

COVID-19 Student Learning Study

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the project about?

The project is being led by Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Midwest in collaboration with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). The project will provide information to ISBE and Illinois school districts to help them understand the relationship between the suspension of in-person instruction due to COVID-19 and student learning.

2. What is REL Midwest?

The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences funds a network of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs). Each REL serves a designated region of the country and works with educators and policymakers to support a more evidence-based education system. [REL Midwest](#) serves seven states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. REL Midwest is operated by the American Institutes for Research (AIR).

3. Who is eligible to participate?

The project leaders are inviting all public school districts serving students in grades 3–8 to participate. Districts are eligible to participate if they have conducted [a Type I interim assessment](#) (for example, AIMSweb, NWEA Measures of Academic Progress, or Renaissance STAR) consistently over the past six years and plan to continue implementing this assessment this coming school year, either in person or virtually. Type I assessments are necessary because they meet certain conditions required for the project, including that they are standardized assessments with demonstrated reliability and validity.

4. What are the benefits of participating?

Participating districts have the opportunity to join a coaching session conducted by REL Midwest researchers, who will present and facilitate discussion about the findings. During this valuable coaching session, the project team will provide an overview of the results, describe how to interpret them, and discuss implications for instructional practice.

5. Who is paying for the project?

REL Midwest operates under contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to conduct research in partnership with state and local education agencies.

6. What will my district need to do?

ISBE will work with each district to establish a data-sharing agreement that specifies the details of what, when, and how data will be shared. Following implementation of your next interim assessment, your district would share a data file containing students' interim assessment scores from the most recent assessment and the past six years. The data shared with ISBE as part of the study will be confidential and used for the purposes of this research project only. ISBE will engage in a separate data-sharing agreement with REL Midwest to transfer deidentified data in advance of analysis. The first step to participate is to complete [this survey](#) to confirm your interest in participating. ISBE will reach out with further instructions once the template to upload your data is available.

7. What if we do not administer an interim assessment as planned in the fall?

School districts may participate in the study whether they administer their Type I interim assessment in-person or virtually. ISBE and REL Midwest will work to accommodate the timing and plans of participating districts while striving to provide actionable findings in a timely way. To accommodate potential delays in testing in some districts, REL Midwest and ISBE will conduct multiple rounds of analysis in order to provide and share findings on a rolling basis. Our initial deadline for collecting the assessment data in preparation for providing a coaching sessions in early 2021 is Nov. 10. Districts that provide data after Nov. 10 will receive a district report but may not have access to the coaching session.

8. What specific data will my district need to share?

Your district will be asked to share a data file covering school years 2014-15 through 2020-21. This data file would include state student IDs; district IDs; names; gender; date of birth; fall, winter, and spring assessment scores; and the Type I assessment names.

9. How will my district's data be protected?

Data will be deidentified (that is, student IDs will be replaced with random numbers to identify students) by ISBE prior to being transferred to REL Midwest. REL Midwest is administered by AIR, and AIR's IT security measures will keep any shared data secure. AIR employs a comprehensive information security program to reduce risks associated with cyberthreats that can affect the confidentiality, availability, and integrity of AIR systems and data. In addition, only researchers who are working on this project will have access to the data. All data will be destroyed securely upon completion of the project.

10. How will the findings be shared?

Upon completion of the analysis, the results of the statewide analyses will be shared with participating districts and ISBE. Participating districts also will receive their district-specific results. Statewide study results will be released publicly, whereas district-specific results will only be shared with the relevant district. No district, school, teacher, or student identifying information or findings will ever be released publicly.