Our Approach

American Institutes for Research (AIR) applies the best research evidence available to inform education policy and practice. We explore the root causes of chronic challenges and measure the impacts of current strategies. We ask difficult questions to increase the field’s understanding of what works and why to drive positive change in education. Our work is distinctive in that we apply what we learn through our direct services to refine and expand the research questions we ask and the hypotheses we pursue.

Our work spans a broad range of areas, including K–12 literacy, early childhood, educator effectiveness, college and career readiness, district and school improvement, expanded learning, higher education, and technology. We have deep expertise in data analysis and application, program and policy evaluation, qualitative and quantitative research, and survey methods. As a credible and trusted leader in education, AIR supports states, districts, schools, and educators in understanding and implementing the right conditions for student learning.

Our Work

**We conduct rigorous and relevant research to improve educational outcomes.**

- AIR is conducting a large-scale randomized controlled trial to test the impact of advanced systems for giving performance feedback to educators and their supervisors. The Teacher and Leader Evaluation Systems Study will help school districts implement such systems and will rigorously examine impacts on teacher practice, student achievement, and other variables.

- AIR provides technical assistance, measurement advice, and program support to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as The Nation’s Report Card. In 2013, we are partnering with NCES to develop a new NAEP assessment to measure the knowledge and skill levels of eighth graders in technology and engineering literacy.

- AIR is conducting a rigorous experimental evaluation of an intensive, content-focused professional development program for elementary mathematics teachers. Commissioned by the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education, the study will inform state and federal policy efforts to improve mathematics teaching and learning.

**We identify effective programs and resources to help educators translate evidence into action.**

- AIR conducts thorough studies of the effects of technology-based instructional programs, including the impact of online Algebra I courses for middle and high school students. The studies generate reliable evidence that is otherwise unavailable to inform educational decisions about technology investments by policymakers and district, state, and school leaders.

**We use data to inform district, state, and federal policymaking and practice.**

- AIR designs early warning systems for high schools and middle grades, along with implementation guides, to help educators effectively use data to identify students at risk of not graduating. For example, working closely with California, Texas, and Virginia education leaders, AIR developed tools based on empirical research and supported states in piloting early warning systems.

**We connect rigorous research, policy, and practice to support and improve education.**

- In its first six months, the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders answered more than 60 requests from states and national organizations for information, expert presentations, and technical assistance on teacher and leader effectiveness. The center has quickly become a go-to resource for states and districts as they develop and implement comprehensive teacher and leader evaluation systems.

- AIR is helping the Texas Education Agency develop and implement a value-added model, using student achievement and growth metrics, to evaluate and report on the quality of educator preparation programs and to produce individual teacher effectiveness measures for 100 schools piloting educator evaluation systems.

- AIR operates the Illinois Center for School Improvement, funded by the Illinois State Board of Education, to provide high-quality coordinated assistance to districts through the statewide system of support and regional education offices. In the early stages of design, the center is using stakeholder input to develop tools and services that will increase schools’ capacities to improve student performance across the state.
We support learning for all students, including English language learners and children with special needs.

- Through the National Center on Intensive Intervention, AIR works closely with 12 districts to provide training, coaching, and technical assistance to improve teacher capacity to support the students with disabilities who have the most intensive learning and/or behavioral needs.

- The Center on Response to Intervention (RTI) helps educators identify students’ learning and behavioral problems early and intervene with specialized instruction to improve academic achievement. The center has provided intensive technical assistance to 11 states and offers wide-ranging support for implementing RTI with fidelity to improve instructional quality and increase students’ chances of school success.

Our Expertise

AIR’s expert research and technical assistance span a wide range of educational issues:

- College and career readiness
- Conditions for learning
- District and school improvement
- Early childhood education
- Educator effectiveness
- English language learners
- Expanded learning
- Higher education
- School finance
- Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)
- Special education

AIR has deep expertise in the most current and relevant research and evaluation methods:

- Data analysis and application
- Program and policy evaluation
- Quantitative and qualitative research
- Survey research

Our Clients

Clients turn to us for our research, leadership, and strategy. Selected clients include:

CORPORATIONS
Intel Education Initiative
U.S. News & World Report

FOUNDATIONS
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Heising-Simons Foundation
Lumina Foundation for Education
M&S Dell Foundation
Novo Foundation
Rockefeller Foundation
The Spencer Foundation
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
William T. Grant Foundation

LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES
Boston Public Schools (Massachusetts)
Chicago Public Schools (Illinois)
Cleveland Metropolitan School District (Ohio)
Dade County Public Schools (Florida)
Decatur Public Schools (Illinois)
East St. Louis School District (Illinois)
Hazelwood School District (Missouri)
Jefferson County School District (Colorado)
Springfield Public Schools (Illinois)
Syracuse City School District (New York)

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS
ASCD
California Education Partners
Change the Equation
College Summit
Corporation for Public Broadcasting
New York Hall of Science
Say Yes to Education
Success for Kids

STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES
District of Columbia Public Schools
Florida Department of Education
Hawaii Department of Education
Maine Department of Education
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Michigan Department of Education
Mississippi Department of Education
Nevada Department of Education
New York Department of Education
Ohio Department of Education
Texas Education Agency
Washington Department of Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
Office of Innovation and Improvement
Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development
Office of Postsecondary Education
Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
Federal Student Aid
Institute of Education Sciences
National Center for Education Statistics

AIR Locations in the United States

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Frederick, MD
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New York, NY
Portland, OR
Sacramento, CA
San Diego, CA
San Mateo, CA
Silver Spring, MD

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