

RELS & CCCs

Translating Research into Results

McREL International supports the work of the United States Department of Education by managing **two federal programs:**

- 1 The Regional Educational Laboratory contract for the Pacific Region (REL Pacific),** which conducts rigorous research and provides resources and technical assistance on identified regional priority needs.
- 2 The North Central Comprehensive Center (NCCC) grant,** which offers training and technical assistance to state education agencies within the North Central region to help them implement federal initiatives and support districts and schools in raising student achievement.



McREL International is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan education research and development corporation. Since 1966, when we were founded to turn knowledge about what works in education into practical guidance for educators, McREL has grown into an international organization serving an array of clients across the United States, Canada, the Pacific region, Australia, and other parts of the world. Today, inside McREL's headquarters in Denver, Colorado, and our offices in Honolulu, Hawai'i; Charleston, West Virginia; Nashville, Tennessee; and Melbourne, Australia, you'll find experienced researchers and education consultants working together to provide educators and leaders with research-based, practical guidance on the issues and challenges facing preK-12 education. Our staff creates and delivers sophisticated data analyses and program evaluations; rigorous scientific studies; authentic and effective professional development; high-quality, field-tested products and services; and insightful reports, articles, books, and tools.

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About REL Pacific

REL Pacific is one of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories established and funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences. REL Pacific at McREL International serves 10 Pacific island entities: American Samoa; the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; the Federated States of Micronesia—Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei and Yap; Guam; Hawai’i; the Republic of the Marshall Islands; and the Republic of Palau.

REL Pacific at McREL identifies priority education needs in the region through comprehensive reviews of data, interviews with education agency staff, and ongoing contact with the field. The REL organizes “research alliances” that bring together key stakeholders to work collaboratively to address teacher effectiveness, family and community engagement, college and career readiness, and data optimization. Working with REL Pacific staff, alliance members identify problems and questions to be answered through research and evaluation, participate in the development of longitudinal data systems, apply research and evaluation study findings to inform decision making and practices, and use the skills and knowledge they’ve gained to help others do the same. REL Pacific also provides customized technical assistance services and resources, including infographics, videos, and toolkits, for educators and policymakers that help translate recent research findings into everyday practice.

Examples of REL Pacific products and services:

- *Five Steps for Structuring Data-Informed Conversations and Action in Education*, a guide that shows education data teams how to move beyond simply reporting data to applying data to direct strategic action. Using guiding questions, suggested activities, and activity forms, this guide gives educators a framework and the tools and vocabulary needed to support an informed conversation around the data they generate or acquire. The guide explains five key steps in using data for informed decision making and strategic action: setting the stage, examining the data, understanding the findings, developing an action plan, and monitoring progress and measuring success.

- *The Pacific Education Research Resource (PERR)*, is an innovative computer-based, interactive set of two modules, the Education Logic Model (ELM) application and the Program Outcomes, Measures and Targets (PSMT), designed to help users create a logic model in order to further knowledge of how data fits within the larger design of an education program or initiative. Structured similarly to programs that guide the general public through a series of steps to complete a task (for example, TurboTax® Software), the PERR modules take the typical “how-to” guide to the next level, providing a practical, hands-on resource for educators to better understand, monitor, and evaluate their programs and develop program outcomes. To complement the modules, REL Pacific created a series of hard-copy quick-reference guides (for example, on relationships among outcomes, indicators, measures, and targets).
- Each REL Pacific research and evaluation study provides research alliance members with a series of *informational briefs* throughout the course of the project. The briefs contain annotated bibliographies from the research literature (or other documented leading practices) and discussions of consistent themes or issues that arise from the literature; a discussion of the data being used in the research study, the choice of analytical methods, and the limitations associated with both; preliminary findings from the studies; and a discussion of the study’s implications as well as potential additional research questions for further exploration. To date, REL Pacific has produced ten informational briefs on topics ranging from college readiness among high school graduates in American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, to research on student non-enrollment and chronic absenteeism.

About the North Central Comprehensive Center



The North Central Comprehensive Center (NCCC) is one of 15 regional centers across the nation that are funded by the U.S. Department of Education to provide assistance to state education agencies to support implementation of federal initiatives and requirements. Operated by McREL International, the NCCC serves Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

The NCCC helps the region’s state education agencies build their capacity to implement and support initiatives that improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, and improve instructional quality. NCCC’s capacity building focuses on the following areas:

- **Human Capacity:** leadership, experience, knowledge, and skills
- **Organizational Capacity:** staff interactions to ensure effective operations
- **Structural Capacity:** coherent policies, systems, guidelines, and processes
- **Material Capacity:** fiscal, technological, and informational system resources

Examples of NCCC products and services:

- Helping the **Nebraska Department of Education** develop and train a cohort of educators to provide statewide support for English language learners (ELLs). Currently, this cohort is delivering a new statewide professional development plan for ELL teachers, using NCCC-created modules containing videos, facilitator guides, and handouts that enhance understanding for all teachers on the academic language associated with instructional content.
- Addressing the needs of Native American students through the NCCC regional project *Identifying Promising Practices to Improve Native American Student Outcomes: Addressing the Academic Language Gap*, which is aimed at reducing the academic language gap through the use of targeted academic

language and reciprocal teaching. This project is supported by an additional federal grant fund and is extending the reach of the project to more teachers and students in the region.

- Assisting the **North Dakota Department of Public Instruction** with development and implementation of a statewide teacher and principal evaluation model, NCCC staff led stakeholder committee meetings to develop guidelines and plans for implementing these systems. The NCCC continues to support state implementation by helping create communication plans and statewide training sessions.
- Developing an *Educator Equity Plan* with the **Wyoming Department of Education** to ensure that all Wyoming students have access to high-quality teachers. The NCCC is engaging with stakeholders across the state to review data and identify equity gaps. Once the plan has been written, the NCCC will continue to partner with the education department to put the plan into place.
- Providing **South Dakota Department of Education’s** lowest-performing schools with an online continuous improvement planning process called *South Dakota Leading Effectively, Achieving Progress (SD LEAP)*. Five of these schools were featured in a video produced by the NCCC highlighting the success experienced by school leadership teams when they worked collaboratively to focus on data and instructional practices.