NNERPP YEAR IN REVIEW 2017

ABOUT US

Housed at the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University, the National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships (NNERPP) was launched in 2016. NNERPP is a member organization for research-practice partnerships (RPPs) in education and is guided by its mission to develop, support, and connect RPPs. NNERPP's activities are organized around four key objectives: develop and share promising partnership strategies, facilitate cross-partnership collaborations, synthesize RPP-produced knowledge and disseminate findings, and advance policies and systems reforms.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is with great pleasure that I share with you our first ever year-in-review! Marking our second full year in operation, this report summarizes NNERPP efforts and activities from 2017 aimed at fulfilling our mission of developing, supporting, and connecting research-practice partnerships in education. In the second half of the review, we are excited to bring together a mere sampling of the numerous research projects completed and in progress our members have undertaken in 2017 (be sure to check out their individual websites for a complete listing of their work!).

Before we get started, a couple of notes of gratitude. First, I'd like to acknowledge and thank our funders for their generous support of NNERPP, without whom this work would not be possible: William T. Grant Foundation, Spencer Foundation, Laura and John Arnold Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and The Wallace Foundation. Second, I would also like to acknowledge the valuable operational support we receive from the Kinder Institute for Urban Research, our home base.

We have been heartened by the growth of NNERPP through this second year, highlights of which include the welcoming and learning from new members, expanding the number and types of NNERPP projects aimed at increasing connectivity across partnerships, and feeling a real sense of fellowship within our learning community for the first time. We are enthusiastic about the upcoming year, and look forward to continuing the creation of learning opportunities for those engaged in RPPs!

Paula Arce-Trigatti

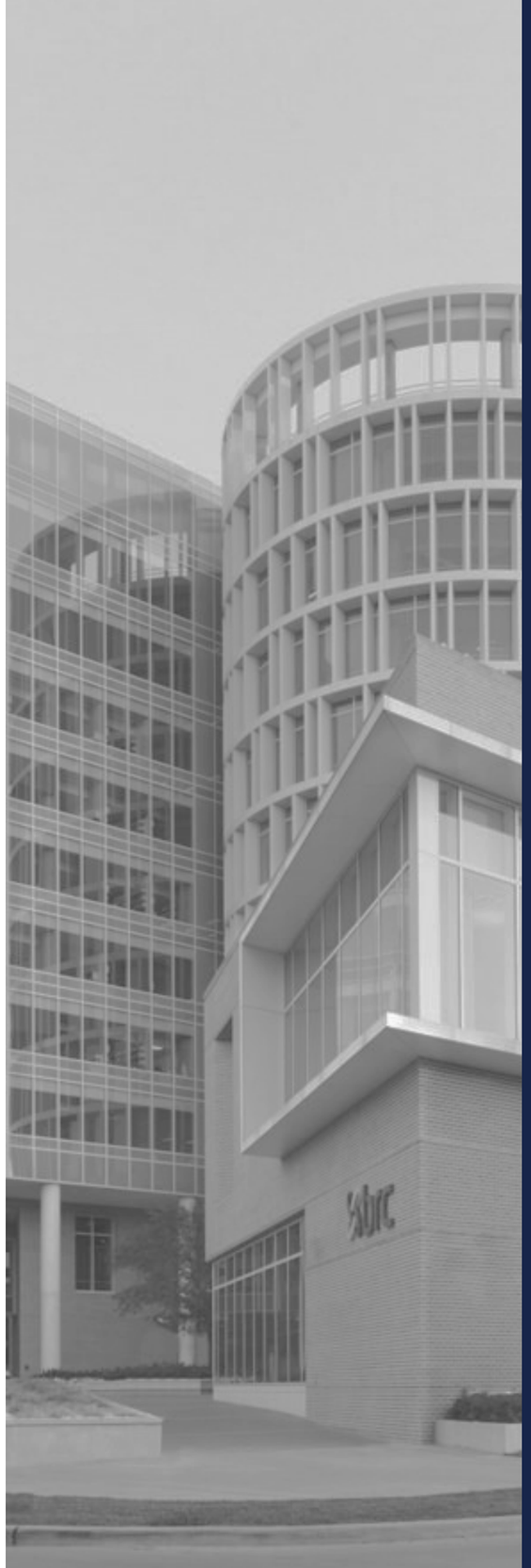
Director, National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships

CREDITS

This project would not have been possible without the excellent support and hard work of Nina Spitzley, Program Administrator to NNERPP. We acknowledge her contributions and thank her immensely. We would also like to acknowledge and thank all of our members for helping us pull together the details of their projects.

Photos: Bioscience Research Collaborative (BRC) photos courtesy of Rice University.
Design: O'Neill Design Co.

The National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships
713.348.4132 | nnerpp.rice.edu | Twitter @RPP_Network



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NNERPP
SUMMARY OF PROJECTS 2017

"This was really exciting to see. It's amazing how much NNERPP has grown in such a short time! Great work!"

— Participant at 2017 NNERPP Annual Forum

WINTER | Newsletter

We kicked off 2017 by launching the first volume of our **bi-weekly newsletter**. Hitting subscribers' inboxes every other Friday, this short read has enabled us to further our commitment towards developing a sense of community for those working or interested in RPPs. The newsletter provides a quick summary of recent research produced by our members, and facilitates knowledge sharing on other relevant readings, happenings, and learning taking place within and beyond NNERPP. We are excited about Volume 2!

SPRING | Knowledge Clearinghouse, EdWeek Blog

To support continuous improvement efforts for those currently working in or aspiring to work in RPPs, the **NNERPP RPP Knowledge Clearinghouse** is a collection of curated content inspired by the William T. Grant Foundation's landmark RPP microsite. In this section of our website, we are regularly gathering, organizing, and synthesizing materials from multiple sources in order to advance our understanding of what leads to productive RPPs. Featured topics are shaped by our assessment of current needs, and we've even had a chance to post a few materials produced by NNERPP as well. Look for more member-produced content sharing our take on various partnership challenges in 2018!

Featuring the work of several NNERPP members, "**Urban Education Reform: Bridging Research and Practice**" brings together researchers and those working in education agencies to discuss findings and reactions to RPP-produced research, share promising partnership strategies, and lessons learned through their experiences. We have found this to be a great way to raise the visibility of RPPs and additionally, as a new channel through which we can stay informed on members' work from across the Network. Stay tuned for more interesting readings through our blog in 2018!

SUMMER | 2017 Annual Forum

From July 26 to 28, over 100 participants gathered in Nashville, Tennessee for the **2017 NNERPP Annual Forum**. As one of the key activities NNERPP offers in support of its mission, these annual convenings help create a professional learning community among our members and other education leaders from across the country and provide a space to dive deep into central issues of research-practice partnership work.

This year's meeting was hosted in association with the Tennessee Education Research Alliance and saw 22 research-practice partnerships represented. In addition to researcher and practitioner representatives from all of our members, guests from relevant policy, advocacy, and philanthropic groups also attended. Under the theme "Testing the Boundaries of Our Thinking: Promoting Continuous Improvement in RPPs," this diverse group exchanged inspiring and innovative ideas, discussed important questions and problems, and collaborated in new ways.

continued »

Among others topics, participants discussed different approaches to research-practice partnership work and the importance of allowing the problem of practice to dictate the type of partnership; shared and examined theories of action; workshopped partnering and communication and engagement issues; explored problems of practice in practitioner-led conversations; collaborated on various research topics; and explored how to assess effectiveness of research-practice partnerships.

We look forward to next year's Annual Forum to be held in Portland, Oregon!

FALL | Virtual Brown Bags

We celebrated a full year of hosting our monthly one-hour **virtual brown bags** in October! These face-to-face online meetings provide space for NNERPP members to present past and current research projects, discuss specific partnership challenges, and workshop promising solutions. We've also invited external speakers to share relevant research, including friend of NNERPP Caitlin Farrell, who directs the National Center for Research in Policy and Practice (NCRPP). We look forward to continuing our collective learning with another round of these in 2018!

BY THE NUMBERS

103 Annual Forum Attendees

EdWeek Blog Posts **76**

70 NNERPP RPP Knowledge Clearinghouse Resources Listed

Newsletters Published **25**

11 Virtual Brown Bags Hosted

New NNERPP Members **9**

6 Partnerships Represented at Conferences

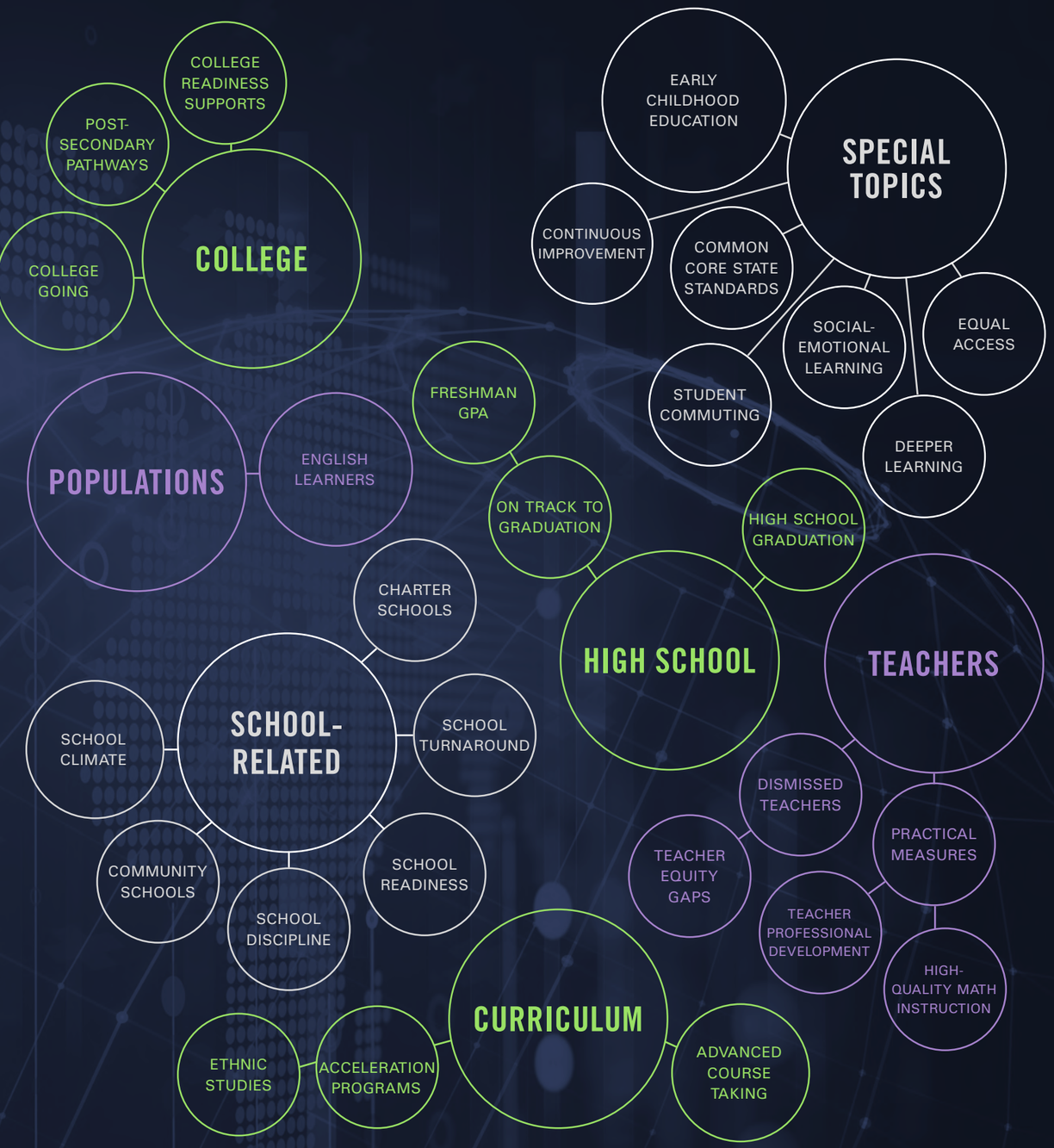
OUR MEMBERS

LOS ANGELES, CA
SACRAMENTO, CA
SAN FRANCISCO, CA
STANFORD, CA
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ATLANTA, GA
CHICAGO, IL
NAPERVILLE, IL
LOUISVILLE, KY
NEW ORLEANS, LA
BALTIMORE, MD

BOSTON, MA
CLEVELAND, OH
PORTLAND, OR
NEW YORK CITY, NY
PHILADELPHIA, PA
NASHVILLE, TN

AUSTIN, TX
HOUSTON, TX
MADISON, WI
MILWAUKEE, WI



SAMPLING OF RESEARCH TOPICS COVERED BY NNERPP MEMBERS IN 2017

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH: REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY (REL) MIDWEST

FOUNDED

2012

JOINED NNERPP

2015

PARTNERS

As part of a network of 10 regional educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, REL Midwest serves seven Midwest states, addressing the priorities and interests of these states through four research alliances and a networked improvement community, as well as other collaborations.

Website

ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest

Twitter

@RELMidwest

MISSION

REL Midwest works in partnership with practitioners to conduct applied research and provide training, coaching, and technical support. It supports a more evidence-based education system.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS

ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midwest/publications.aspx

PROJECTS

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS AMONG EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS PARTICIPATING IN IOWA'S QUALITY RATING SYSTEM

Research Questions

This study examined quality improvement activities among Iowa's early childhood education programs and the relationships between those activities and ratings on the state's Quality Rating System (QRS).

Why This Study

To effectively allocate resources to support quality improvement efforts, state administrators need information about how programs use quality improvement supports and activities.

Main Findings

Among other findings, the study found that almost all programs had staff participate in trainings and a majority of programs offered coaching, but participation in continuing education (defined as credit-bearing coursework toward any credential, degree, or certificate) was less common. The most common topic of professional development was health and safety practices. The results demonstrated that Iowa Quality Rating System ratings tend to increase over time, with programs that provide key staff with 15 or more training hours per year being more likely to increase ratings than programs that do not.

Also available for this report: infographic

Project in Practice

REL Midwest researchers held a full-day debrief with the Iowa Oversight Committee to walk through the findings and facilitate a feasibility impact discussion about potential changes as the Iowa Quality Rating System Oversight Committee recalibrated the state's Quality Rating System.

CHARACTERISTICS AND POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS OF STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATE IN ACCELERATION PROGRAMS IN MINNESOTA

Research Questions

The study explored five research questions about who participates in acceleration programs in Minnesota public high schools and what outcomes are associated with participation.

Why This Study

Though acceleration programs comprise a major part of Minnesota's strategy to increase high school students' college readiness and success, we know little about who participates in these programs and how participation affects college outcomes.

Main Findings

Almost half of the cohort investigated in the study participated in at least one acceleration program during high school; however, participants were disproportionately female, White, and not economically disadvantaged. Additionally, graduates who participated in acceleration programs and enrolled in a Minnesota college were more likely to receive college credit if they were White and not economically disadvantaged. Acceleration program participation was associated with more positive college outcomes than nonparticipation in terms of enrollment, readiness, and persistence to the second year. The full report outlines additional findings.

Also available for this report: infographic

Project in Practice

The findings have sparked conversations in Minnesota about credit transfer and access to acceleration programs. The Minnesota Department of Education will use the findings to develop career and college resources for school districts. Districts can also use the information about dual-credit opportunities as they develop their goals and strategies to increase career and college readiness, especially for underrepresented students, for their World's Best Workforce plans. The Minnesota Office of Higher Education invited researcher Lyzz Davis to present the results of the study to the State Longitudinal Education Data System governing board and other education policymakers.

AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH: REL SOUTHWEST

FOUNDED
1946

JOINED NNERPP
2016

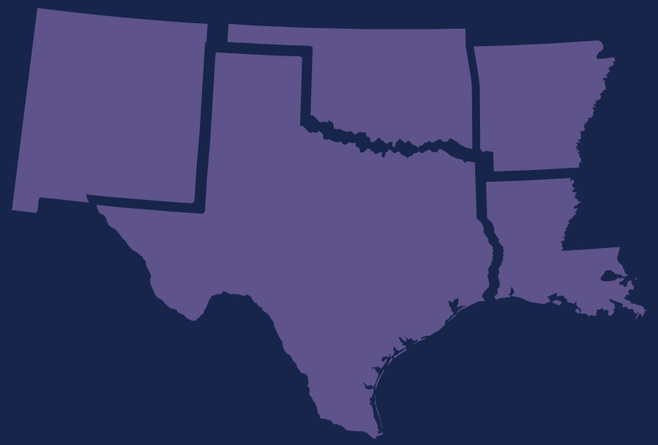
PARTNERS
As part of a network of 10 regional educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, REL Southwest serves the education needs of 5 Southwest states through eight research alliances which bring together practitioners, policymakers, and researchers.

MISSION
Helping states and school districts systematically use research and data to answer important issues of policy and practice, with the goal of improving student outcomes.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS
relsouthwest.sedl.org/resources/tools_products/reports_guides

Website
relsouthwest.sedl.org

Twitter
@RELSouthwest



GRADUATION EXAM PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE, GRADUATION RATES, AND ADVANCED COURSETAKING FOLLOWING CHANGES IN NEW MEXICO GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS, 2011–15

Research Questions
This study investigated five research questions to understand student performance on graduation exams, graduation rates among students at various levels of performance on the exam, patterns of enrollment in Algebra II and lab science courses, and how four-year graduation rates differed among students taking and not taking these additional courses. The specific research questions are outlined in greater detail in the report.

Why This Study
The New Mexico graduation rate has lagged behind the national graduation rate in recent years. In 2009, New Mexico introduced a new graduation exam and added Algebra II and two lab science courses as requirements to graduate. This study examines student outcomes among the 2011–15 cohorts before and after these changes in New Mexico high school graduation requirements.

Main Findings
The percentage of students scoring proficient or better on the reading, math, and science sections of the new graduation exam versus the prior one did not change substantially among the first cohort to take the new graduation exam but did increase among subsequent cohorts. The four-year graduation rate was higher among students who took Algebra II and two lab science courses than among students who did not. The report includes additional findings.

Also available for this report: slide show

Project in Practice
David Rogers, Executive Director for Dual Language Education of New Mexico, on the experience with the New Mexico Achievement Gap Research Alliance, during a recent webinar:

"We find ourselves data-rich and understanding-poor, meaning we seem to have a mountain of data available to us, but we often don't disaggregate and analyze that data in a useful format. [Through the alliance, we were able to] identify what research initiatives … would help us understand better and improve our educational programs, and then we were able to demonstrate how the data through this report should be disaggregated and analyzed for decision-making purposes. [It] has done a lot to establish a baseline for many of our leaders, policymakers, leaders [at the LEA and state levels]."

OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN OKLAHOMA RURAL AND NONRURAL SCHOOLS

Research Questions
1. How is the professional development that is offered to teachers structured in Oklahoma rural and nonrural schools?
2. How is it planned?
3. What support and barriers do teachers encounter when accessing professional development in Oklahoma rural and nonrural schools?

Why This Study
The Oklahoma State Department of Education seeks to address teacher shortage problems in Oklahoma by improving teacher retention through professional development. This study fills the gap in statewide information about teacher professional development opportunities in Oklahoma and compares the opportunities in rural and nonrural schools.

Main Findings
Among other findings, the study found that while almost all Oklahoma schools offer at least one type of professional development structure, a lower percentage of rural schools than of nonrural schools offer each type of professional development. Additionally, local planning teams are less common in rural schools than in nonrural schools. The greatest barrier to accessing professional development opportunities is scheduling conflicts with other school or professional activities. This barrier is more prevalent in rural than nonrural schools.

Also available for this report: infographic

Project in Practice
As a result of the findings, the Oklahoma State Department of Education launched an effort to increase professional development quality and rigor through three complementary strategies, including new standards, the development of a new learning management system, and a professional development focus in the newly adopted teacher/leader evaluation system.

Susan Pinson, Executive Director of Professional Learning for the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE), in a recent article:

"OSDE doesn't have a data department, but we need data to inform our work. Therefore, it's really important for us to 'link arms' with an organization like REL Southwest. The REL and this research alliance serve as bridges between researchers and practitioners that make critical information understandable. The REL's grounded professional research practices give the OSDE confidence that the data we receive will be accurate, clean and professionally presented."

BALTIMORE EDUCATION RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

FOUNDED
2006

JOINED NNERPP
2017

PARTNERS
Baltimore City Head Start
and Early Head Start
Baltimore City Health Department
Baltimore City Public Schools
Catholic Charities
Family League of Baltimore
Johns Hopkins University
Maryland Family Network
Morgan State University
St. Vincent De Paul
The Y of Central Maryland

MISSION
Conducting and disseminating long- and short-term strategic data analysis and research that informs decisions about policy and practice to improve the educational and life outcomes of children in Baltimore.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS
baltimore-berc.org/category/publications

Website
baltimore-berc.org

Twitter
@BaltimoreBERC

PROJECTS

BALTIMORE'S EARLY EDUCATION DATA COLLABORATIVE

The Early Education Data Collaborative (EEDC) is a data sharing collaborative convened by the Baltimore Education Research Consortium to support Baltimore City's collective impact initiative to improve child well-being from birth to adulthood. The EEDC is composed of partners committed to a collective vision of serving children and their families, and its purpose is to improve and increase the efficacy and interconnectedness of programs and services to benefit Baltimore's children. So far, reports from the Collaborative have provided a descriptive analysis of mothers and children in Baltimore and their service usage and examined how the experiences of and services received by Baltimore's families from birth to kindergarten are associated with school readiness and early elementary school performance. Partners have used this research to examine how families and children transition between programs and into kindergarten. The research has brought to light the number of children who appear to qualify for Head Start or Pre-K but do not participate in either program, as well as children who engage with city programs but withdraw at some point for unknown reasons.

GETTING TO HIGH SCHOOL IN BALTIMORE: STUDENT COMMUTING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Research Questions
The report asks a series of questions about how high school students in Baltimore commute to school, particularly those using public transportation, including how long those commutes take and how complicated they are.

Why This Study
The Maryland Transit Administration's (MTA) BaltimoreLink Plan represents a major overhaul of the local bus system in Baltimore. Given the upcoming significant changes to the public transportation system, it is especially important to develop an understanding of student commutes now.

Main Findings
Approximately 13,000 Baltimore high school students (6 out of 10) rely on public transportation to commute to school, with the average commute estimated to take 36.2 minutes. High school student commutes are likely to be more complicated than the average trip of a public transportation user, with 2 out of 3 (68%) high school students needing at least one transfer to get to school. The report outlines additional findings.

Project in Practice
This report has introduced student transit into the school district's strategic planning discussions and has encouraged MTA to be more proactive in its outreach to youth-serving organizations.

CLEVELAND ALLIANCE FOR EDUCATION RESEARCH

FOUNDED

2016

JOINED NNERPP

2017

PARTNERS

American Institutes for Research
Center for Urban Education
at Cleveland State University
Cleveland Metropolitan School District

MISSION

Bringing original data analysis to bear on problems of practice and policy in Cleveland schools.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS

csuohio.edu/cehs/cue/cleveland-alliance-for-education-research-caer

Website

csuohio.edu/cehs/cue/cleveland-alliance-for-education-research-caer

CLEVELAND ALLIANCE FOR SCHOOL CLIMATE RESEARCH

The Cleveland Alliance for School Climate Research is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences to help Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) gain new knowledge about the climate of its schools, specifically how climate is associated with student education outcomes and how students of different subgroups (e.g., race/ethnicity, disability) experience school climate differently. The project also seeks to build district capacity in research use, with a particular emphasis on the Humanware department at CMSD, which is responsible for addressing conditions for learning in district schools through social and emotional learning, positive behavioral supports, anti-bullying, and school-community collaborations, among other strategies. The research will help Humanware staff advocate for the importance of school climate to building-level staff in CMSD and will help identify which student subgroups may need more targeted assistance.

CLEVELAND PARTNERSHIP FOR ENGLISH LEARNER SUCCESS (CLE-PELS)

The Cleveland Partnership for English Learner Success (CLE-PELS) is a place-based researcher-practitioner partnership between the American Institutes for Research and the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. CLE-PELS leverages existing data from the district to (1) increase the district's capacity to access, conduct, interpret, and make sense of English learner (EL) research; and (2) support the use of EL research in decision making at the school and district levels. Specifically, partnership members use research to understand and address the needs of a growing and increasingly more diverse EL student population in the district, including examining how this group of students has changed over time, determining what student- and school-level factors are associated with their academic success, and identifying, implementing, and improving practices aimed at increasing EL student success.

CORE-PACE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

FOUNDED
2015

JOINED NNERPP
2017

PARTNERS
CORE Districts
Fresno USD, Garden Grove USD, Long Beach USD, Los Angeles USD, Oakland USD, Sacramento City USD, San Francisco USD, Santa Ana USD
Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)

MISSION
Supporting continuous improvement in the CORE districts and informing state-level education policy in California.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS
edpolicyinca.org/projects/core-pace-research-partnership

Website
edpolicyinca.org/projects/core-pace-research-partnership

Twitter
@COREdistricts
@edpolicyinca

PROJECTS

BUILDING SYSTEMS KNOWLEDGE FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: EARLY LESSONS FROM THE CORE DISTRICTS

Research Questions

This policy report details the early efforts of the CORE districts in collectively tackling a shared problem of practice by applying a particular continuous improvement model known as a Networked Improvement Community (NIC).

Why This Study

In California, recent policy shifts have created a high degree of local control with the expectation that school districts will think differently about school and district improvement. However, many districts lack the individual expertise and organizational capacity to support these changes at scale. In large part, this is due to a lack of a shared understanding of the routines, structures, and supports needed for school systems to develop and implement change ideas. This policy report is a first step towards clarifying what continuous improvement activities can look like in school districts.

Main Findings

In this report, the authors detail four lessons learned from the work of the CORE Improvement Community (CIC):

1. Effective systems analysis starts with creating an improvement team that is set up for success.
2. The systems analysis process enables district leaders to revise, refine, and expand their initial theories about the reasons behind their problem of practice.
3. Accessing and interpreting different types of data are critical to building a complete understanding of a problem of practice.
4. Teams getting started in continuous improvement benefit from expert facilitation and learn-by-doing activities.

The authors also include a description of challenges and roadblocks identified by CIC members and recommendations for educators looking to incorporate continuous improvement principles into their work.

Also available for this report: infographic

Project in Practice

This report (and accompanying infographic) was recently used in a meeting with the CORE district superintendents as a way to reflect on the work of the past year and think about how to deepen the work in the year ahead. As one CIC member stated about the partnership in general, "CORE's partnership with researchers provides districts with rich resources for data conversations both in statewide context and locally." CORE's work was also highlighted at a state convening on continuous improvement hosted by PACE. There, an administrator of a statewide support organization stated that CORE's research approach should be a model for every improvement network across the state. As a result of this report, CORE leaders and researchers have been invited to speak at more statewide meetings to counsel leaders at all levels of the system.

USING SURVEYS OF STUDENTS' SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND SCHOOL CLIMATE FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Research Questions

This study addresses four research questions to better understand differences across schools in social-emotional learning (SEL) and school culture and climate (CC) and the implications of these differences for the use of those measures in practice, including: How does the inclusion of SEL and CC into a school accountability system change school rank and the identification of the lowest performing schools?

Why This Study

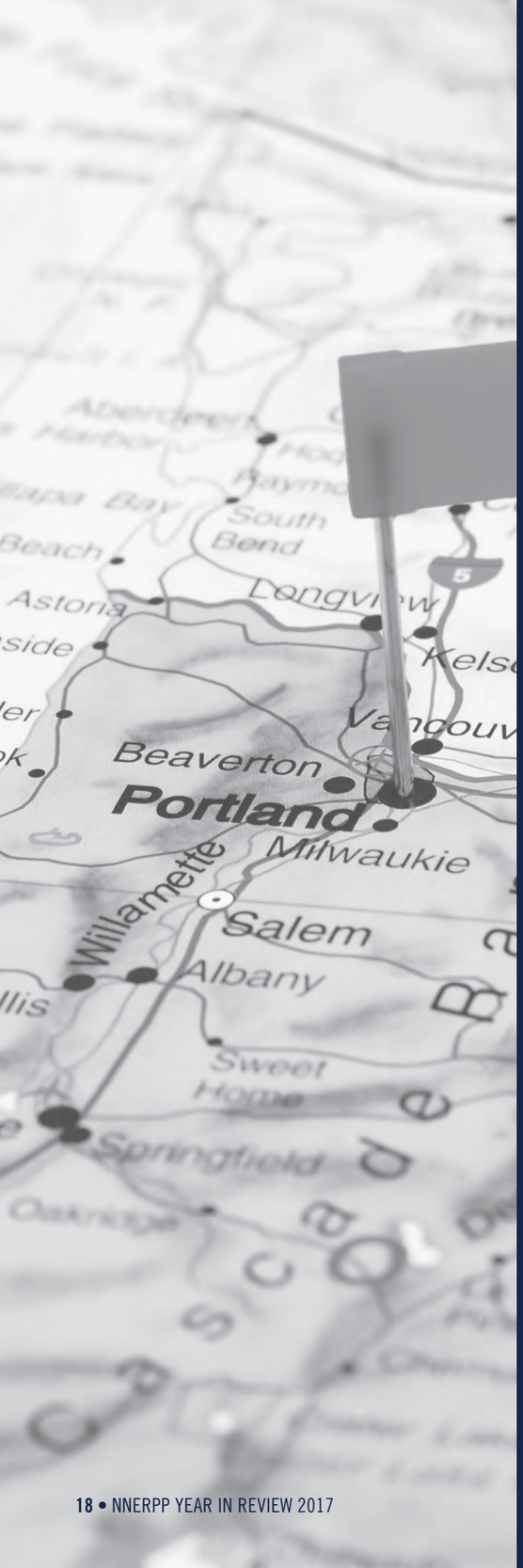
This policy brief summarizes recent CORE-PACE research to provide guidance for state and local policy makers about the suitability of social-emotional learning (SEL) and school culture and climate (CC) surveys as school performance indicators and how they can be used in a broader set of measures.

Main Findings

Measures from the CORE school districts of SEL and CC demonstrate validity and reliability, distinguish between schools, are related to other academic and non-academic measures, and illuminate dimensions of student achievement that go beyond traditional indicators. The measures thus show promise for informing school improvement.

Project in Practice

Practitioners within the CORE districts found the report (and the accompanying brief and webinars) to be helpful in thinking through the uses of the data. As one research lead said: "Research like this supports our ability to study the hypothesis that SEL competencies are a) important in their own right as contributors to school culture, and b) a part of the causative model in student achievement; if we can find them to be factors that are malleable for kids, we can unlock some new methods to support student learning." At the state level, this report led to PACE being invited to sit on two committees: 1) how to build a framework for SEL improvement in the state through the CASEL collaborating states initiative, and 2) how to measure and report CC in the context of the state's accountability system.



EDUCATION NORTHWEST

FOUNDED

1966

JOINED NNERPP

2016

PARTNERS

REL Northwest, operated by Education Northwest, primarily works in five Northwestern states, partnering with schools, districts, and communities on comprehensive, research-based solutions to the challenges they face. REL Northwest researchers and technical assistance providers work alongside practitioners and policymakers to conduct rigorous research and trainings and to share actionable findings that focus on the region's high-priority needs.

MISSION

Improving learning by building capacity in schools, families, and communities through applied research and development.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS

ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/publications/

Website

educationnorthwest.org

Twitter

@educationnw
@relnw

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE DATA INDICATORS: A GUIDE FOR DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS

Purpose

This guide follows up on an earlier REL Northwest study that identified how frequently students in six Oregon districts received exclusionary discipline. It is designed to supply educators with information on how to identify whether racial /ethnic disportionality in discipline practices exist in their schools or districts. It also aims to help educators use data to reduce racial/ethnic disportionality in suspensions and expulsions.

Why This Guide

The Oregon Leadership Network (OLN) is a statewide partnership of districts, local and state education agencies, and other partners dedicated to leadership for equity. Reducing disproportionality in school discipline is one of its main priorities. OLN requested the guide to support districts' efforts to eliminate disparities in discipline experienced by different groups of students.

Key Points

The guide provides information on how to select, analyze, and interpret data indicators to determine whether disproportionate discipline practices exist and, if an intervention is implemented, to measure progress toward desired outcomes. It also describes how to use the Plan–Do–Study–Act process to make data-informed decisions on improving equitable school discipline practices. Throughout the guide, examples are also provided from Oregon districts that have made reducing racial disproportionality in school discipline a priority.

Project in Practice

One OLN school district focused specifically on addressing discipline in middle schools after seeing data showing that students in grades 6–8 experienced the highest rates of suspensions and expulsions overall, as well as the greatest disparities among students who were disciplined. The district's equity coordinator began monthly meetings with middle school principals to share promising practices around establishing positive learning environments for each student. The district reported seeing significant decreases in the total number of days students spend out of the classroom because of disciplinary actions. They noted that having data that clearly defined the extent of the problem served as a catalyst for action.

ADVANCED COURSE ENROLLMENT AND PERFORMANCE IN WASHINGTON STATE: COMPARING SPANISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS WITH OTHER LANGUAGE MINORITY STUDENTS AND ENGLISH-ONLY SPEAKERS

Research Questions

This REL Northwest report describes patterns in advanced course taking among three groups of high school students in Washington state: Spanish-speaking students, other language minority students whose primary or home language is not Spanish, and English-only speakers.

Why This Study

This study responded to a request from the English learner work group of the Road Map Project, a regional collective impact partnership. The partnership's three priorities included identifying newcomer English learner students at risk of dropping out of school, examining how long it takes English learner students to be reclassified by their districts, and identifying and assessing English learner student success indicators.

Main Findings

Spanish-speaking students, regardless of their English learner status, take fewer advanced courses than do other language minority students and English-only speakers. Accounting for differences in students' prior grade point average and state standardized test scores in math and reading explains most, but not all, of the gaps in advanced course enrollment and performance. When other language minority students become English proficient, they perform in advanced courses as well as or better than English-only speakers do.

Project in Practice

Partnership members reported that working with REL Northwest to produce a series of data briefs on English learner students helped them feel empowered to advocate for policy and practice changes. They noted that the process allowed them to be more proactive and less dependent on the state education agency for information. In addition, the regional nature of the work helped develop trust among alliance members from different sectors such as K-12, higher education, and community-based organizations.

EDUCATION RESEARCH ALLIANCE FOR NEW ORLEANS

FOUNDED
2013

JOINED NNERPP
2016

PARTNERS
Louisiana Association of Educators
Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools
Louisiana Federation of Teachers
Louisiana Recovery School District
New Schools for New Orleans
Orleans Parish School Board
Orleans Public Education Network
Urban League of Greater New Orleans

MISSION
To produce rigorous, objective, and useful research to understand the outcomes and effects of the post-Katrina school reforms and their long-term effects on all students.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS
educationresearchalliancenola.org/publications/archives

Website
educationresearchalliancenola.org

Twitter
@ERA_NOLA

PROJECTS

HOW HAVE NEW ORLEANS' CHARTER-BASED SCHOOL REFORMS AFFECTED PRE-KINDERGARTEN?

Research Questions

The study addresses two primary questions about how the charter-based school reforms after Hurricane Katrina affected pre-Kindergarten offerings, specifically examining how the transition from a centralized school district to an almost-all-charter setting affected the supply of public pre-K programs in New Orleans and whether charter schools that offer pre-K programs perceive and experience a competitive advantage over those that do not offer pre-K.

Why This Study

Academic literature on New Orleans' market-based school reforms has yet to explore fully whether and how optional services such as pre-K, afterschool programs, or academic enrichment are offered. However, enrollment data reveal that there has been a decline in school-based pre-K seats (relative to the number of kindergarten seats available in publicly funded schools). This is the first study to examine not only how offerings of one particular optional service, pre-K, have changed as a centralized system transitioned to an almost-all-charter district, but also whether and how schools perceive and experience competitive benefits when offering pre-K.

Main Findings

After the reforms, the number of schools offering pre-K and the number of school-based pre-K seats dropped, even after accounting for drops in kindergarten enrollment. The decrease in seats occurred primarily in charter schools. At charter schools that continued to offer pre-K after Katrina, school leaders offered two school-centered motivations – pursuit of higher test scores and early recruitment of families committed to sticking with the school for the long-run – in addition to more mission-focused commitments to providing early education for the benefit of students and the community. The study finds that offering pre-K had no measurable effect on charter schools' third-grade math or ELA test scores, potentially as a result of high student mobility between pre-K and third grade. Charter schools that offered pre-K programs saw short-term, but not long-term, enrollment benefits.

Project in Practice

This research has been used by local practitioners and policymakers to better understand the early childhood education context in the city as the percentage of charter schools in the district continues to grow.

DID THE TEACHERS DISMISSED AFTER HURRICANE KATRINA RETURN TO PUBLIC EDUCATION?

Research Questions

The study addresses four main questions about the teachers that were dismissed after Hurricane Katrina, investigating aspects such as how many of these teachers returned to public schools in Louisiana and to New Orleans' reformed schools.

Why This Study

Academic literature on New Orleans' system-wide teacher dismissal has focused on anecdotal evidence of the economic and psychological harm to affected teachers. However, administrative data reveal that many pre-Katrina teachers continue to play a role in the city's reformed school system. This is the first study to use state administrative records to provide evidence about the post-Katrina outcomes of the teachers who were subject to dismissal.

Main Findings

Among other findings, the study showed that approximately 50% of the dismissed teachers returned to work in administrative, teaching, or other positions in Louisiana's public schools by fall 2007. Of those, 32% were re-employed in New Orleans schools and 18% in other Louisiana Parishes. These numbers had dropped substantially by 2013.

Project in Practice

This research contributed to public discourse on the New Orleans school reforms by providing an analysis of one way in which the post-Katrina mass dismissal of teachers has had a lasting impact on the teachers, their families, and the community.

HOUSTON EDUCATION RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

FOUNDED

2011

JOINED NNERPP

2016

PARTNERS

Alief Independent School District
Houston Independent School District
Rice University

VISION

Educational equity in Houston and beyond.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS

kinder.rice.edu/herc/research

Website

kinder.rice.edu/herc

THE BENEFITS OF HISD PRE-KINDERGARTEN: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YEARS OF EXPOSURE AND SCHOOL READINESS

Research Questions

1. To what extent is exposure to Houston Independent School District (HISD) pre-kindergarten programs associated with student readiness at kindergarten entry?
2. What, if any, is the added benefit of an additional year of pre-kindergarten education?
3. To what extent do students in various social and demographic groups benefit differently from participation?

Why This Study

Early childhood education is viewed as one way to narrow gaps in school readiness and achievement. Given the significant resources needed to provide full-day pre-kindergarten programs, it is important to understand whether students in Houston are benefiting from participating in the district's pre-kindergarten program and whether a second year of pre-K provides an added benefit.

Main Findings

Overall, students who attended one or two years of HISD pre-K were significantly more likely to be ready than those who attended zero years on both English and Spanish assessments. For students who participated in the English assessment, those with two years of HISD pre-K had the highest rates of school readiness, significantly higher than students who participated in one or zero years. However, students did not appear to benefit from a second year on the Spanish assessment.

2-PART "EQUALITY OF PRE-KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES" STUDY:

EXAMINING STUDENT DIFFERENCES IN ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY PRE-KINDERGARTEN [PART 1] & THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRE-K QUALITY AND STUDENT OUTCOMES [PART 2]

Research Questions

There are three questions Part 1 of this study aims to address:

1. What is the distribution of pre-K quality benchmarks reached by schools in the district?
2. Which student characteristics are associated with enrollment in pre-K programs with a higher number of quality benchmarks (continuous indicator)?
3. Which student characteristics are associated with enrollment in pre-K programs with the most quality benchmarks and those with the fewest (dichotomous indicators)?

There are two questions Part 2 of this study aims to address:

1. To what extent is the quality of a pre-K program associated with student academic outcomes, controlling for prior student achievement?
2. How does the relationship between pre-K quality and student academic outcomes vary for students of different social and demographic groups?

Why This Study

This study focuses on variations in the quality of pre-kindergarten programs across the Houston Independent School District (HISD) by examining the number of National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) quality benchmarks attained by pre-K programs and how these contexts vary for students of different racial/ethnic, economic, and linguistic backgrounds.

Main Findings

Findings from part 1 of this study suggest that White and Black students are in pre-K programs which have attained a higher number of quality benchmarks than Hispanic and Asian students. Additionally, students who have limited English proficiency (LEP) are in programs attaining fewer benchmarks than non-LEP students.

Part 2 of this study finds that, on average, there appears to be no direct association between the total number of quality benchmarks attained by a student's school and the student's average CIRCLE assessment score at the end of pre-K. For some groups, however, quality is positively associated with academic outcomes at the end of pre-K. Compared to their peers, non-economically disadvantaged students, students who have limited English proficiency, or are in bilingual programs, exhibit higher CIRCLE scores when enrolled in programs with a higher number of quality benchmarks.

Project in Practice

The Houston Independent School District shared this report with state legislators during the session in Spring 2017 to fight for the maintenance of (at least) the current level of pre-k funding available to districts.

Project in Practice

The study was just recently shared with the new director of Early Childhood Education for the Houston Independent School District. There is high interest from the district in the quality benchmarks attained by HISD pre-k programs.

JOHN W. GARDNER CENTER FOR YOUTH AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

FOUNDED
2000

JOINED NNERPP
2017

PARTNERS
Oakland Unified School District
Ravenswood City School District
Redwood City School District
San Francisco Unified School District
Sequoia Union High School District

MISSION
Producing evidence-based research to improve the wellbeing of youth, informing policy and practice in the fields of education and youth development, and supporting equity and capacity-building in youth-serving organizations.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS
gardnercenter.stanford.edu/publications

Website
gardnercenter.stanford.edu

Twitter
@gardnercenter

PROJECTS

FULL SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN THE OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT [ONGOING]

Nationally, schools and districts are using the community school model to partner with community-based organizations to provide integrated services that address student barriers to learning, especially those related to poverty. In this ongoing partnership with Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), the Gardner Center is conducting a longitudinal, multi-methods research project examining early outcomes and ongoing implementation of the district's Full Service Community Schools Initiative. OUSD was the first in the nation to use community schools as a strategy for equity district-wide; today, more than a third of all OUSD students attend a community school. Since 2011, when OUSD adopted community schools as an approach to mitigate the effects of inequality on student academic and life outcomes, the district has scaled up from eight community schools to thirty-five. By identifying key implementation strategies as well as emerging patterns in student outcomes, this project seeks to support district continuous improvement and scale-up. Specific research questions include: How is the community school model being implemented across schools in Oakland? What factors hinder or facilitate implementation? What patterns in student and school outcomes are emerging across sites?

Completed studies for this project show that overall, OUSD community schools are partnering with Community Based Organizations and families around shared goals for students. They also find that staff at mature sites report high levels of collaboration between adults at the school, greater levels of family engagement in academics and school decision-making, and meaningful alignment of partner resources to meet student needs; and that community schools create conditions to support teaching and learning. OUSD administrative data indicate that community schools are experiencing desirable trends in a range of student outcomes. To date, the joint research has helped inform decisions on the new school "onboarding" process, professional development for community school managers, engagement with community school principals, and other training and development. Research briefs and other publications have been useful tools to share with site level staff as well as across the district more broadly.

LOS ANGELES EDUCATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE

FOUNDED

2011

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2016

PARTNERS

Los Angeles Unified School District

MISSION

Improving educational outcomes for Los Angeles students by engaging in a collaborative inquiry process and producing a coherent, useful, and cumulative program of research designed to inform education policymaking and practice.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS

laeri.org/projects-and-publications

Website

laeri.org

Twitter

@LAEdResearch

COLLEGE GOING IN LAUSD: AN ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE ENROLLMENT, PERSISTENCE, AND COMPLETION PATTERNS

Research Questions

The report examined overall college enrollment, persistence, and completion patterns of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) graduates and differences by demographic characteristics, program status, academic preparation, and college eligibility.

Why This Study

College attendance and completion have become increasingly critical pathways to social and economic well-being. This report is the first in-depth analysis of the postsecondary outcomes of LAUSD graduates and thus provides a baseline from which Los Angeles can measure progress going forward.

Main Findings

The classes of 2008, 2013, and 2014 all had similar college enrollment rates of about 70% within one year of high school graduation. Most LAUSD students stayed in California and enrolled in public colleges and universities. The study found gender and race disparities in college enrollment, persistence, and undermatch rates. Additional findings are detailed in the report.

Project in Practice

This research influenced the district's interest in regularly collecting information about their graduates' college enrollment and success, and also sparked conversations about ensuring that students receive information and support during the college application process.

Carol Alexander, LA Unified's Director of A-G/College Readiness, in NNERPP's EdWeek blog:

"In addition to focusing on post-secondary data as a metric of our success, our partnership has brought more attention to the information and data we need as students progress through the application process."

COLLEGE READINESS SUPPORTS IN LAUSD HIGH SCHOOLS: A FIRST LOOK

Research Questions

The report explored the prevalence and types of college-related resources available to LAUSD high school students, as well as the barriers to providing those resources and some promising practices that emerged from focus groups and interviews.

Why This Study

Given the increasing importance of college completion for individuals' economic and social well-being and growing socioeconomic disparities in students' college enrollment and completion, public schools play a critical role in ensuring that students enroll in, and are well prepared to succeed in, college. This report provides a first look at college readiness supports for high school students in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and some of the challenges schools face when trying to ensure that all students receive sufficient support during the college application process.

Main Findings

Nearly all LAUSD high schools provide students with information about the course requirements for high school graduation and college eligibility as well as support during the college application, financial aid, and enrollment process. Nonetheless, some students report lacking sufficient information and assistance and many counselors feel overwhelmed by large caseloads and competing demands on their time. External service providers play an important role in providing supports, but optimizing their assistance requires coordination and monitoring to better understand who is receiving services and to avoid duplication.

Project in Practice

This research informed the district's plans to build additional supports for college counselors and counseling services into their College Readiness Block Grant. In addition, the results from this study informed subsequent collaboration, through the inclusion of questions to district-wide surveys in order to better understand college access supports from the perspective of both counselors and students, as well as to describe differences among schools.

Dr. Frances Gipson, LA Unified's Chief Academic Officer, on 89.3 KPCC on August 30, 2017:

"Things that we are focusing on right now, as a result of this research [are] college and career coaches at our middle schools," along with more counselors at high schools and social workers to help students.

MADISON EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

FOUNDED

2016

JOINED NNERPP

2017

PARTNERS

Madison Metropolitan School District
University of Wisconsin-Madison's
Wisconsin Center for Education Research

MISSION

Engaging in and supporting high-quality, problem-based research, contributing to policy discussions based on MEP-generated research, and regularly disseminating findings to the research community, school district, and the public in order to improve the experiences and individual outcomes for all Madison Metropolitan School District students.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS

mep.wceruw.org/research.html

Website

mep.wceruw.org

PROJECTS

MADISON METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM: PATTERNS OF ENROLLMENT

Research Questions

The report addresses four research questions in total, including: How does participation in Madison Metropolitan School District's (MMSD) four-year-old kindergarten differ by groups of children? Does MMSD four-year-old kindergarten reach students of color or those who are least advantaged? The report provides a comparative analysis of 6 other comparable Wisconsin school districts. The two remaining research questions address additional aspects related to enrollment patterns and are detailed in the full report.

Why This Study

This report on enrollment patterns was created to give the district a basic understanding of enrollment patterns in their 4K program and sought to determine if the program was indeed an equity enhancing program.

Main Findings

Overall, the report finds that MMSD 4K is an equity-enhancing program with students from historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups and students from less advantaged backgrounds being more likely to participate than non-Hispanic white or more socioeconomically advantaged students.

Project in Practice

MMSD found this report incredibly helpful in quantifying trends across the first several years of the 4K program. While the district already knew about some aspects of enrollment, digging into it in greater depth over a longer period of time helped frame and confirm much of what they believed. The report also gave a public profile to the program, informing the greater Madison community about these enrollment trends and the potential impact on equity. MMSD will continue to use this report as part of a comprehensive review of the 4K program. It will be informative for long-term planning and immediate programmatic improvement.

PREPARING THE LITTLEST LEARNERS: FOUR-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT AND KINDERGARTEN READINESS IN MMSD [SCHEDULED TO BE RELEASED IN MID-DECEMBER]

Research Questions

This report provides a descriptive analysis of the association of enrollment in MMSD four-year-old kindergarten (4K) with readiness for five-year-old kindergarten using outcomes of literacy and socioemotional skills. The report also provides a comparative analysis with a partner school district, Milwaukee Public Schools. Two additional research questions address readiness and enrollment associations by student and family characteristics and between site variance.

Why This Study

As a follow up to our previous enrollment study, this study address the next logical question for the district - what impact does the 4K program have on preparing students for kindergarten?

Main Findings

Preliminary results indicate that enrollment in MMSD's 4K program is associated with literacy gains upon entry to kindergarten for low-income students, minority students, and students of parents who end their education after high school. A full district analysis and comparative analysis using data from Milwaukee Public Schools will be available to the public in mid-December.

Project in Practice

This brief is still early in the release process; as such, we have not yet had a chance to see how it will be used in practice. The coming weeks will give us a better sense of its application and practitioner reaction. Early indications are promising - district administrators who are part of the review process prior to release seem excited with the content and eager to learn more as we dig into this work.

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION OFFICE OF PLANNING AND RESEARCH

JOINED NNERPP

2017

PARTNERS

Abt Associates
American Institutes for Research
Center for the Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research
MIT School Effectiveness and Inequality Initiative
The National Bureau of Economic Research

MISSION

The mission of the Office of Planning and Research is to help the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Massachusetts districts and schools to implement effective policy and programs and make effective resource use decisions to improve student outcomes.

Website

doe.mass.edu/research

Twitter

@maschoolsk12
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TEACHER EQUITY GAPS IN MASSACHUSETTS

Research Questions

Are there gaps in access to effective teachers in Massachusetts? If so, how consequential are those gaps likely to be for disadvantaged students? The report also addresses six other research questions about teacher effectiveness in Massachusetts, listed in the brief.

Why This Study

Effective teachers make a real difference for student learning. But research shows that academically struggling students and those from historically low performing subgroups are less likely to be assigned the teachers who generate the strongest results, leading to missed opportunities to close achievement gaps. This policy brief, produced through the state's CALDER partnership, provides an overview of how effective teachers are identified and what teacher equity gaps look like in Massachusetts to address the important issue of access to effective educators.

Main Findings

In Massachusetts, low-income students are 31 percent more likely to be assigned to teachers with less than three years of experience and twice as likely to be assigned to teachers rated unsatisfactory or needs improvement, as compared to non-low-income students. Inequitable access to effective teachers for low-income students increases achievement gaps by up to three weeks of learning in mathematics and six weeks in English language arts between fourth and eighth grade. Additional findings are detailed in the policy brief.

Project in Practice

The agency is using the policy brief to demonstrate to districts the impact of inequitable access to effective educators in Massachusetts as part of its strategy for increasing districts' focus and attention on teacher equity issues. The report is helping to build support for the agency's Equity Playbook, Educational Equity Professional Learning Network, and other state resources related to teacher equity. Ultimately it will also inform the new district equity plans required as part of the federal Title I program.

TURNAROUND PRACTICES RESEARCH AND EVALUATION REPORTS

Research Questions

What is the impact of school turnaround on student outcomes in Massachusetts? What implementation strategies differentiate turnaround schools that have seen sustained improvement over time from ones that have not?

Why This Study

Improving outcomes for students in the state's lowest performing schools is a key part of the agency's strategy to close achievement gaps and promote success after high school for all students. The reports from this project examine the implementation and impact of Massachusetts' school turnaround strategy and form the basis of a number of research-based resources for districts engaged in turnaround work.

Main Findings

Relative to matched comparison schools in the same district, students in schools that received School Redesign Grants to implement turnaround strategies gained an additional year of learning after one year. Students continued to gain in the second and third years, ultimately improving by an average of 0.4 to 0.5 standard deviations (about half of the achievement gap between black and white students). Schools that improved shared the following four practices in common: leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration; intentional practices for improving instruction; student-specific instruction and supports to all students; and a focus on school climate and culture.

Project in Practice

The department uses its turnaround research to revise support structures to turnaround schools and districts, so that they are well aligned to the findings from this work. Its annual monitoring tool, school improvement planning tools, and direct targeted assistance efforts are all aligned to the four turnaround practices. A complementary field guide is also available for the district and school staff to learn about best practices in turnaround schools that have been successful in sustaining high academic achievement for students across the state.

MULTNOMAH COUNTY PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION RESEARCH

FOUNDED

2013

JOINED NNERPP

2016

MISSION

Using results-driven data to increase learning and equity.

PARTNERS

Centennial School District
David Douglas School District
Gresham-Barlow School District
Northwest Evaluation Association
Parkrose School District
Portland Public Schools
Reynolds School District
School of Education
at the University of Portland

Website

sites.up.edu/edresearch

PROJECTS

A DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM IN GRESHAM-BARLOW SCHOOL DISTRICT

Research Questions

Which students are enrolling in Gresham-Barlow School District's Advanced Placement program and which students are successful?

Why This Study

Research shows that participating in Advanced Placement (AP) courses in high school is a significant predictor of college enrollment and college degree attainment but that underrepresented students are less likely to participate in AP programs. This study focuses on AP program participation by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender to work towards equitable AP programming.

Main Findings

Female students, White students, and students of high socioeconomic status (SES) were more likely to participate in AP courses in 2014-2015, at disproportionate rates to overall district enrollment. Despite disproportionate enrollment, GPAs in 2014-2015 were very similar across all demographic groups, indicating similar success rates once enrolled.

Project in Practice

Gresham-Barlow School District put an initiative into action to identify and recruit students who had been successful in other classes but were not choosing to enroll in AP classes. Next, the district organized multiple informational sessions explaining the AP program and its benefits to these students and their families. These efforts resulted in 156 first-time AP students enrolled during the 2015-2016 school year. The district then conducted further research to examine the perceptions of these first-year AP students, specifically those of traditionally underrepresented AP students.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR AMBITIOUS AND EQUITABLE MATHEMATICS INSTRUCTION

FOUNDED

2007

JOINED NNERPP

2017

PARTNERS

Corona-Norco Unified School District
Federal Way Public Schools
Fort Worth Independent School District
Jefferson County Public Schools
Metro Nashville Public Schools
New York University
Riverside Unified School District
San Francisco Unified School District
Strategic Education Research Partnership
University of California-Riverside
University of Washington
Val Verde Unified School District
Vanderbilt University

MISSION

Investigating and supporting the development of ambitious and equitable mathematics instruction in large urban districts

MIST PUBLICATIONS

peabody.vanderbilt.edu/departments/tl/teaching_and_learning_research/mist/mist_dissemination.php

Websites

vanderbi.lt/mist
education.uw.edu/pmr2

MIDDLE SCHOOL MATHEMATICS AND THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING OF TEACHING (MIST)

Research Questions

What does it take to improve the quality of math teaching and student learning on a large scale?

Why This Study

Schools and districts across the U.S. face the challenge of supporting increasingly diverse groups of students to attain increasingly rigorous learning goals across multiple subject matter areas including mathematics. Not surprisingly, the proportion of students judged to be proficient in mathematics has dropped significantly in most districts when more rigorous assessments of student learning were implemented. The MIST project addressed this issue by establishing partnerships with two large urban school districts for four years and an additional two districts for eight years. In these partnerships, we investigated what it takes to improve the quality of mathematics teaching and student learning on a large scale.

Main Findings

In the course of our collaboration with the four districts, we compiled a longitudinal data set that spans classroom and district instructional leadership. The empirically grounded improvement strategies that we identified constitute a coherent theory of action (TOA) for instructional improvement that bridges the traditional divide between research on teaching and learning, and research on policy and leadership. The TOA consists of three top-level components: *a coherent instructional system* for supporting teachers' improvement of their instructional practices, *school leaders' practices as instructional leaders* in mathematics, and *district leaders' practices in supporting the development of school-level capacity* for instructional improvement. This TOA provides actionable, research-based guidance on the types of improvement strategies that schools and districts can implement to address the challenge of supporting *all* students in attaining increasingly rigorous learning goals.

Project in Practice

Our MIST partnership had both pragmatic and research goals. We addressed our pragmatic goal of adding value to the districts' instructional improvement efforts by collecting and analyzing data each year to document how each district's instructional improvement strategies were actually playing out in schools and classrooms. We then shared our findings with each district leader yearly and made actionable recommendations about how they might revise their current improvement strategies to make them more effective. Districts took up 67% of our recommendations, noting that they found our findings relevant due to their direct focus on districts' current problems of practice.

PRACTICAL MEASURES, ROUTINES, AND REPRESENTATIONS FOR IMPROVING INSTRUCTION (PMRR)

Research Questions

What types of practical measures, routines, and representations support school districts to improve instruction?

Why This Study

The aim of the MIST project was to figure out what supports should be implemented in order to improve the quality of math teaching and learning, and the aim of PMRR is to figure out how to implement some of those improvement strategies effectively/reliably. Implementing instructional improvement strategies in school districts and other educational organizations that target the core of mathematics teaching and learning is challenging work. It requires significant learning on the part of all role groups involved (e.g., teachers, coaches, school leaders, central office leaders). One challenge is that there are few tools practitioners can use to engage in frequent, systematic, disciplined inquiry regarding the implementation of particular strategies in and across various contexts. In response, in this project, we are collaborating with our school district partners to develop a system of practical measures, routines for using the measures, and representations of the measures to support the implementation of instructional improvement strategies in middle-grades mathematics. Practical measures are designed to provide practitioners with frequent, rapid feedback that enables them to assess and improve their practices.

Main Findings

We have developed a measure of the quality of small-group instruction and a measure of the quality of whole-class discussion. We are also working to develop a measure of the rigor of mathematical tasks prior to implementation and a measure of the launch of a problem-solving task. As part of this work, we are investigating how to embed the use of the measures in different types of professional learning, including teacher collaborative meeting and content-specific instructional coaching.

Project in Practice

In PMRR, we are adjusting the focus of our work to fit with our partner districts' current improvement strategies and are collaborating with district leaders to fit within ongoing initiatives. For example, in Metro Nashville Public Schools, the whole class discussion survey tool was introduced during a monthly coaching meeting with secondary instructional coaches.. The coaches gather each month, continuing to co-construct a vision of high quality math instruction and what factors impact the quality of classroom discourse as a means of determining what to focus on during coaching sessions with their partner teachers. Coaches observe classrooms and analyze the data from administration of the measure to determine next steps with individual teachers and school-level professional development. District leadership is able to look at aggregated data to determine professional development needs system-wide.

PHILADELPHIA EDUCATION RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

FOUNDED

2014

JOINED NNERPP

2016

PARTNERS

Local university faculty
Philadelphia's charter school sector
Research for Action
School District of Philadelphia

MISSION

Conducting research and analysis to strengthen policy and practice for Philadelphia's students and schools

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS

phillyeducationresearch.org/research/our-research/

Website

phillyeducationresearch.org

Twitter

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PROJECTS

FINDING THEIR STRIDE: KINDERGARTEN ENGLISH LEARNERS AND TIME TO PROFICIENCY IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

Research Questions

1. Among English learner students who enrolled in kindergarten from 2008-09 to 2011-12, what percentage reached English proficiency within four years?
2. Are there differences in proficiency rates by student gender, home language, disability, or English proficiency at entrance to kindergarten?
3. Are there differences in proficiency on the ACCESS language domains (speaking, listening comprehension, reading, and writing)?

Why This Study

The School District of Philadelphia has experienced an increase in English learner (EL) students, most of which enroll in the early elementary years. This study provides evidence on the progress towards English proficiency of four cohorts of EL students entering the District in kindergarten. The study provided new information for the District, which can use the findings to set ambitious but achievable goals for English proficiency.

Main Findings

At the start of kindergarten, most ELs knew and used minimal English. By the end of third grade, about two-thirds of the kindergarten EL students achieved English proficiency appropriate for their grade level (a composite score of 5 or above on the ACCESS assessment). The proficiency rate in writing was notably lower than rates for listening, speaking, or reading English. Students with disabilities achieved proficiency at a lower rate, as did those who were less proficient in kindergarten. Proficiency also varied by home language.

Project in Practice

This study has given the School District's Office of Multilingual Curriculum and Programs baseline data on the amount of time English Learners need to become proficient in English. As the district has set a goal for all students to be reading on grade-level by the end of third grade, this information is guiding its work to meet this goal and set appropriate expectations for English Learners. Specifically, the data from the report is informing revisions to English Language Development (ELD) curriculum in grades K-3.

KEEPING PHILADELPHIA'S NINTH GRADERS ON TRACK TO GRADUATION [IN PROGRESS]

Research Questions

1. Which eighth grade student characteristics, if any, are strong predictors of becoming off track to graduation in ninth grade?
2. In which core subject areas are first-time ninth graders most likely to fail courses or earn a poor final grade? What are the strongest predictors of course failure in each of these subject areas?

Why This Study

The School District of Philadelphia is focusing on improving experiences and outcomes for ninth graders as a key lever for improving graduation rates. To this end, they seek to identify students whose eighth-grade outcomes suggest that they need special attention from the very first days of high school. To focus investments wisely, they also want to know whether course failures in particular core subject areas are disproportionately causing ninth graders to fall off track to graduation.

RESEARCH ALLIANCE FOR NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS

FOUNDED

2008

JOINED NNERPP

2016

PARTNERS

New York University
The City University of New York (CUNY)
The NYC Department of Education (NYC DOE)
Various other research institutions and organizations that work in and around NYC schools

MISSION

The Research Alliance for NYC Schools conducts rigorous studies on topics that matter to the City's public schools. By providing nonpartisan evidence about policies and practices that promote students' development and academic success, the Research Alliance strives to advance equity and excellence in education.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS

steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance/research/projects

Website

ranycs.org

Twitter

@RANYCS

NEW YORK CITY GOES TO COLLEGE: NEW FINDINGS AND FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINING COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS

Research Questions

How are NYC's rising high school graduation rates playing out as students move into and through college? How do patterns of college-going differ across groups of students (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, neighborhood income)?

Why This Study

High school graduation rates in NYC have increased dramatically over the last two decades. At the same time, expectations for students and schools have shifted, with a growing emphasis on preparing students for college and careers. This report examines changes in college access and success in New York City over time by examining high school students' pathways into and through college.

Main Findings

The Research Alliance uses a four-part framework–access, persistence, efficiency, and equity–to examine students' pathways, beginning with those who entered 9th grade in 2003 and ending with students who began 9th grade in 2008. There have been broad improvements in college access, driven largely by rising high school graduation rates. However, higher rates of college access have been eroded by somewhat higher rates of departure after one or two years of college. Fewer students are delaying college enrollment, but increasing proportions of students have enrolled in two-year colleges, and enrollment in two-year colleges is growing faster among students from underrepresented groups. Additionally, gaps in enrollment and outcomes associated with gender and neighborhood income have persisted, and there is some evidence that gaps by race/ethnicity have actually grown over time.

Project in Practice

The NYC Partnership for College Readiness and Success is a collaboration involving the Research Alliance for NYC Schools, the New York City Department of Education, and CUNY. A significant result of their work together has been the creation of the Partnership Dataset, which is unique in its size, its depth of available individual-level data, and its longitudinal capabilities. Researchers from all three partnering institutions collaborate to develop research agendas and conduct studies that follow NYC students through the critical transition from K-12 through post-secondary education. This work is helping the NYC DOE and CUNY better evaluate internal initiatives and is enabling researchers to answer important questions about what factors—at the high school and post-secondary levels—are important for college success.

ADVANCING SCHOOL CAPACITY [ONGOING PROJECT]

A growing body of research shows that organizational characteristics—such as teacher collaboration, effective leadership, and school safety—can influence teaching and learning, and might be an important lever for improving school quality.

In 2014, the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) developed its "Framework for Great Schools," which outlines specific areas of school functioning that previous research suggests are critical for improving student outcomes. The Research Alliance worked with the district to develop the Framework and to redesign NYC's annual School Survey of teachers, parents and students, to capture better, more valid and reliable information about the Framework's key elements.

Key research questions included: What organizational capacities are important for improving student outcomes in NYC schools? Are the measures being used to assess these capacities valid and reliable? How can information about school capacities be best used—by individual schools and the district—to support improvement efforts?

Research Alliance analyses found that, in general, the redesigned Survey did a much better job of capturing distinct aspects of school climate and capacity than previous iterations. Many measures used in the 2014-2015 survey were of very high quality (i.e., with high reliability and validity), but there was room for improvement in others. Using the results of these analyses, the NYC DOE made several revisions to the following year's Survey, and has continued to use Research Alliance analyses to improve the School Survey each year.

This ongoing collaboration is helping make the most of a large system-wide investment—indeed, the NYC School Survey is the largest effort of its kind, administered annually to nearly a million teachers, parents and students. Looking ahead, the Research Alliance and the NYC DOE will continue working together to learn about the relationship between key elements in the Framework for Great Schools, as measured by the Survey, and important outcomes for students and schools.

STANFORD-SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP

FOUNDED

2009

JOINED NNERPP

2016

PARTNERS

California Education Partners (partnership manager)
San Francisco Unified School District
Stanford University's Graduate School of Education

VISION

Stanford University and San Francisco Unified School District work together to design research that informs policies, practice and scholarship to maximize the potential of every student in San Francisco and beyond.

PROJECT MAP

bit.ly/stanfordsfusdprojects20172018

Website

collaborate.caedpartners.org/display/stanfordsfusd

Twitter

@StanfordSFUSD

PROJECTS

HOW MUCH REGULATION? A FUZZY REGRESSION DISCONTINUITY ANALYSIS OF STUDENT LITERACY SKILLS IN PREKINDERGARTEN VS. TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of Transitional Kindergarten on student literacy skills and attendance in kindergarten and first grade when compared to San Francisco's universal prekindergarten program?
2. Do the effects vary by student ethnicity or other characteristics like English Learner status?

Why This Study

The Kindergarten Readiness Act, signed into law by then Governor Schwarzenegger in 2010, required all districts in California to offer Transitional Kindergarten (TK) beginning in the 2012-2013 school year. Between 2010 and 2012, SFUSD built this new grade level from scratch. This study evaluates the TK program in SFUSD.

Main Findings

Kindergarteners who attended TK outperformed their peers on all pre-literacy skills measured by the BAS and English Learner students who attended TK outperformed their peers on all subsections of the CELDT. However, TK students' reading levels were not necessarily more advanced. Also, the pre-literacy advantages were concentrated on minority students.

Project in Practice

The study results prompted SFUSD to reexamine their goals for TK impact, sparking conversations about the specific skills the district wants to promote in each of their grades and whether improving reading levels should be a goal at the Transitional Kindergarten level.

THE CAUSAL EFFECTS OF CULTURAL RELEVANCE: EVIDENCE FROM AN ETHNIC STUDIES CURRICULUM

Research Questions

What are the estimated effects of participation in the ethnic-studies curriculum on students' academic outcomes (e.g., grades, persistence, and test performance)?

Why This Study

San Francisco Unified School District's (SFUSD) school board commissioners passed a resolution in 2010 to pilot an ethnic studies course, and SFUSD administrators wanted to know if the ethnic studies course piloted across a set of San Francisco high schools in fact achieved its intended outcomes. The SFUSD administrators wanted to have evidence when their school board considered expanding the resolution beyond a small group of schools.

Main Findings

The ethnic studies course had dramatic effects on all of the outcomes examined. Results indicate that taking ethnic studies increased attendance by 21 percentage points, GPA by 1.4 grade points, and credits earned by 23 credits (or roughly four courses). These effects are quite large for school-based interventions; however, some of these striking gains are likely to reflect reductions in dropping out as well as gains in the performance of enrolled students. In addition, estimates are defined for students close to the 2.0 GPA threshold who are at considerable academic risk, so larger academic gains are possible.

Project in Practice

The findings of this study gave SFUSD administrators full confidence to support the expansion of the ethnic studies course across San Francisco high schools.

TENNESSEE EDUCATION RESEARCH ALLIANCE

FOUNDED

2016

JOINED NNERPP

2017

PARTNERS

Tennessee Department of Education
Vanderbilt University

MISSION

The Tennessee Education Research Alliance is a research-policy-practice partnership committed to creating an expanding body of knowledge on a set of interrelated areas of focus that directly impact Tennessee's school improvement strategies.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS

peabody.vanderbilt.edu/research/tnedresearchalliance/publications.php

Website

peabody.vanderbilt.edu/research/tnedresearchalliance/index.php

Twitter

@TNEdResAlliance

DRIVING IMPROVEMENT IN LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS: LESSONS FROM FIVE YEARS OF RESEARCH ON STATE TURNAROUND EFFORTS

Research Questions

What has research from the past five years found about the effects of the Achievement School District and Innovation Zones interventions on student achievement, teacher and student mobility, and the organizational dynamics of these educational agencies and the communities they serve?

Why This Study

As policymakers continue to evaluate and consider changes to Tennessee's five-year-old school turnaround strategy, the state department of education requested a summary and update of research on the state's key reform efforts since they began under Race to the Top in 2010.

Main Findings

Overall, priority schools in Tennessee have improved both in absolute terms and relative to the rest of the state. iZone schools have improved student outcomes but state-led ASD intervention did not improve student outcomes relative to other low-performing schools in its first several years of operation, potentially due to historical and political challenges.

Project in Practice

The Tennessee Department of Education has restructured the Achievement School District to be more sustainable and flexible over time. In addition to the previous school improvement efforts that will continue, the department is also creating new intervention options that provide the opportunity for more flexibility and innovation in determining school improvement decisions.

EDUCATOR INSIGHTS: TAKEAWAYS FROM THE 2017 TENNESSEE EDUCATOR SURVEY

Research Questions

Overall, the report looks at the central trends in all of the survey data that are most actionable for state, district, and school leaders, including what needs teachers report in the areas of instructional time, curriculum and materials, teacher evaluation, and professional learning.

Why This Study

The educator survey is the state department's most comprehensive tool for gathering feedback from educators statewide and plays a central role in department strategy and goal-setting.

Main Findings

Survey responses pointed to key areas of need to further protect teachers' instructional time, indicated that teachers experienced difficulties identifying and accessing high-quality instructional materials and found that teachers received few opportunities for personalized professional learning. The report highlights additional key findings.

Project in Practice

The Tennessee Educator Survey is the Tennessee Department of Education's (TDOE) most comprehensive feedback loop with teachers and administrators. Previous results from this survey can be directly tied to changes made over the years in how TODOE conducts formal teacher and administrator evaluation in Tennessee and, more recently, to a statewide review of professional learning for Tennessee teachers. Aggregated results are made available at the district and school levels, providing school leaders with perception data, which in many districts is used as part of principals' end of year evaluations.

UCHICAGO CONSORTIUM ON SCHOOL RESEARCH

FOUNDED

1990

JOINED NNERPP

2016

PARTNERS

Chicago Public Schools

MISSION

Conducting research of high technical quality that can inform and assess policy and practice in the Chicago Public Schools and expanding communication among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners while supporting the search for solutions to the problems of school reform.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS

consortium.uchicago.edu/publications

Website

consortium.uchicago.edu

Twitter

@UChiConsortium

PROJECTS

THE PREDICTIVE POWER OF NINTH-GRADE GPA

Research Questions

The study addresses three sets of research questions motivated by the interest in grades as predictors of important outcomes, as well as by lingering concerns about the possibility of grade inflation and other unintended consequences caused by Chicago Public Schools' focus on freshman year grades: (1) Trends and patterns in freshman GPA, (2) Freshman GPA as predictor of later success, and (3) Freshman GPA as a measure of student achievement and learning.

Why This Study

Over the last 10 years, ninth-grade GPAs in Chicago Public Schools have steadily increased. While this aligns with a district-wide focus on ninth grade, there is a need to better understand these increases. Further, in light of concerns about the validity of grades in predicting later achievement, it is important to confirm that the relationship between grades and future academic success still holds under current practices.

Main Findings

The study demonstrated a strong relationship between GPA in ninth grade and GPA in eleventh grade and that ninth-grade GPA was strongly predictive of a student's likelihood of graduating from high school and enrolling and persisting in college. Freshman GPA was more predictive of future success than test scores.

Project in Practice

The report's findings have generated significant buzz and conversation among practitioners, particularly with respect to the findings about the ability of grades to predict later outcomes - such as college enrollment - better than test scores. The report authors have shared these findings in a variety of forums, including presentations to Chicago Public Schools' district leadership and network staff, and to audiences of local nonprofit and philanthropic leaders. Discussions in these spaces often focus on questions of how to raise student awareness of the importance of grades and how schools can translate these findings into practice. In addition, the report has been shared widely by practitioners on social media. The Consortium is currently working on a practitioner-focused synthesis of findings from this study and other Consortium findings on grades, which will likely be released in 2018.

GETTING READY FOR THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: EXPERIENCES OF CPS TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS PREPARING FOR THE NEW STANDARDS

Research Questions

This report describes teachers' and administrators' experiences preparing for the transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), using survey responses from the spring of 2014 and the spring of 2015. Survey questions focused on four areas: attitudes about the kind of impact the new standards will have and how challenging they are; experiences with formal professional development on the new standards; opportunities outside of formal training to learn about the new standards; and how prepared teachers feel to teach the new standards.

Why This Study

Adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) represents one of the most significant educational initiatives in the last decade. The success of any education reform depends on many factors. A critical component is whether school staff are supportive of the initiative and view it as likely to improve educational outcomes. Equally important is whether school staff have the professional development opportunities they need to ensure their practice is aligned with the goals of the initiative. This study is the first in a series of reports that examines implementation of the CCSS in Chicago Public Schools (CPS).

Main Findings

In 2015, 56 percent of elementary school teachers and 41 percent of high school teachers in CPS reported feeling "very" prepared to teach the new standards, and only 1 percent of elementary and 5 percent of high school teachers felt "not at all" prepared to teach the new standards. Teachers in schools with high levels of organizational capacity, such as teacher collaboration, instructional leadership, and teacher influence, were more likely to report feeling prepared. More findings, including those on teachers' experiences with CCSS-related professional development, are detailed in the report.

Project in Practice

Report authors shared these findings with Chicago Public Schools' district leadership and staff to help inform their understanding of teacher participation in the district's train-the-trainer model of CCSS professional development, as well as the types of schools most likely to offer this kind of the professional development opportunity. The report has also been useful for the philanthropic community which funds standards-based professional development.

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE – JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FOUNDED

2016

JOINED NNERPP

2016

PARTNERS

Jefferson County Public Schools
University of Louisville

This year, the second year of our partnership, our original research focus needed to be reconsidered following several changes in district administration. With the blessing of the new interim superintendent, we moved forward with repositioning the University of Louisville-Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) Partnership within the School District's Research Office. Recently, we held meetings with the Chief Executive Director of the Data Management, Planning, and Program Evaluation office and later convened a group of JCPS and University of Louisville leaders to discuss an initial topic our partnership would tackle. We decided to study the Deeper Learning initiative that the District has just launched this summer. Because the initiative is new, we are starting our research just as the program is taking root. After years of focusing on accountability through tests, the district is moving toward increasing student engagement through its Deeper Learning plan. We will study the program as it unfolds, spending time trying to understand how a new district program gets launched, is rolled out and adopted, and embraced by the district's schools. We hope that by studying the implementation process over time, we will not only learn about the JCPS Deeper Learning Initiative, but also contribute to the general understanding of how districtwide initiatives extend across the district and what it takes for new practices to be taken up and institutionalized.

In two blog posts that have been published on NNERPP's Education Week blog ("Urban Education Reform: Bridging Research and Practice") this year, we also described the developments our young partnership has experienced since its inception.

Lessons Learned from an Edu. Research-Practice Partnership

Our first post, "Lessons Learned from an Edu. Research-Practice Partnership," shares three of the greatest challenges we encountered when trying to launch our RPP: limited resources, bureaucratic structures, and forging communication pathways. Though funding is always a concern, along the university-side of the partnership, graduate students can be an immensely helpful resource to the RPP. Even still, what we've also found is that the academic process can at times be confusing, secretive, and unnecessarily difficult for researchers. Add to that the possibility (and reality) of leadership turnover on the district-side, and one can see why RPPs are not easily established. While these challenges are not unique to our experience, how we respond can ultimately impact the direction and health of the partnership. We have seen that setbacks are often followed by new successes and can spur innovative problem solving.

New Roles for Education Doctoral Students: Internships in Early-Stage Partnerships

In a second post, we talk more about this idea of innovative problem solving and how it is essential to those interested in starting an RPP. Written from the researcher point of view, "New Roles for Education Doctoral Students: Internships in Early-Stage Partnerships," expands on the idea of having graduate students as an important resource in the RPP and sketches an apprenticeship model for doctoral students that would benefit their research training as well. More traditional education doctoral training programs involve classroom activities where students receive abstract knowledge out of context. Instead, in the model proposed here, students would be actively engaged with a significant applied research topic, learning relevant theory, methods, and practices in the real-world setting of an urban school district. Benefitting multiple aspects of the partnership, this apprenticeship model is just one way our RPP is embracing the challenges unfolding in front of us and innovating where we can to keep moving forward.

RECAP

URBAN CHILD STUDY CENTER

FOUNDED

2013

JOINED NNERPP

2017

PARTNERS

The Urban Child Study Center (UCSC) is an interdisciplinary research center in the College of Education & Human Development at Georgia State University and includes several partnerships between the university, education agencies, and relevant community organizations.

Website

urbanchildstudy.education.gsu.edu

MISSION

Promoting the overall development and school success of children and youth in urban contexts through innovative, translational research that informs policy and practice.

ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS

urbanchildstudy.education.gsu.edu/research-practice-partnerships

PROJECTS

EXAMINING EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' WRITING PRACTICES: ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN PEDAGOGICAL SUPPORTS AND CHILDREN'S WRITING SKILLS

Research Questions

1. Which strategies do teachers in early childhood settings utilize to support children's writing?
2. When teachers employ supportive strategies, what component skills do they address and what level of support do they provide children?
3. How are strategies teachers use to support early writing skills related to children's writing development in pre-K?

Why This Study

Little research exists about ways in which early writing skills are supported or promoted in classrooms but some emerging evidence shows that teachers' supportive practices appear important to children's writing development. Yet the nature, quality, and prevalence of pedagogical approaches to writing in early childhood classrooms remains unknown. This study seeks to fill this gap in the literature.

Main Findings

Among other findings, the study showed that teachers were much more likely to focus on children's handwriting and spelling skills rather than composing skills. The study also found that children from classrooms with teachers who supported composing exhibited stronger writing skills.

Project in Practice

The results of this study provided our partners with the evidence they needed to make early writing a focus of teacher professional development and classroom activity. Since reviewing the findings, our partners have agreed to participate in an intervention study where teachers are provided with access to online materials and coaching. Teachers have been implementing the instruction and enjoy having access to the materials and the coaching support. However, participation in the study has revealed a number of structural challenges at the organizational level that may impact teachers' uptake of effective interventions. As a result, we are working with leadership to design a more comprehensive strategy for supporting early childhood teachers and sites, such as practice based coaching, which is a relatively new model for supporting early childhood teachers in Head Start programs.

NNERPP

THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF EDUCATION RESEARCH–PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS

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