

Seizing the Opportunity for State Education R&D

Executive Summary



Education in the United States faces an urgent imperative: the need to transform our education system into one that can prepare all students for success in an increasingly competitive global economy. While sectors like healthcare, energy, and defense invest substantially in research and development (R&D) to drive innovation, there is also a vital opportunity in education to systematically identify, test, and scale effective solutions that can improve experiences and outcomes for every student.

At the forefront are states. States have the opportunity to prioritize innovation and education R&D infrastructure as a central part of their education strategic plans and policy priorities. R&D embedded across state and community levels can be a powerful force for modernizing education and providing systemic solutions to the biggest education and workforce challenges states are tackling.

The [Alliance for Learning Innovation](#) (ALI) defines R&D as applied research in real-world education environments focused on developing, testing, and evaluating innovative solutions—tools, products, features, or systems—to our nation's most pressing education problems.

Recommendations for States

The recommendations below were informed by interviews and survey responses from 60 education stakeholders representing 15 states and diverse political contexts. Interviewees and respondents included local and state leaders in K-12 education and staff from foundations, national advocacy organizations, and higher education institutions. Recommendations center on the **conditions** to incentivize and foster education R&D and the **infrastructure** to support, evaluate, embed, and sustain it. Themes from the research and key actions for each recommendation are detailed in the full brief, [Seizing the Opportunity for State Education R&D: Findings and Recommendations for Action](#).

Conditions

- Establish a state vision and goals that prioritize innovation and continuous improvement.
- Establish a dedicated office to oversee and drive state education R&D.
- Empower local leaders to test evidence-based solutions and develop innovative models that improve learner experiences and inform systems transformation.
- Identify and build the needed capacity that impacts mindset and behavior change.

Infrastructure

- Modernize state longitudinal data systems (SLDS).
- Leverage tools, artificial intelligence, and technology platforms to support and enable education R&D efforts.
- Build human capacity through partnerships, networks, and community engagement.
- Provide technical support for R&D activities and continuous improvement.