

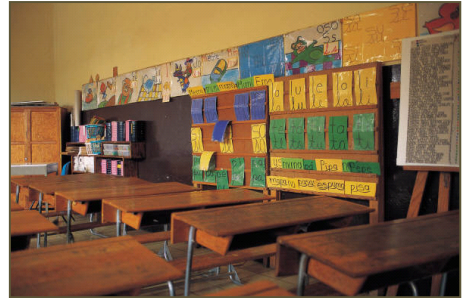
# Regional Educational Laboratory–Appalachia: Needs Assessment

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

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## Project Overview

Insight served as a subcontractor to CNA Corporation to conduct a needs assessment for 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 close achievement gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students, and achieve other key goals of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Emphasis is on long-term, rigorous evaluations of public education programs as well as short-term research projects investigating and analyzing education policies and practices.



Insight designed and implemented an annual needs assessment and provided analytical, data collection, and report writing services to the REL–Appalachia. Each year, Insight submitted an annual report to the National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) on the needs of stakeholders throughout the region.

- The first year's report documented the needs of State directors and school principals based on Insight's discussions with representatives from State Education Agencies (SEAs) and a series of focus groups with school principals.
- In Year 2, Insight interviewed school superintendents to identify their educational priorities and their information needs and to establish connections between educators and laboratory researchers.
- In Year 3, Insight developed targeted issue briefs on various topics such as "universal pre-K" and the call for providing high-quality early education, improving rural education, and high school reform.
- In Year 4, Insight convened several 1-day professional development opportunities for stakeholders; these events aimed to bring evidence-based practices to practitioners. These events typically were based on the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Practice Guides; they included issues such as turning around low-performing schools and preventing students from dropping out of school.

## Core Activities

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

## Products

Numerous assessments, evaluations, and issue briefs resulted from this project. Selected products are listed below.

- "Regional Needs Assessment 2006: Identifying Research-Related Information Needs of School Principals" (June 2007)
- "Regional Needs Assessment 2007: Identifying Research-Related Information Needs of School Superintendents" (January 2008)
- "Issue Brief From the REL–Appalachia: Parental Involvement in Education" (June 2008)
- "Issue Brief From the REL–Appalachia: State Initiatives to Improve Access to High-Quality Pre-K Programs" (January 2008)