Overview of AIMS EduData Initiative

Due March 2, 2026

This call for proposals invites researchers and educators to propose an R&D project using existing data from large-scale digital learning platforms (DLP) for conducting new experiments on these platforms to pursue insights about mathematics teaching and learning. These widely-deployed platforms provide ecologically valid data that provide potential insights into the processes of student learning, ways that teachers engage with platforms and professional development, and the impact on student motivation, engagement, persistence, and learning outcomes. For more information about the available datasets and experimental capabilities, see the DLP Catalog.

We especially invite early career researchers and educators, including tenure-track faculty, postdocs, graduate students, researchers within non-profit organizations, district staff with research roles, and researchers located at minority serving institutions or Title I schools. In addition to providing funding, grantees will be involved in a community of practice and engage with DLP staff, with each other, and with the broader AIMS Collaboratory network, providing opportunities for awardees to grow their professional network, research skills and results, and knowledge.

This Opportunity

This solicitation offers an opportunity to conduct research with five DLPs: Khan Academy, Curriculum Associates, the Lastinger Center, OpenStax, and EdLight. To conduct this research, grantees will gain access to deidentified datasets and research tools, provided they comply with IRB, privacy, and data use policies and procedures established by each DLP in accordance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations. In order to write a competitive proposal, it is essential to visit the DLP catalogue, which you can access here: https://www.dlpcatalog.org/.

This opportunity is open to all types of research questions and methods, including exploratory projects, correlational research, measurement, and evaluation studies. We are particularly interested to understand how research-based concepts can lead to understanding of how DLPs can foster student motivation, engagement, and persistence in learning math. We also welcome proposals with mutual value to researchers, educators and DLPs, including analyzing how DLP features could help teachers save time or engage in known effective teaching and learning practices based on the data in a DLP, and projects involving partnerships with K-12 districts that investigate how to improve the effectiveness of DLPs for their students.

In our experience, there is a learning curve for researchers and educators entering collaborations with DLPs and gaining familiarity with their data. As such, we encourage applicants to think of these grants as opportunities to explore what is feasible with these DLPs, potentially laying the groundwork for subsequent further grant proposals to this program or other funders. We also welcome partnerships of educators and researchers who have already done the feasibility work to indicate their readiness to begin research (district

or educator-led projects involving EdLight can receive additional research support if needed, for example analysis support, dashboards, or check-ins with an EdLight researcher, more information here.

Background

In 2021, the K-12 Education Team at the Gates Foundation launched an effort called "R&D Infrastructure" to develop new research and evaluation capabilities in large existing digital learning platforms (DLPs). AIMS EduData was launched in spring 2025 to open up opportunities for external researchers and research-practice partnerships to access these tools and platforms to conduct further research on these developed research platforms, providing access to data and experimental capabilities that have been difficult to access in conventional research settings.

In partnership with other efforts like SEERNet, the AIMS EduData initiative is part of a broader movement to increase the pace of discovery and innovation in US education. Conducting research through widely used DLPs can accelerate research and development and make it easier to conduct replications to identify what works for whom under what conditions. DLPs often collect far more data than their internal research teams have capacity to analyze. The partners and platforms in the AIMS Collaboratory have been very successful in lowering barriers to make new discoveries in education based on learning platforms in widespread use among students. DLPs have developed tools and methods that enable external researchers to gain access to system log data, including newly instrumented learning activities, research data dashboards, and new datasets. An initial cohort of research partners received grants in summer 2025 and is presently conducting studies.

We invite new proposals to suggest potential insights about how to use these new data and tools to enable new discoveries in math teaching and learning. Funded projects can contribute to the education R&D movement by expanding its capacity and skills, providing feedback to DLPs about the utility of their datasets and insights about their features, and demonstrating the affordances and value of conducting research through DLPs.

Our long term vision is for the AIMS EduData initiative to grow into a robust community of researchers and educators working in partnership with DLPs to advance theory and math education. We also intend to reduce commonly-encountered barriers to conducting DLP research through re-usable infrastructure and open science practices. As such, we anticipate opening new calls for proposals at roughly six month intervals.

All research will require completion of ethical and legal data usage requirements, including IRB applications, privacy requirements, and data use policies and procedures established by each DLP.

What makes for a strong proposal

This is the second RFP for the AIMS EduData program, so we can share some insights from the first round of applicants. **Overall, we funded ten projects out of 91 proposals**. Stronger proposals built on prior research and had a theory-driven line of inquiry to advance the knowledge frontier. These applicants typically deeply reviewed the information provided through the DLP catalog, selected the platform that best matched their research interest, and as a result were prepared to ask questions during DLP office hours. These teams were able as a result to develop research proposals that were targeted on questions of interest and were feasible with the data available. Proposals that were not funded often did not go beyond a descriptive

analysis of the data, lacked a theoretical perspective, were not high value for the DLP, or did not have the potential to generate new knowledge. We welcome replication studies provided they recognize previous research and provide a rationale.

Appendix A provides a detailed description of funding opportunities for this solicitation.

Description of Grant Opportunity and Expectations

This solicitation offers grants of $10,000-$400,000. This solicitation includes a range of proposal types:

- P*lanning grants* of $10,000 to $20,000 allow **up to six months** to develop a detailed research proposal. A *planning grant* is the right choice when the research is contingent on relationships that are yet to be worked out or there are other uncertainties or contingencies that require a planning period.

- S*mall grant research projects* of $10,000 to $50,000 for **3-12 months (depending on DLP)**. These projects should seek to address research questions and produce findings, typically without requiring time consuming steps like establishing new partnerships or acquiring data sets beyond those available via the existing platforms. A *small grant research project* is the right choice when the proposer is ready to make concrete progress on a research question as soon as funding and data become available.

- *Large research grant projects* of up to $400,000 for **up to two years**. Proposals in this range should communicate the *capability and readiness of a partnership* among a school district and researchers with the intent to undertake important and innovative research. **This option is only available for projects involving Curriculum Associates (up to $150,000) and EdLight ($100,000 to $400,000)**. Projects seeking large research grants with EdLight are reserved for district/educator led applicants or research-practice partnerships with existing relationships and are expected to upload student handwritten math work. Projects seeking large research grants with Curriculum Associates are reserved for research-practice partnerships that include university-affiliated researchers and school district partners. Research projects should be aligned to Curriculum Associates priorities outlined in this RFP, but these larger projects may also involve data collection from educators and students that is not provided through the platform.

IMPORTANT: Refer to the table at the end for specific grants available for each DLP. **Additional** information for educator/district-led projects with EdLight **available** here.

Earliest starting date: June 1, 2026

Successful applicants will be expected to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Planning grant** recipients will be able to present a detailed research proposal along with securing letters of commitment from intended partners (e.g., a school district) to be involved in the research.
- **Research grant recipients** will have completed a research project and be able to present their findings to the AIMS community. They will also submit a final report describing the research activities, methods used, findings, and implications for the DLP and for future research (including what further proposals are being contemplated, if applicable). If research results in new discoveries, recipients should write up their findings and make them publicly available, ideally in a peer-reviewed journal.
- **All grantees** are expected to:
    - Participate in monthly virtual community convenings to build relationships and share learning.

- Prepare and present a poster at a virtual community convening and/or Gates Foundation event (travel to the event will be supported by the Gates Foundation).
- Distribute research results publicly, ideally using open science approaches that include pre-registration of studies, openly licensed and reproducible analytical code, derivative data sharing, and other techniques where feasible and appropriate.

Proposal guidance

Proposals for grants up to (and including) $50,000 should be 3-4 pages long, including the abstract, but not including CVs and references. The proposal should not exceed 2000 words.

Proposals for grants between $100,000-400,000 (Curriculum Associates and Edlight only) can be up to 6 pages long, including the abstract but not including CVs and references. These proposals should not exceed 3000 words.

Abstract / summary - provide a brief summary of your proposed research project, summarizing the elements described below.

Significance - describe how your proposed project might contribute insights about ways to improve students' math achievement and/or to establish the relevance and usefulness of digital learning platforms as research infrastructure. Why is this project important? How does your project fit with the goals of the DLP? (The latter is very important!) If you are seeking a planning grant, describe what your criteria for selecting partner(s) would be and how this partnership would enable you to achieve your research goals.

If effective, this section will enable a proposal reviewer to know why the project is important for the improvement of mathematics teaching and learning, how it fits the goals of the DLP and, if applicable, how it could benefit the district partner.

Research plan - What research questions will you address, and what do you hope to learn more broadly? Describe what types of learner outcomes you wish to address, the types of data from the DLP that you will use and analysis you plan to conduct, and how these methods will enable you to address your research questions. How does your research leverage the specific data provided by the DLP?

Describe any barriers you might encounter, and what steps you might take to overcome those barriers. Because some of the work will involve discovering what is possible and not possible with the available data, you can describe the initial feasibility questions you will explore and possible adjustments you will make depending on what you learn. Provide an estimated timeline for your project.

Plans should describe approaches to reproducibility and dissemination of results, ideally using open science methods consistent with the Gates Foundation Open Access Policy.

For planning grants, this section will focus on an intended research plan and how you will refine both the research plan and your partnerships using the planning funds.

Proposals involving district partnerships and new data collections should describe how the DLP will be implemented, what intervention or implementation factors will be examined (as applicable), who from the district will be involved, and how any data collected outside the DLP will be integrated with DLP data for analysis.

A proposal reviewer will have a clear understanding of the research you seek to do and how you will do it, including how you will resolve issues of feasibility and/or develop necessary partnerships (for a planning grant). For consideration at the $100-400,000 level (Curriculum Associates and EdLight only), explain what you have already

done to establish feasibility and readiness. For projects seeking funding for a large research grant with EdLight please provide a statement acknowledging you will upload student handwritten math work. Additional guidance for Edlight district/school-based proposals can be found here.

Career (Partnership) growth - How will participation in the AIMS EduData initiative contribute to your career growth? (Planning grants might also use this section to discuss the growth of the partnership). What demonstrated skills and knowledge could you apply to this project? What new skills or knowledge do you hope to gain? How might belonging to the AIMS Collaboratory and this cohort of researchers open up new possibilities for your career?

A proposal reviewer will be able to discern if you are capable of doing this research and will learn how it will advance your career (or partnership) in important ways. For consideration at the $100,000-400,000 level, describe the maturity of the partnership, including readiness to execute MOUs, Data Sharing Agreements, etc. as necessary to move forward.

Resources - Describe the personnel, consultants, travel, equipment, facilities and other resources you would need to conduct your project successfully and demonstrate that you have access to these resources through existing means or through use of grant funds. Explain what systems and procedures you would use to ensure secure data transfer and storage. State how you will comply with data security and human subjects research requirements and execute data sharing agreements.

A proposal reviewer will have confidence that you have access to the skills, facilities and resources needed to do the research.

Budget (outside the 2000 word limit)
Provide a budget using the template described below.

Note that acceptable use of funds includes:

- Researcher and/or educator time, including course buy outs or summer salary
- Consulting fees or a stipend for a senior researcher for mentorship and guidance on the research, and/or a research assistant or postdoc for support.
- Up to 2 professional conferences relevant to the research project.
- Equipment and computational resources, (including devices, internet access, privacy-compliant analytical applications, computing power, and storage)
- IRB review and legal support for data sharing agreements
- For EdLight proposals, a portion of grants must go toward platform costs (with the exception of research designed to use the existing dataset of handwritten work in the research portal)
- Institutional overhead up to limits established by the Gates Foundation (0% for government agencies, 10% for colleges & universities, 15% non-profits & for profits (see https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/documents/indirect_cost_policy.pdf)

You can include additional narrative outside the word limit if necessary to further justify your budget (beyond the explanation in the Resources section).

What to Submit
Your submission should include:

- An abstract or summary of your project and narrative addressing the topics above, not exceeding 2000 words (including the abstract) or 3000 words for larger grants.
- Citations
- Resume or CVs for the PI and any other key staff
- Early career scholars (graduate students and postdocs) MUST include a letter of commitment from a faculty advisor at your institution who can help to navigate the process to obtain IRB approval and data sharing agreements, and to ensure smooth execution of grant agreements and receipt of funds. The letter must have a specific commitment to an amount of time.

- Budget in the template provided, along with any additional justification. Download a copy of the template and save your version with the file name convention PI LAST NAME_BUDGET.XLS.

Additional guidance for EdLight proposals can be found here.

Eligibility Criteria

This opportunity is open to any U.S.-based applicant(s), whether in a non-profit organization, for-profit organization, or educational/government agency. These may include individuals submitting on their own behalf (if applying for a planning grant), individuals working for an institution of higher education, a school district, research organization (e.g. a nonprofit) or U.S.-based small business or consultancy. Prior to award, applicants must establish their ability to complete necessary IRB, MOUs, Data Sharing Agreements and to comply with data security requirements.

We are especially interested in receiving proposals from the following types of proposers: graduate students and early career professionals, educators with research roles, such as those working in district research offices, research-practice partnerships, and researchers located at minority serving institutions or Title I school districts.

Individuals may not submit more than one application.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be assessed on four main criteria:

- Significance, explaining the value of the research in relation to the stated priorities and including why the chosen DLP (and proposed partnership, for planning grants) is a good fit for realizing that value.
- Research Plan, including both the strength of the plan, but also awareness of feasibility and contingencies you will need to resolve as you go. For planning grants, the proposal describes how the team will arrive at a strong plan and a strong partnership that can conduct the plan.
- Career or Growth, including both how you are positioned to do this research or planning and how the funds will enable growth of your career or growth of a valuable partnership.
- Resources, access to needed expertise and institutional support, and reasonable and appropriate use of resources available to you both from this grant and in your context.

An FAQ will be available at http://aimsedudata.org. We will also offer office hours to respond to questions about the RFP.

Description of Digital Learning Platforms and Priority Research Topics

DLP Research Dataset Provider	**Description**	**Priority Topics of Interest**	**Funding available**	**Type of project (period)**
Khan Academy	Khan Academy is a web based learning platform, offering students learning content (e.g., videos, articles) and practice opportunities (exercises, quizzes, etc.) on a wide variety of topics. The platform is instrumented to record student actions such as performance on practice questions, time spent, hint usage, and exercise retries. The platform also collects teacher data, such as assignment creation, and dashboard usage (see the data dictionary for examples). Data is available for research purposes from non-district partner U.S. classrooms in 6th-8th grade math. Other grades/subjects and Khanmigo (AI Guide) data is not available for research purposes at this time.	• Detecting and overcoming struggle • Optimizing learning paths for improved efficiency • Understanding transfer of learning to new topics • Predicting rates of acquisition and forgetting over time • Content analytics	$45,000 grant	Small research study (1 year)
Curriculum Associates	A provider of K-12 adaptive assessments and personalized instruction, Curriculum Associates will provide opportunities for researchers to answer questions using de-identified data from the i-Ready suite of assessments and personalized instruction. Curriculum Associates is offering access to three datasets: 1. i-Ready Assessment & Instruction Data (Grades 3-5): This dataset includes a sample of mathematics data from the i-Ready Personalized Instruction platform and assessment data from the i-Ready Diagnostic that represents over 500,000 students in grades 3-5 from across the United States.	Curriculum Associates is interested in a variety of research questions and will consider questions beyond the sample research questions provided below. 1. For the i-Ready Assessment & Instruction Data (Grades 3-5): Research investigating patterns of student engagement across lessons, patterns of engagement that are predictive of student learning. 2. For the Middle School Lesson Data (Grades 6-8):	Multiple grants, max $150,000	Small and/or large research projects (up to 1 year)

	2. Middle School Lesson Data (Grades 6-8): This dataset includes a sample of student-level instruction data from 100,000 students using i-Ready Personalized Instruction for Middle School Math (i-Ready Pro) in the 2025-2026 school year. 3. i-Ready Educator Report Data (Grade 5 Teachers): This dataset includes a national sample of Grade 5 educator data that tracks access to reports available to educators and administrators in the i-Ready platform in the 2024-2025 school year.	Research investigating student progress through lessons to identify student engagement, student rushing, or student idling. Research investigating how patterns differ by student placement level, by domain, or by other factors, such as item type. 3. For the i-Ready Educator Report Data (Grade 5 Teachers): Research investigating patterns of educator access by report type, time of year, and relationship to administration of the diagnostic; research investigating the relationship between access to different types of reports and student outcomes.		
University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning	We have two different datasets. One enables research with student data from MathNation, an online middle and high school mathematics curriculum. The second includes teacher data from the Math Matrix Micro-Credential, an asynchronous, competency-based online professional learning system for K-12 mathematics educators. *This provider is not accepting proposals from PhD students and candidates this round.*	• Research investigating and identifying salient patterns of student engagement across curriculum activities. • Research investigating student conceptions of mathematics content. • Research investigating relationships between student engagement and learning outcomes. • Research investigating and identifying salient patterns of teacher engagement across course features, activities, and time. • Research investigating teacher conceptions of course content.	Up to five $20,000 grants	Small studies that can be conducted during summer (mid-May to mid-August) 2026

		• Research investigating relationships between teacher engagement and learning across teacher characteristics.		
OpenStax RAISE Algebra I Curriculum	Assignable is a Learning Management System (LMS)-compatible platform, built using OpenStax's RAISE Algebra's curriculum that allows teachers to create/modify/delete custom assignments in leading LMSs like Canvas. Assignable is modular and supports various types of learning activities, including assessments, videos, readings, textbooks, and other interactives. Furthermore, students are able to complete these assignments from their LMS, and instructors can score those assignments and generate grades. The data available for this project will be from partner institutions using Assignable for their Algebra 1 courses. This dataset includes granular usage data (e.g., student time spent on page, note-taking, and highlight behavior) as well as survey responses on psychosocial constructs.	• Learning Analytics & Prediction • Self-Regulated Learning • Engagement, affect & motivation	One grant max $25,000	Planning grant, may lead to larger grant (6 months)
EdLight	EdLight's dataset of annotated handwritten student work surfaces misconceptions correlating with content gaps, research-grade portals for testing interventions, and integrated data models that identify which teacher actions most improve outcomes for priority students. These datasets provide meaningful insights into how students learn and how teachers approach and leverage systems of assessment.	• Research on how to support students' motivation, engagement, and persistence in mathematics. • Research on effective strategies for utilizing formative assessment data to support responsive, asset-based mathematics instruction. • Examinations of patterns in student misconceptions and/or the use of insights in addressing these misconceptions.	3–5 small practitioner or early-career $10,000-$50,000 1-2 Optional planning grants <$20,000. 1–2 larger district research partnerships for $100K–$400K	Small practitioner or early career grants (up to 1 year) Optional planning grants < $20,000 (up to 6 months) Large district research partnership (up to 2 years)