

Know What Works, Act on Evidence, IMPROVE RESULTS

**PROVING
GROUND**

Center for Education Policy Research
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Across the country, education agencies are implementing a wide variety of strategies to improve student outcomes. Too often, these agencies have to make decisions about their strategies based on anecdote or popularity rather than concrete evidence of success.

Proving Ground works with school districts to help them identify and test solutions to specific challenges, such as chronic absenteeism, that are obstacles to student achievement. Based at Harvard University's Center for Education Policy Research, Proving Ground creates a network of districts and charter management organizations to address each specific challenge.

The Proving Ground team provides partner districts with data analysis, strategic advice, hands-on assistance, and peer networking opportunities. Network members use these opportunities to share lessons learned and decide what solutions to test. Through this process, Proving Ground helps districts:

- ✔ Quickly and reliably assess the impact of their solutions;
- ✔ Act on evidence to continuously improve implementation; and
- ✔ Learn to use new and better evidence to make decisions about how to invest resources.

PROVING GROUND'S PARTNERSHIP WITH DISTRICTS

	Data Analysis	Strategic Advice and Hands-On Assistance	Peer Networking Opportunities
Proving Ground will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Analyze district data and generate timely, actionable reports on findings. ✔ Provide an online data dashboard for districts. ✔ Provide analyses that meet federal evidence standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Lead working sessions with district and school teams to review evidence and develop solutions. ✔ Meet on-site with district leadership teams to discuss evidence and prioritize solutions. ✔ Share potential solutions that have a track record of success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Convene network members and experts in person annually. ✔ Lead virtual sessions for districts to work together and solve problems. ✔ Provide an online collaboration and resource-sharing portal. ✔ Host interactive webinars.
Each district will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Assess its historical performance. ✔ Use data to identify challenges and successes. ✔ Monitor implementation progress. ✔ Act on evidence to identify next steps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Learn to use evidence to make decisions. ✔ Understand the root causes of challenges. ✔ Understand how to better align resources to solve challenges. ✔ Work across departments to prioritize solutions and achieve set objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Share resources, ideas, and promising practices with other network members. ✔ Solve common problems by identifying and testing solutions with other network members. ✔ Learn from experts in the field.



“Proving Ground has really been helpful in getting us not only these actionable data reports but also giving us some strategies and helping us develop ideas on how we might improve our implementation in a testable way.” – JOHN RICE, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Photo courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action.

PROVING GROUND NETWORK

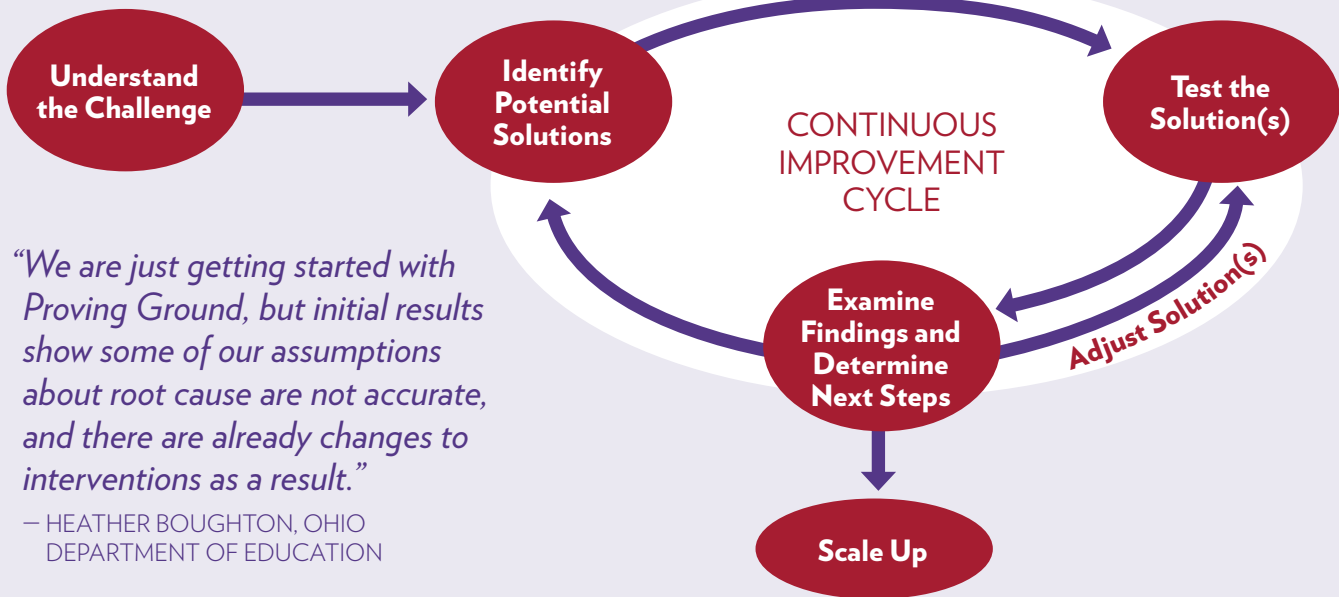


APPROXIMATELY
300,000
students



MORE THAN
70%
free or reduced-price lunch

HOW PROVING GROUND WORKS



Although districts join a network focused on an overarching challenge, such as chronic absenteeism, each district has its own context. Proving Ground’s process focuses on a continuous improvement cycle to help each district rapidly find solutions that work for its students and families:

1. Understand the Challenge: Proving Ground begins its work with each district by analyzing the district’s historical data and conducting interviews with district and school staff. Through this process, Proving Ground helps the district uncover key issues and trends that contribute to the challenge the network is addressing.

2. Identify Potential Solutions: Proving Ground then leads each district through a process of uncovering the root causes of its challenges. Proving Ground helps the district identify potential solutions and works with the district’s leadership team to prioritize these solutions. Then Proving Ground connects the district with others working on similar challenges, and these districts determine a common set of solutions to test.

3. Test the Solution(s): Proving Ground helps each district design and implement the solution(s) in a measurable way. During the testing phase, Proving Ground provides reports on findings every six to eight weeks, depending on the solution being tested.

4. Examine Findings and Determine Next Steps: Proving Ground then works with each district to determine how to act on the findings. If the solution is producing the desired results, the district may decide to scale up. If the solution is underperforming, the district may decide to make adjustments and continue testing, or it may decide to stop implementation and try an entirely new solution.

“Being able to be part of this network with people that are interested in the same data has allowed conversations to be much more effective in getting out new best practices and brainstorming solutions.” — JESSICA PETERS, KIPP DC

MEETING INDIVIDUAL DISTRICT NEEDS

Because districts have different internal capacities and contexts, groups of network members may test different solutions. For example, some districts may choose to test new parental engagement strategies; others may test a public messaging campaign. Some may test multiple solutions at once.

For each solution that network members choose to test, Proving Ground helps individual districts tailor the test based on the district’s capacity and resources. Proving Ground also works with districts’ unique schedules to ensure that the timing of the testing phase aligns with each district’s academic, hiring, and budget timelines.

Regardless of the solution that is tested, Proving Ground’s fast turnaround helps districts quickly learn whether a solution is working and determine how to allocate resources in the next school year.

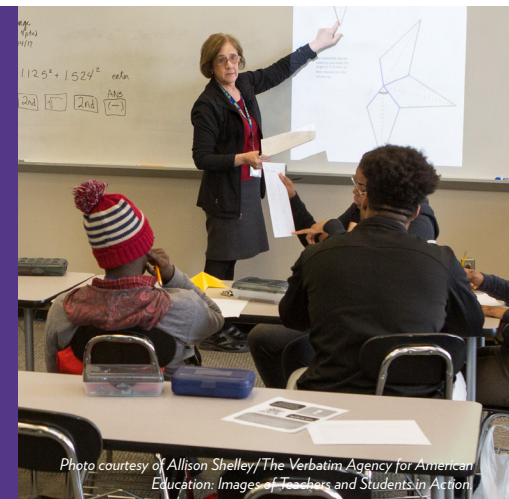


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To join Proving Ground or learn more about its work, visit provingground.cepr.harvard.edu.