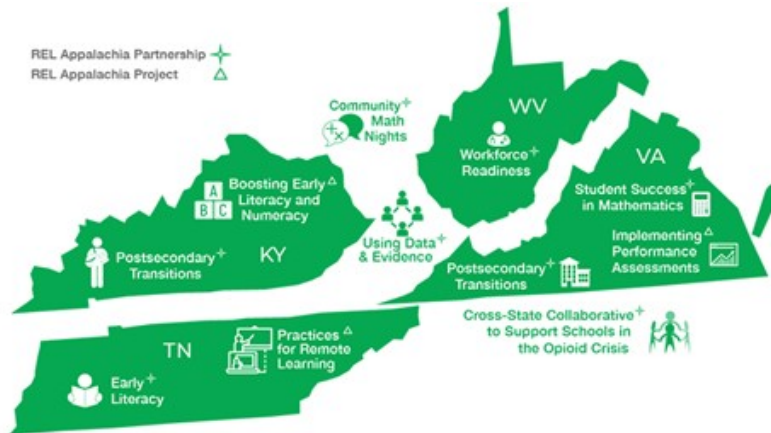




REL Appalachia at SRI International

Director's update

Over the past five years, REL Appalachia at SRI International and educators in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia have invested in building trusted partnerships aimed at strengthening education policy and practice in a wide range of topic areas, as shown on the map below.



In response to local needs, the REL Appalachia team has published over 40 blog posts, authored 10 peer-reviewed reports and toolkits, answered almost 100 Ask A REL questions, hosted over 70 professional learning sessions, and created countless other resources to support ongoing improvement in the region.

We appreciate you, the educators and supporters of a robust education system supporting each student. We thank you for including us in your professional networks and for inviting us to partner with you, to learn from you and with you, and to support your priority improvement initiatives in education. We recognize and applaud your resilience, creativity, compassion, and, most importantly, your commitment to enhancing students' and educators' success in school and in life, helping to strengthen the region's communities.

Sincerely,
Deborah L. Jonas
Director, REL Appalachia

Zooming in: Stories of support and partnership

In this newsletter, we share highlights from three projects through which REL Appalachia provided intensive support to help educators, district leaders, and state education agency leaders use research, data, and evidence-based practices to move the needle towards accomplishing their high-priority goals.

Educator-level support

Across the Appalachian region, stakeholders repeatedly voiced the need to expand support to schools navigating the consequences of the opioid crisis. The stakeholders recognized that students exposed to family and community opioid abuse are likely to face acute and chronic traumatic stress, a range of physiological and psychological difficulties, and unmet basic needs that can affect their behavior and performance in school.

Inspired by educators and communities across the region who are committed to giving their students a better future, REL Appalachia



assembled a collaborative focused on this urgent need. The [Cross-State Collaborative to Support Schools in the Opioid Crisis](#) (CCSSOC) comprises 30 members from state and local education agencies as well as leading nonprofit organizations that support schools in all four REL Appalachia states. These partners collaborated to share and amass collective knowledge as well as to support each other as they and their schools navigate similar experiences during the opioid crisis.

"I liked thinking about how to help the staff and faculty at our school. Most of my work focuses on the families and children, but there is a big gap on help when it comes to the teachers and staff. They are tired and have a tremendous amount of compassion fatigue."

Trauma Support for
Schools Summit
attendee

To celebrate the accomplishments of CCSSOC and to disseminate resources and lessons learned about supporting students and educators experiencing trauma, REL Appalachia hosted a two-day virtual summit offering 20 sessions with expert speakers and facilitators from across the country. The sessions built awareness and understanding of research evidence and equitable practices to support students and educators experiencing trauma. The summit attracted 294 educators, service providers, researchers, and policymakers from across 15 states. If you missed this event, not to worry! You can find information about it on the [CCSSOC website](#), including session recordings and other

Supporting district leaders

Mathematics instructional leaders from four Virginia school divisions^[1] and REL Appalachia came together around a common challenge: to prepare all students for success in Algebra I no later than grade 9, a deciding moment in students' mathematics pathways. In partnership with REL Appalachia, the division leaders developed [professional learning models \(PLMs\)](#) and embedded evidence-based mathematics teaching strategies in professional learning for teachers.

You can learn more about implementing PLMs and hear about our partners' experiences in a [recent webinar series](#). We have also developed a [resource compendium](#) to help education leaders use the content from the webinars to design and assess their own PLMs.

“[Because of the PLM,] one of the most powerful moments with teachers happened ... Hearing teachers that were just beginning this work share with their colleagues about the wide range of ways that their reflection on tasks had influenced their teaching practices and sharing stories of, ‘Even though it is hard [to learn and implement new teaching strategies], I could see students thinking and interacting in new ways that convince me that this is worth it ...’ brought tears to my eyes and goose bumps down my spine. It was that moment that I realized this work WAS making an impact and was worth it.”

Mathematics instructional leader

Support for state education agencies

In 2019 the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) approached REL Appalachia to ask, "How can we leverage the approaches already used in Kentucky schools to increase grade 3 student proficiency rates for mathematics and reading?" Time and time again, research has shown that meeting grade 3 proficiency rates in both mathematics^{[2], [3]} and reading^{[4], [5]} is a critical milestone in students' academic trajectories.

To help answer the question, KDE and REL Appalachia collaborated to examine data to identify high-performing, high-growth schools to learn what was driving students' growth in those schools. Based on

“Working with the REL created a dialogue where we can draw on the strengths of both organizations to think critically about how to approach issues how we can use data, techniques that have been

historical data, did some schools outperform others, relative to expectations? What was propelling their success? How could KDE adapt lessons learned from these high-performing schools to other schools? REL Appalachia coached KDE staff in carrying out the analytic work to answer these questions and supported their presentation of the findings to other KDE leaders.

used in the past, new ways to think about data. The collaboration helped us think more outside the box with our work and built our capacity to identify schools that were ...performing better than statistically predicted, then analyze the practices that were happening in those schools so we could learn and share.”

Data analyst, state education agency

Check out the [results of the analytic coaching](#) as well as a recent [conference presentation](#) summarizing the findings and what KDE learned from the experience of partnering with REL Appalachia.

[1] In Virginia, local education agencies are known as school divisions. In most other states, these are known as school districts.

[2] Claessens, A., & Engel, M. (2013). How important is where you start? Early mathematics knowledge and later school success. *Teachers College Record*, 115(6), 1–29. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1020177>

[3] Siegler, R. S., Duncan, G. J., Davis-Kean, P. E., Duckworth, K., Claessens, A., Engel, M., Susperreguy, M.I., & Chen, M. (2012). Early predictors of high school mathematics achievement. *Psychological Science*, 23(7), 691–697.

[4] Lesnick, J., Goerge, R.M., & Smithgall, C. (2010). *Reading on grade level in third grade: How is it related to high school performance and college enrollment?* Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

[5] Texas Education Agency. (2019). *Predictive power of grade 3 TAKS and STAAR on future academic success*. https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/staar_power.pdf

Grab-and-go resources

A recent REL Appalachia [blog post](#) shares timely “grab-and-go” resources that educators can use immediately on topics such as online teaching, trauma-informed practices, and college and career pathways. Since the publication of that blog post, there’s even more! Here are some additional REL Appalachia resources:

- Use the **College Access Evidence Matrix** to identify effective, evidence-based college access interventions. REL Appalachia hosted a [webinar on September 28](#) to introduce the new Excel-based resource and provide information on how to navigate it to learn more about what programs work, for whom, and in what settings. Additionally, you can check out this step-by-step [tutorial video](#) on using the matrix and the corresponding [descriptive transcript](#).
- Positive school culture is critical to student success and is at the heart of

the West Virginia **Simulated Workplace program**. REL Appalachia hosted a webinar on how to use West Virginia's annual school culture survey data to improve programming in Simulated Workplaces. The lessons learned can be adapted and used in a variety of school settings to implement a continuous improvement process to elevate school culture. View the [archived webinar](#) and check out [this infographic](#) to learn more.

- Learn how to bring together community agencies to improve school-based supports for students experiencing trauma and create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students by using REL Appalachia's resources for implementing the free **Handle With Care (HWC) program**! Check out the [HWC resource page](#) to find our resources that can help you use data to strengthen supports for students. On the resource page, you can watch a short video to hear from educators who have found REL Appalachia's resources to be useful and read more detailed information in the HWC guide, *Using Data to Support Program Improvement: A Guide for Monitoring Handle With Care in School*.
- Want to find out if an online learning program is affordable for your school or district? Use REL Appalachia's [Cost-Feasibility Analysis Toolkit for Supplemental Online Programs](#) to gather data on cost to inform decisionmaking. This toolkit includes information on the importance of cost analysis in education, a glossary of key terms, and an Excel template for collecting and analyzing cost information in your own context. Check out this [archived webinar](#) to learn more about the toolkit and how to use it!

REL Appalachia

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