

## **Impact on Communities of ED Research Contract Cancellations: Parents, Students and Educators Miss Out**

Representatives from the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) have cancelled nearly 100 contracts that support critical evaluation, research and data collection for the U.S. Department of Education (ED). In cancelling these contracts, DOGE denied parents and educators critical information and opportunities to learn and apply what works to improve student outcomes. DOGE's actions stopped critical research midway through or late in a study, effectively paying for a study without benefiting from its results. This is a short-sighted, missed opportunity to provide parents, educators and the public insights they need to improve student outcomes – an opportunity that Congress funded and promised to communities across the country.

The following are just some of the examples of projects that were cancelled and the impact and opportunity cost for students, parents, educators and the public.

### *Supporting students with disabilities to transition successfully into postsecondary education and the workforce*

The Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires States and districts to offer education, services and resources to help youth with disabilities prepare for work, education and independent living after high school. This Federal contract supported over 1,000 youth with disabilities across numerous States and 13 school districts with specialized instruction that will help them prepare for work, education and independent living after high school. Over 60 full-time staff were delivering transition support services to youth with disabilities. The project included an evaluation to learn how the intervention works across the different communities and how students and families are benefiting. Cancelling this project leaves students behind and the public unable to learn from the results to better support youth with disabilities in their communities.

Spotsylvania County Public Schools, Virginia, was participating in this project. Superintendent Clint Mitchell [said](#), *“The decision to cancel this grant will have a significant effect on our 91 students who are receiving services in the school division .... Particularly [because now they are] not being able to get the support as they transition from high school.”*

The impacted states include the following: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, New York, South Carolina, Utah, Virginia, and Washington. Some of the impacted districts within these states include: Anchorage, AK; Spotsylvania, VA; Pauling, GA; Agua Fria, AZ; Mt Diablo, CA; Poway, CA; and Sweetwater, CA.

The impacted communities include Spotsylvania, VA; and students and staff in the following states: Arizona, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington.

*Helping rural school districts in Alaska to tackle teacher recruitment and retention challenges and improve early literacy*

The Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Northwest is one of 10 RELs across the country that generate research, evidence and tools for States to implement to improve student outcomes, driven by a State or district's expressed priorities. Two examples of the locally-driven work of REL Northwest that were cancelled are its partnerships with rural school districts on teacher supports and early literacy. Kenai Peninsula Borough Public School District wanted to partner with REL Northwest to study its use of universal screening data to make informed decisions about serving students' literacy needs to improve early literacy. In another project, several rural school districts working on improving teacher retention had identified working conditions as a key element of improving teacher retention. They partnered with REL Northwest to develop a Guide to Developing Localized Strategies to Address Rural Teacher Working Conditions, which would have helped rural districts make evidence-based decisions on improving teacher working conditions to increase teacher retention. Now, these supports and resources for Alaska students and educators have been taken away through cancelling the contract.

*Increasing Evidence and Support for Career-Focused Education in Rhode Island*

The Rhode Island Department of Education was working with REL Northeast and Islands (NEI) to understand evidence and provide technical assistance for career-focused education that were part of *Prepare Rhode Island* led by the governor. REL NEI was within two months of releasing a cost effectiveness analysis of early college programs when the contract was cancelled. Without this study, Rhode Island education leaders and policymakers will not have the information needed to make smart investments in these programs that enroll approximately 7,000 students, or 20 percent of all secondary school students in Rhode Island. In addition, the Rhode Island State Superintendent's Association had engaged with REL NEI to provide support to school guidance counselors on guiding students toward the most cost-effective programs to prepare them for high-skill jobs. Now, guidance counselors and the students they work with in Rhode Island will not receive this support that would have helped to create a more career ready workforce within Rhode Island.

*Accelerating students' math achievement in North Dakota*

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) is launching a new grant program to promote differentiated instruction in grade 3–8 math classrooms through blended learning. NDDPI partnered with REL Central to conduct trainings to increase educators' readiness for differentiated instruction, and to co-facilitate a group of educators to support schools through use of data, evidence and improvement strategies. Cancelling this project more than halfway through means that North Dakota educators will not receive the support they need to successfully implement the new teaching approach and help students accelerate outcomes.

### *Helping Maine implement innovative learning models*

The Maine Department of Education (MDOE) is developing innovative learning models, including access to high-quality remote learning, so all Maine students have access to learning opportunities aligned with their needs. MDOE staff and school leaders were working with REL NEI on data and evidence use in 42 school districts, including 30 rural districts. Eight of the districts were also receiving support from REL NEI to help them better understand how to use research and data to implement innovative learning models in the specific district context. Now, educators in these 42 school districts will not have this support to implement the statewide initiative effectively.

### *Understanding What Works to Support Reading in Early Elementary School*

Multi-Tiered System of Support for Reading (MTSS-R) is used for early intervention with reading difficulties, especially for children at risk of dyslexia. Teachers in 140 schools across 6 States-California, Tennessee, Ohio, Washington, Arizona and Montana-were receiving training and assistance to implement MTSS-R. In addition, a study was looking at the impact of the work so other states and communities could learn about how to improve literacy for young children. The project was cancelled after all the data had been collected but not analyzed. Now, these teachers will no longer receive any training or assistance, and parents, teachers, and policymakers will not know the results of the study to inform their decisions and investments about early literacy.

### *Improving Students' Performance in Math in Connecticut*

Teachers in Connecticut were receiving professional learning from REL NEI to apply evidence-based strategies to improve students' performance in math, with a focus on English learners and students with disabilities. Additionally, the State had asked REL NEI to study the impact of the interventions. Now, both the professional support for teachers and the study have stopped, leaving teachers and State leaders without this support and information to improve students' math outcomes.

### *Improving Student Mental Health Across Nine States*

Nine States-NY, KY, VT, NE, WY, IA, PA, MI and NH-want to increase access to Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) in rural areas to improve student mental health for rural students. REL NEI was supporting this effort by bringing together State education agency staff from these States to learn and implement evidence-based practices of MTSS. Now, these States will no longer have access to this training and peer learning network while many of their rural students continue to need mental health supports now.

### *Addressing Teacher Shortages in North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming*

Facing teacher shortages in their States, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming have launched teacher apprenticeship programs where working paraprofessionals can become fully credentialed teachers. REL Central partnered with leaders in South Dakota and Wyoming on surveys and data analysis, and with North Dakota to summarize program information about their teacher apprenticeship programs. The States were awaiting a now-cancelled evaluation from REL Central on how to implement a strategy to address their States' teacher shortages.

### *Providing Critical Education Data for Parents and Schools*

EDFacts is run through a Federal contract to collect and analyze key data spanning pre-kindergarten through grade 12. This information is readily available to the public and used in a variety of ways to inform parent and community decision-making. For example, the company GreatSchools uses EDFacts data to provide parents and realtors information about their local public schools helping to inform decisions about where students enroll in school and where people choose to live. EDFacts data are also used for the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) that provides a clear picture of student achievement in the country. Now without this data, parents, communities and policymakers do not have a clear picture of how students are doing in their local schools and nationwide.

### *Supporting Washington Educators to Use Technology to Improve Student Outcomes*

The Washington Rural Alliance that includes 79 Member districts, wanted to learn evidence-based strategies for online and blended learning to support rural students, and REL North West (NW) was providing support including through a resource that was planned to be shared nationally this spring. Now, this resource will not be released, denying teachers the strategies to use technology in their classrooms this would have provided to improve student outcomes especially in rural areas.

### *Evaluating Adult Education Programs in Arizona, Nevada, Oregon and Washington*

Four States-Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington-were involved in a study evaluating trainings for career navigators in adult education programs as part of the congressionally-mandated National Assessment of Adult Education. The trainings would have helped adult education program staff develop key knowledge and skills to guide and support adult learners in their career and college planning. Career navigators are full- or part-time staff who provide informational services to help learners explore careers and identify needed skills and education for those careers. Cancelling this contract and its trainings means that approximately 1,500 adult learners per year across four States-900 adult learners in Nevada, 300 adult learners in Arizona, 200 adult learners in Oregon, and dozens in Washington-will not have access to career navigators who could have participated in this training and may be less prepared for the workforce as a result.

### *Helping Michigan Educators in Early Literacy*

Two Michigan districts- Battle Creek Public Schools and Fruitport Community Schools-wanted to focus on teachers' instructional practices in early literacy to improve student outcomes. REL Midwest was working with 21 teachers and over 500 students in Battle Creek Public Schools and 13 teachers and over 320 students in Fruitport Community Schools to increase their knowledge of evidence-based instructional strategies for early literacy when this contract was cancelled.

### *Supporting Washington Educators to Improve Student Literacy Outcomes*

Washington is developing a statewide literacy framework to improve student literacy outcomes. State education agency staff engaged REL NW this school year to help them use data and research to inform their framework and was set to release a resource this spring on evidence-based reading strategies to improve student literacy. Now, teachers and districts will not have access to this resource and students will lack additional support to improve in literacy.

### *Increasing Attendance and Achievement in Minnesota*

Waseca Public Schools in Minnesota wanted to focus on improving student attendance and achievement at the secondary level. They partnered with REL Midwest, whose staff were working with approximately 50 teachers and 1,000 students at Waseca Junior High and Waseca Senior High on evidence-based practices to improve student attendance and achievement. Now, these teachers and students no longer have access to this support.

### *Strengthening Teacher Preparation Programs and Coordination of Educator Workforce Data in Minnesota*

The Minnesota Department of Education along with partners including the University of Minnesota Mankato and State agencies wanted to better understand what was working and not working to recruit and retain teacher candidates in their teacher preparation programs. They partnered with REL Midwest to conduct a study on this challenge and provide training to their State agencies to strengthen the coordination of educator workforce data on teacher preparation and workforce retention. Now, the study and the training have been cancelled, denying Minnesota leaders the opportunity to make improvements to better recruit teacher candidates and coordinate educator workforce data.

### *Strengthening Career and Technical Education Programs and Supporting Student Success Plans in Oregon*

Portland Public Schools wanted to review its career and technical education programs as a means to improve high school graduation rates and had partnered with REL NW to analyze this

data this spring. Additionally, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) asked REL NW to evaluate the impact of its Student Success Plans, which are designed to improve student outcomes. Now the Portland Public Schools leaders and ODE staff will not have support to know whether these initiatives are improving student outcomes.

### *Improving English Learner Students' Literacy in New Mexico*

New Mexico education leaders have been focused on improving English learner students' literacy and asked REL Southwest (SW) for support. REL SW has been working with New Mexico teachers to use evidence-based literacy practices in their classrooms. Following their work in three school districts last school year, REL SW was implementing the program with 11 schools, 76 teachers, and hundreds of students this school year. Now, the teachers and students involved do not have this support and other teachers of English learner students will miss the opportunity to learn from this program.

### *Supporting Washington Educators to Improve Student Math Outcomes*

In Washington, Seattle and Tacoma Public Schools have been focused on improving students' math outcomes and engaged REL NW for support. In Seattle, REL NW was scheduled in just a few months to release a new system to help teachers improve middle school math outcomes, and in Tacoma, REL NW was working on a study that was 99 percent complete and would have helped the district support more students to access higher-level math courses. Neither of these resources will now be able to be released.

### *Providing a Toolkit on Using Technology to Support Postsecondary Learning*

Many higher education institutions want to better understand how to use technology to support postsecondary learning. In partnership with the Rural Community College Association, which includes over 30 States, REL NW had built a toolkit based on three years of research and lessons learned from testing the toolkit with 100 instructors and more than 3,000 students. The toolkit was being finalized for public release when the work was forced to stop due to the contract cancellation.

### *Providing National Evaluations of Career and Technical Education, a \$1 Billion Literacy Grant Program, and Grant Programs Focused on School-Based Mental Health*

Three Federal contracts that were conducting national evaluations on investments made by Congress were swiftly cancelled, denying the public and Congress insights on the effectiveness of key Federal programs. The first contract was to be the first national evaluation of career and technical education (CTE) in over a decade, with the report scheduled for release in 2025. With so much national interest in CTE, it is a missed opportunity that this report could not be shared

that would have given insights into how to strengthen CTE for students' success. Through the second contract, researchers were evaluating the impact of the \$1 billion Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant program on students' literacy skills. At a time when the latest NAEP scores tell us we have serious work to do on K-12 literacy, evaluations of literacy programs like this one are critical. Finally, through the third contract, researchers were evaluating grant programs' recruitment and training approaches of in-school mental health service providers to address the shortage of these providers in schools. School, district, and State leaders could have used the insights from this evaluation to recruit more mental health service providers to their schools at a time when they are greatly needed.