



REL Appalachia at SRI International



You can do it; we know you can! The end of the school year is finally in sight. This academic year has been incredibly challenging, yet educators all over the country have, time and again have embodied true perseverance. Pause, take a deep breath, and think about how much we have grown on this journey and what lessons we can carry forward. Although it may feel like there were many more valleys than peaks in the last year, educators across the country managed to make magic with and for students by reimagining graduation ceremonies, delivering meals and resources to driveways, connecting via virtual meetings, and so much more. Educators had to innovate constantly to navigate the ever-changing landscape of 2020 schooling, and REL Appalachia is honored to share some of the incredible work of educators in our region. If you want to learn more about the work REL Appalachia is engaged in or if you are interested in partnering, we invite you to connect with us via our [website](#), [Ask A REL](#), [Twitter](#), or at rel.appalachia@sri.com. We are here to support you.

Featured Stories

Research-based practices for effective remote learning

Making the transition from teaching students and leading activities in person to providing remote instruction and leadership from a distance was challenging for educators across the country. To equip and support educators with this pivot, REL Appalachia staff are collaborating with 29 Tennessee school districts, the Niswonger Foundation (their local technical assistance provider), and district trainers to develop a three-part train-the-trainer series on research-based practices for effective remote teaching. The workshop content will be timely, relevant, and responsive to the evolving needs of educators. After participating in all three workshops, attendees will deliver proven strategies to educators in their home districts on improving student engagement, monitoring student progress, and designing effective instruction in a hybrid model. Learn more about this project, view information about upcoming events, and access the materials from the first workshop of the series [here](#).

Implementing high-quality performance assessment in science

Working directly with educators to enhance their skill sets with evidence-based practices is one of the most rewarding experiences for our staff, and this project was no exception. REL Appalachia, in collaboration with teachers from Virginia's Prince William and Arlington school divisions, developed and refined resources to implement performance assessments in science. Ten Virginia teachers participated in coaching workshops and contributed to the development of the *Implementing Performance Assessments Workbook*. REL staff visited four classrooms to collect video footage of the teachers in action and, with the teachers, shared this footage and highlighted insights from their experience in a recent webinar series. Thank you to the educators who opened their classroom doors to share tangible learnings about performance assessment implementation. Explore the coaching and webinar resources and materials [here](#).



Community math nights



Despite COVID-related school closures, partners across the region have maintained their priority of engaging families in math education by adapting the REL Appalachia in-person Community Math Night (CMN) model to meet their local needs during the pandemic. One math-intervention teacher in Kentucky created a web-based, self-paced virtual family math night with instructional videos for parents and caregivers, showing them how to play interactive, skill-building math games with their child. In another instance, math educators in Kentucky (pictured here) partnered with a local library and set up a drive-through for family members to pick up CMN math station and other activities to enrich at-home interactions during quarantine.

New cohorts of teachers from Kentucky and West Virginia will attend virtual training in winter 2021 to implement CMN in their schools in spring 2021. Huge thanks to the Kentucky Department of Education, the Kentucky Center for Mathematics, and the West Virginia Family Engagement Center for partnering with us in these efforts! And because we have seen great excitement grow in our CMN programming, REL Appalachia has drafted a toolkit so any educator anywhere can implement a CMN in their school. Nine reviewers — elementary teachers, math coaches, family-engagement specialists, and parents from across our four-state region — provided stellar feedback on the usability of the

draft toolkit, expected for release this year. Learn more about Community Math Nights and check out resources [here](#).

Improving postsecondary transitions

Students' successful transition from high school to postsecondary education programs and careers requires strategic support, especially in rural and underserved communities where students may live far from a university campus and may not have any family members who have navigated higher education. REL Appalachia has been fortunate to partner with committed educators in four rural districts in Eastern Kentucky who are working to improve students' postsecondary transitions. During the virtual National Forum to Advance Rural Education (NREA) conference, REL Appalachia staff and leaders from these districts shared their experience with a continuous improvement process and how their work affected their schools and students. REL Appalachia continues to learn with and support partners in Eastern Kentucky and salutes their ongoing work and commitment to helping students' successfully transition to college and career, even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Postsecondary transitions partnership resources can be found [here](#), and the NREA [conference materials](#) are also available.

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