

About EdLight

EdLight's mission is to bridge educational gaps by building technology that creates pathways between teachers and learners. EdLight is the connective tissue of instructional systems, helping schools see what's happening in classrooms so conversations shift from "Did we teach it?" to "Did students learn it?" By translating everyday student work into clear, actionable understanding through our AI-powered tool and professional learning, EdLight empowers educators to respond to learning in real time and advance equitable outcomes for all students.

EdLight's infrastructure reveals patterns in handwritten student work in math. These insights, based on real student work, guide teachers to identify common misconceptions, respond with effective instructional moves, and reflect on their practice. This AI-assisted approach to formatively assessing students' handwritten mathematics work helps to accelerate teachers' development and confidence in delivering rigorous, responsive instruction. Furthermore, it enables research-driven improvement to classroom practice at scale.

EdLight's dataset enables curriculum-embedded assessment systems that surface 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 serve as valuable spaces for educational research, as they provide meaningful insights into how students learn and how teachers approach and leverage systems of assessment. This infrastructure ensures that equity isn't an afterthought, it's embedded in the design. Ultimately, EdLight closes the feedback loop between student thinking and teacher action at scale, in real-time, and with equity at the center. By pairing AI infrastructure with collaborative research and school partnerships, EdLight empowers systems to deliver on the promise of high-quality instruction for all learners, not just those who fit neatly into traditional models.

To date, EdLight has collected more than 300,000 student work samples and this data has been used to support practice-partnered, exploratory research related to students' mathematics learning. Check out [EdLight's recently published report](#) with the Research Partnership for Professional Learning (RPPL) as an example of our practice-partnered research contributions.

In this current call, we seek applicants (e.g., teachers, coaches, school-based professional learning communities, research-practice partnerships, university based researchers) with ideas

related to what platform features or research questions they wish to explore, as well as what outcome measures would be appropriate to evaluate success.

Example studies could include:

- Exploration of trends in student understanding of different mathematical content based on AI-generated insights of handwritten student work
- Exploration of how data from the EdLight platform enhances teaching effectiveness, teacher capacity, and workforce capacity and/or impacts students' motivation, engagement, and persistence in mathematics classroom
- Examinations of patterns in student misconceptions and/or the use of insights in addressing these misconceptions

Proposals should demonstrate immediate relevance to classroom instruction and articulate how findings will inform practice within the year.

For more information about the AIMS EduData initiative and opportunity to conduct research with four other DLPS (Khan Academy, Curriculum Associates, the Lastinger Center, and OpenStax) please see the open call for proposals. For more information about the available dataset and experimental capabilities of [EdLight](#) and the other DLPS, see the [DLP Catalog](#).

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

Description of Grant Opportunity & Expectations

At EdLight, we believe that the clearest window into student learning is their own work. Our research portal and R&D infrastructure were built through the support of the Gates Foundation to help schools deeply understand how students make sense of mathematics, and how teachers can respond with precision, speed, and equity. This solicitation offers grants between \$10,000 and \$400,000 for research lasting from 6 months up to two years:

- *Planning grants* of up to \$20,000. We plan to award 1-2 planning grants, for **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.
- *Small research projects* up to \$50,000 for **3- 12 months**. We plan to award 3-5 small research projects small practitioner and early-career grants of up to \$50,000 aimed at leveraging the portal to explore the existing dataset of handwritten student work. These

grants are beneficial for both university-based and school-based individuals interested in researching different aspects of formative assessment.

- *Large research projects \$100,000 - \$400,000 for up to 2 years.* We plan to award up to 2 large district research partnership grants of \$100,000-up to \$400,000. Large research grants are reserved to those led by educators or districts, or research-practice partnerships. There is an expectation projects will include uploading student work as a part of this grant.

Earliest start date is June 2026.

This opportunity is open to teachers, coaches, research practice-partnerships and other groups of educational professionals working in middle grades mathematics classrooms. Specifically, we seek to support projects that involve the integration of EdLight's digital learning platform (DLP) to support research on instructional challenges related to improving student outcomes in mathematics classrooms.

For teachers, schools and/or districts who apply, participation is a supported, co-designed, school-centered improvement effort grounded in real student thinking.

Awardees selected for this program will:

1. Receive Supports to Co-Design a Research Question That Matters to You. We work with each school/district to identify an urgent instructional challenge tied to:

- student motivation, engagement, and persistence in math (MEP),
- misconceptions that disproportionately impact priority learners,
- how teachers use formative assessment data,
- equitable implementation of HQIM.

2. Use EdLight Regularly to Surface Real-Time Student Thinking. Participating teachers commit to uploading student work approximately 3x/week. This creates a continuous stream of real data that:

- reveals misconceptions early,
- strengthens PLC conversations,
- supports coaching,
- builds teacher confidence in serving priority learners.

3. Receive Structured Research Support (Not More Work). EdLight provides:

- onboarding & teacher support,

- quarterly professional learning aligned towards school/district instructional priorities,
- monthly check-ins with our research lead,
- access to annotated datasets,
- tailored datasets and dashboards (or API if district already has preferred dashboard) aligned to your study,
- analysis support and interpretation sessions.

All grantees are expected to:

- Participate in monthly check-ins with research lead
- Participate in virtual community convenings to build relationships and share learning.
- Prepare and present a poster at a 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.

Deadline to submit proposals March 2, 2026.

Proposal Guidance

Proposals should be approximately 3-4 pages long for grants up to \$50,000 and should not exceed 2000 words. Proposals for larger-scale grants between \$100,000-400,000 should be up to 6 pages and should not exceed 3,000 words.

SECTION 1: Cover Page & Basic Information (no more than 1 page)

Proposal Name

Submitting Organization

District / Network Name

School(s) participating (if applicable)

Primary Contact

Name, role, email, phone

Research Team Members

List names + roles (must include at least one school-based practitioner)

If associated with a University, please provide evidence of explicit University approval

Abstract/summary: provide a brief summary of your proposed research.

SECTION 2: Instructional Context & Significance

Why is this project important for your school context and/or broader improvements in mathematics teaching and learning? How does your proposed project align with the goals of EdLight?

Short answer

Briefly describe your math program (HQIM, curriculum, instructional priorities).

Short answer

Briefly describe how your school/district currently uses student work to inform instruction.

Short answer

Research Plan

SECTION 3: Proposed Research Focus

What instructional challenge or question do you want to investigate?

(Examples: use of formative assessment in team meetings, student persistence/MEP, misconceptions that disproportionately impact priority students, etc.)

Short answer

Why is this the right question for your team this year? Include an estimated timeline for your project.

Short answer

Which grade levels and student groups will be involved?

Indicate all that apply and describe any relevant demographics.

SECTION 4: Anticipated Learning + Use

What decisions or instructional routines do you hope this research will inform?

Check + short answer

- PLC routines
- Intervention / WIN block

- Teacher coaching
- Curriculum implementation
- District-level strategic planning
- Other

How will you share learnings with teachers and leaders in your system?

Short answer

SECTION 5: Career (Partnership) growth

How will this project contribute to your growth? (Planning grants might also use this section to discuss the growth of the partnership). This could include: individual professional growth, growth of your department or school community, expansion of pedagogical content knowledge, etc.)

Short answer

SECTION 6: Resources & Implementation Commitments

Requirement for Large Research Grants: Projects funded by large research grants require partnerships with educators so that teachers will upload their students' handwritten math work at least weekly. Are you able to commit to this?

Yes / No / Need to discuss

Are you able to participate in co-design (1–2 sessions) and monthly research check-ins?

Yes / No / Maybe

Do you have district approval and/or know the process for IRB/DSA? Please attach additional documentation detailing your school/district's AI policy, vendor policy, DSA, MOU, and/or IRB policies.

Short answer.

Do you have approval/confirmation that school/district leadership is aware and supportive of your proposal? Please attach a signed letter of support from your school/district leader. We have linked a [template](#) here, if valuable!

Yes / No / Need to discuss

SECTION 7: Budget

Please include a budget for your proposal in .xlsx or .csv format. Budget justifications in narrative form are strongly encouraged. Feel free to utilize our [**budget template**](#) (includes space for 1-2 sentence budget justification per line item) as an added support.

Please note that a portion of your subgrant must be allocated to platform costs. EdLight pricing is \$10,000 per school, with a 10% district discount applied when multiple schools from the same district are included. For example, a proposal including three schools would budget \$27,000 for EdLight (\$30,000 total minus a \$3,000 district discount).

OPTIONAL SECTION

This section is optional. Schools with lower research/writing capacity AND/OR serving high concentrations of Black, brown, and low-income student populations may choose to answer either or both questions below. While completing this section does not guarantee writing support, it helps the EdLight team identify applicants who may benefit from additional capacity.

What strengths or cultural assets within your community should we highlight to accurately represent your student and teacher experience?

What support do you need in articulating your research question or intended impact? (We will help refine.)

Choose one:

- We have a rough idea and want help shaping it
- We need help naming a strong, research-able question
- We want help connecting our question to MEP / equity goals
- Other (short answer)