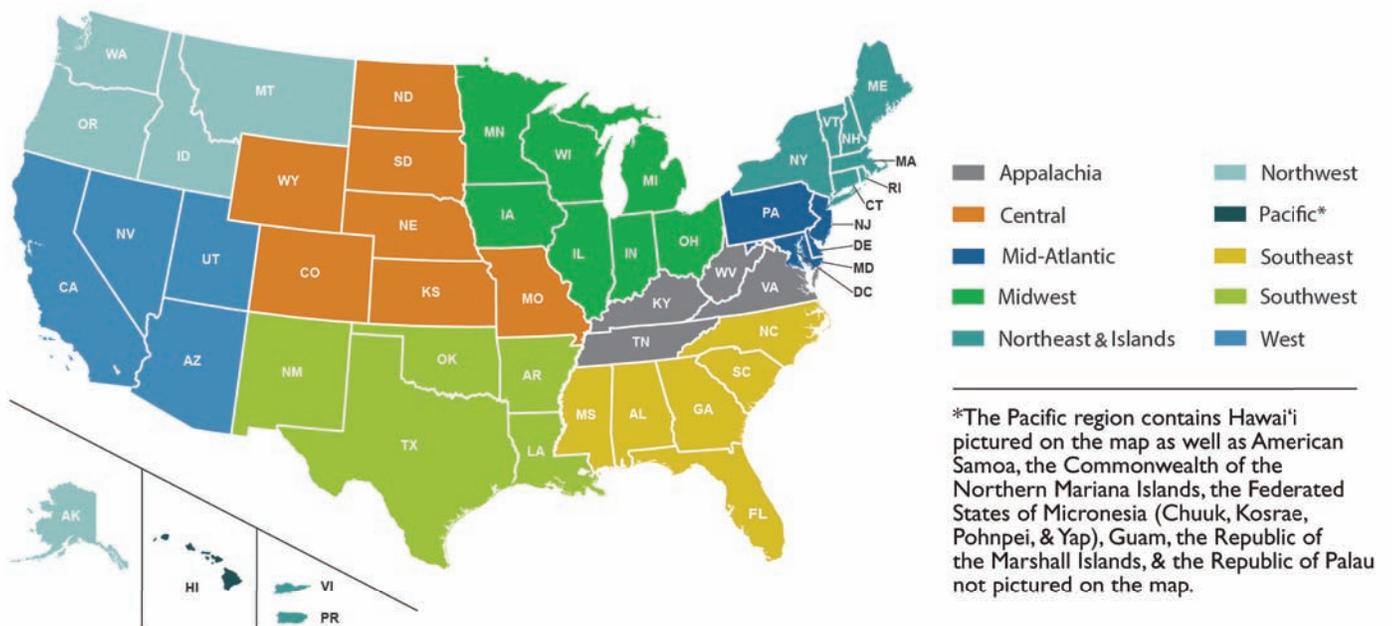
REL Pacific at McREL, 1 of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs) funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), serves educators in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), Guam, Hawai'i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

REL Pacific is committed to providing educators with resources that support the development of a deep and cohesive body of knowledge in priority topic areas. Like REL Pacific, other RELs across the United States and in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands have developed studies that address these topics. In this Research Digest, you will find information on the purpose and design of several REL studies that focus on engaging families and communities in education, ensuring college and career readiness, and strengthening teacher effectiveness.

These abstracts have been compiled from the REL Work in Progress webpage on the IES site: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/relwork/index.asp>. For additional information, please contact Dr. Richard Seder, associate director of McREL's Pacific Center for Changing the Odds, at rseder@mcrel.org or 808.664.8186.



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Engaging Families & Communities in Education

REL Pacific: Distribution and Academic Achievement of Students from the Freely Associated States in Hawai'i

Students from the freely associated states—the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau—are entitled to attend Hawai'i public schools under long-standing agreements between the United States and those nations. However, there is currently no single data marker in the Hawai'i State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) to identify students whose families have migrated from the freely associated states, making it difficult to know and report the distribution and educational outcomes of this population known as migrant Micronesians. Recent Hawai'i State Assessment data show that Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students are not attaining educational achievement levels comparable with other groups, suggesting that students from the freely associated states might also be struggling academically. This study aims to identify students who have migrated from the freely associated states using existing data in the Hawai'i SLDS and depict their distribution in the state as well as their academic achievement as measured by the Hawai'i State Assessment.

Ensuring College and Career Readiness

REL Appalachia: College Transition Courses in Kentucky

High schools in Kentucky are required to offer high school college-preparatory transition courses, or college-preparatory courses in math and reading for 12th-grade students who test below state benchmarks on the ACT assessment in grade 11. The purpose of this study is to provide descriptive analyses to help Kentucky understand the types of students who take college preparatory transition courses, the participation in, and the pass rates for such courses in alliance districts and a group of comparison districts. This information will help the Eastern Kentucky College and Career Readiness Collaborative set measurable goals and compare the outcomes for students in alliance districts and matched comparison districts.

REL Appalachia: Examining Patterns of Taking (and Passing) Algebra I Before the End of Ninth Grade

The purpose of this study is to describe the current state of student Algebra I course taking and passing rates in Kentucky and within school districts affiliated with the Eastern Kentucky College and Career Readiness Collaborative alliance. The study will report the Algebra I course taking patterns of students in grades 8 and 9 in alliance districts and the state of Kentucky as a whole. Specifically, results from this study will show the proportion of students enrolled in Algebra I in grades 8 or 9, and when they successfully completed it. The report will also show how patterns of taking and successfully completing Algebra I vary across student and school subgroups of interest to the research alliance.

REL Northwest: Early Identification of Students Likely to Drop Out or Graduate on Time From Oregon Leadership Network Schools

This study will provide data that research alliance districts need to identify students at risk of dropping out and to direct resources to those students. It will look at whether students' backgrounds, attendance, behavior, and achievement in grade 9 courses predict whether they will drop out of high school and whether they will graduate on time from high school. In addition to addressing specific needs identified by alliance members, the study will make an important contribution to knowledge about early warning indicators by expanding the range of districts in which the predictive efficiency of such indicators has been studied.

REL Northwest: Early Warning Indicators of High School Dropout for English Language Learners in Road Map Districts

This study will look at whether early warning indicators used to predict high school dropout in Road Map¹ school districts are accurate predictors for English language learners (ELLs) in those districts. The findings of this study will determine whether the existing cut points are appropriate for ELLs or whether different cut points would more accurately identify at-risk ELLs, thereby affecting tens of thousands of students across the seven Washington districts. The results of the study will also inform the broader work of Road Map's action planning. This process uses a theory of action that connects what is known about new-ELLs, long-term ELLs, recently proficient former ELLs, and long-term proficient ELLs (e.g., graduation rate, the proportion of students who are on track to graduate, and other characteristics) to effective instruction, interventions, and supports. Road Map's theory of action also connects data to specific actions each district can take to improve these students' high school graduation outcomes. Future work may then focus on measuring and monitoring the implementation and impact of the action plan.

REL Northwest: Pathways of Alaska High School Students into Postsecondary Options

This study addresses two key questions for the Alaska education policy community: (1) What pathways do students take once they exit high school?, and (2) How are these pathway choices associated with a variety of postsecondary outcomes, such as employment, dropping out of high school, and two- and four-year college attendance and persistence? In addition to these questions, which address all students in the state, the study will specifically examine how Alaska Native students progress through postsecondary choices. Study results will help policymakers target resources and services. The findings will also provide the foundation for an Alaska research alliance that is creating college/career readiness indicators, which will align secondary and postsecondary standards, curriculum, and assessment programs and measure and support student progress.

REL Northwest: Variations in College Enrollment and Persistence for Graduates of Oregon High Schools in Small Towns and Rural Communities

This study assesses how college enrollment and persistence rates to the second year of college vary among groups of students in the Rural Schools Network. It analyzes what gaps in college enrollment and persistence exist between groups of students and whether persistence rates vary by college type and time of initial enrollment. It also examines how students perform academically in first-year classes in public Oregon colleges, studies the relationship between high school state test scores and placement in remedial college courses, and identifies postsecondary courses in which student performance has a strong correlation with college persistence. This study will provide baseline data for future work to identify measures to track high school students' progress towards college readiness.

¹ For more information on Road Map schools, visit www.roadmapproject.org.



Strengthening Teacher Effectiveness

REL Central: Examining Evaluator Feedback in Teacher Evaluation Systems

All seven states in the Central Region are either implementing or developing performance-based teacher evaluation systems. These states want to ensure that their systems support effective teaching and learning by providing constructive and timely feedback. This study will collect information about: (1) how teachers perceive the feedback they receive, including its utility, accuracy, and credibility, (2) how teachers respond to feedback, including their access to follow-up learning opportunities, and (3) how teacher responsiveness to feedback relates to their performance in the classroom. The study will examine data from a teacher survey and data from evaluations of teacher performance in districts that are implementing teacher evaluation systems.

REL Central: Review of Approaches for Assessing Teacher Preparation Programs in the Central Region

Constituents in all seven Central states have identified assessment of the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs (TPPs) as a priority and many are developing or implementing new assessment approaches. States are looking for information to develop new systems for tracking the outcomes of TPPs and their graduates. This study is designed to provide information that builds capacity to assess the effectiveness of TPPs by describing data sources and methods currently used (or planned) to assess TPPs in the Central states by identifying available data in Central states that may be used to assess TPPs. Data sources include documentation of approaches for TPP assessment and available state data and interviews with key informants in each state.

REL Central: Understanding Clinical Practice in Traditional Teacher Preparation Programs in Missouri

Constituents in the Central Region have expressed the need for better information about the relationship between teacher preparation program (TPP) implementation and outcomes for teachers and their students. A necessary step in pursuing this goal is the collection of good information about TPP implementation, which requires better information about how TPP implementation varies and how to measure key components, such as student teaching and other field experiences. The purpose of this study is to document implementation of the clinical practice component in traditional Missouri TPPs and to provide a data collection tool and an approach for collecting data from TPP graduates that can be adopted and adapted as part of future research.

REL Mid-Atlantic: Relationships among Measures of Teacher Performance: Classroom Observations, Student Surveys, and Value Added

The purpose of this study is to conduct a series of analyses of a new observational rubric, based on Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching, for evaluating teachers' professional practice in the classroom. The study has three aims: (1) to understand the extent to which the new observational rubric produces differentiation in teacher scores, (2) to examine the extent to which ratings on the rubric are

correlated with teachers' estimated value-added and with the results of surveys measuring student engagement and perceptions, and (3) to use the data on all three measures to inform the district's decisions about how the measures might be combined into a useful composite measure of teacher performance. This kind of analysis cannot produce strong causal inferences, but it nonetheless could provide valuable evidence to educators and researchers about the elements of teaching that are associated with the largest gains in student achievement. It will also help to identify ways to simplify and improve the utility of the observational metric itself.

REL Mid-Atlantic: Alternative Student Outcomes for Growth Measures: Case Studies

Although various school districts are adopting alternative student outcomes for measuring growth, and many more will need to adopt them soon due to changes in state-level evaluation systems, little is yet known about their features, their uses, the process of implementation, or the challenges encountered. REL Mid-Atlantic proposes to fill this gap by conducting qualitative case studies of up to nine districts that are using alternative measures of student achievement growth in teacher performance ratings. The case studies will examine what alternative outcome measures are used, how the alternative growth measures are implemented, challenges and obstacles in implementation, how the measures are being used, and, where possible, the distribution of teacher performance on the measures, as compared with the distribution of teacher performance on conventional value-added measures that are based on state assessments.

REL Northeast and Islands: Implementation Study of New Hampshire's Teacher Evaluation System

A wide array of studies has called attention to the limitations of traditional educator evaluations, in particular their inability to differentiate among teachers and link teacher evaluations to student learning outcomes. In October 2011, the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) released a set of guidelines for a new statewide framework for teacher evaluation that includes multiple measures of student learning and teacher performance. The state then required its 15 School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools to design and implement new teacher evaluation systems aligned with the new state guidelines during the 2012–13 school year. The purpose of this study is to describe (1) the features of the new teacher evaluation system in each SIG school, (2) the fidelity of implementation of the new evaluation systems during the pilot year as well as the factors that influence implementation, (3) the extent to which schools use their multiple rating systems to differentiate across teachers, and (4) the changes in teachers' perceptions of professional school climate during the pilot implementation year. This study will provide the Northeast Educator Effectiveness Research Alliance and the NHDOE with data to inform the scaling up of the framework in the state's remaining schools in subsequent years.

REL Pacific: Patterns and Results of the Practice Teacher Certification Examination in the Republic of Palau

This study involves the administration of a demographic survey and the practice ETS Praxis I PPST® tests of reading, writing, and math to teachers employed with the Palau Ministry of Education. The paper-and-pencil tests were administered over a period of two days by Palau Ministry of Education and proctored by staff from the Ministry of Education and Palau Community College. Performance of the Palau teachers by teacher characteristics will be examined as well as strengths and weaknesses in the content categories of the practice ETS Praxis I PPST® in reading, writing, and math. The findings from the study will inform Palau's decision to move forward with full implementation of the Praxis I PPST® as part of its teacher certification process.

REL West: Analysis of the Stability of Teacher-Level Scores from Nevada's Growth Model

This study is designed to address the following research questions for reading and mathematics scores derived from the statewide Criterion Referenced Tests (CRTs) underlying the Nevada Growth Model: (1) How stable over time is the annual estimate of teacher effectiveness derived from the teacher-level growth score of the Nevada Growth Model (NGM)? (2) How does the stability of the estimate change when it is computed as an average over multiple years of annual growth scores? And (3) How does the stability of the NGM teacher-level score compare to the stability of the teacher-level "status" measure (i.e., the percent of students in the teacher's class who are judged to be proficient)? The results of this study can directly inform the deliberations of Nevada's Teachers and Leaders Council (TLC), State Board, and Nevada Department of Education (NDE) around appropriate ways to incorporate teacher-level NGM results into educator evaluations. With the information provided in the reports, decision makers who are designing the evaluation system will be able to consider this information in line with other design goals.

McREL

and



McREL's Pacific Center
for Changing the Odds

REL Appalachia

Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, & West Virginia
(703) 824-2828

RELAppalachia@cna.org

<http://www.RELAppalachia.org/>

REL Central

Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North
Dakota, South Dakota, & Wyoming
(888) 840-8510

relcentral@marzanoresearch.com

<http://www.relcentral.org>

REL Mid-Atlantic

Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania,
& Washington, DC

(866) RELMAFYI or (866) 735-6239

info@relmidatlantic.org

<http://www.relmidatlantic.org>

REL Midwest

Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota,
Ohio, & Wisconsin

(866) 730-6735; (630) 649-6500

relmidwest@air.org

<http://www.relmidwest.org>

REL Northeast and Islands

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New
Hampshire, New York, Puerto Rico, Rhode
Island, Vermont, & the Virgin Islands

(617) 969-7100

relneiinfo@edc.org

<http://www.relnei.org>

REL Northwest

Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, & Washington
(800) 547-6339, ext. 454

relnw@educationnorthwest.org

<http://educationnorthwest.org/rel-northwest>

REL Pacific

American Samoa, Commonwealth of the
Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of
Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap),
Guam, Hawai'i, Republic of the Marshall Islands,
& Republic of Palau

(808) 664-8175

RELpacific@mcrel.org

<http://relpacific.mcrel.org>

REL Southeast

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North
Carolina, & South Carolina

(850) 644-9352

rel-se@fsu.edu

<http://rel-se.fsu.edu>

REL Southwest

Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma,
& Texas

(800) 476-6861

askrelsw@sedl.org

<http://relsouthwest.sedl.org/>

REL West

Arizona, California, Nevada, & Utah

(866) 853-1831

relwest@wested.org

<http://relwest.wested.org>