

Regional Educational Laboratory–Appalachia: Data-Driven Decisionmaking

Client: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance

Project Overview

Insight served as a subcontractor to CNA Corporation to provide research assistance with respect to the programs and initiatives within the Regional Educational Laboratory–Appalachia (REL–Appalachia). The goal of the laboratory is to identify and meet the educational research needs of State and local education agencies, school districts, and schools in the Appalachian region (Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee).

The REL–Appalachia, part of a network of 10 such labs across the country, is designed to conduct and disseminate research that will support continuous improvement in student outcomes, help to close achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students, and achieve other key goals of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Emphasis was on long-term, rigorous evaluations of public education programs as well as short-term research projects investigating and analyzing education policies and practices.



As part of this process, the REL–Appalachia helped State departments of education develop ways to provide data that their districts needed to inform local practice; respond to the need for data for continuous improvement; and in particular, aid educators to improve teaching and learning activities. The purpose of this research was to help States in the region understand how districts are trying to use data and how well their capabilities align with their objectives.

Insight provided research assistance and analysis in the development of materials relevant to the data-driven decisionmaking process throughout the region. Insight reviewed and provided analysis of the methodology, revised the report based on independent research and analysis of the findings and the process for data collection, reviewed and analyzed the primary data collection, and made recommendations for the product development based on these findings. Insight also provided independent coding and analysis of the qualitative data—from both written transcripts and audio—collected from 17 interviews with State administrators and data managers. Through analysis of the audio, the coding captured responses not illuminated through the written product, such as area emphases from intonation, conversation flow, and emotional expression through the discussion. Resultant data was analyzed by research question, topic, and theme.

Core Activities

Literature Reviews and Environmental Scans; Qualitative Research; Secondary Data Analysis; Policy Analysis and Assessment; Report Development and Presentation

Products

REL–Appalachia internal document submissions (July 2010)