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MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues,

Spring is upon us, and REL Appalachia (REL AP) is blooming with updates and upcoming activities. REL AP is working closely with partners across the region to develop and implement high-quality research supporting schools' and states' efforts to improve early literacy practices, mathematics instructional practices, and college and career readiness. Responsive training, coaching, and technical support are coupled with the research agendas to further advance the use of evidence to improve education outcomes for students. We are thrilled with the progress, activities, and products resulting from these collaborative partnerships. This quarterly newsletter provides a snapshot of our work. For the most current news from our work across the region, please visit the REL AP website at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/appalachia/index.asp>. If you have a research-based education question, submit it to [Ask A REL](#) and we will get back to you with references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations. Or if you are looking for a more interactive way to keep in touch, follow us on [Twitter](#) or contact us directly at relappalachia@sri.com. We at REL Appalachia are here to support you!



Deborah Jonas, PhD
Director, REL Appalachia

PROJECT UPDATES

Learn About Our Work and Partnership Events

REL Appalachia works in partnership with school districts, state departments of education, and other education stakeholders in the region to develop high-quality research and to use and disseminate the research findings to improve student outcomes. These partnerships combine rigorous research with responsive training, coaching, and technical support and practitioner-focused information sharing to ensure that evidence informs practice in a timely manner to benefit students.

We are REL Appalachia: Introduction Video



This short video introduces the REL Appalachia team and provides information on how our partnerships are supporting state and district leaders and educators in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia in their use of evidence to improve educational practice. Access the video [here](#).

Preparing All Students for Algebra: Applying Research-Based Strategies Bridge Event

What does algebra for all students look like? On January 24, the Virginia Student Success in Mathematics partnership facilitated a bridge event to help educators learn research-based strategies to support all students in achieving success in preparing for algebra. Thirty-seven mathematics educators (general and special education) of students in grades 4-6 representing the five Virginia school divisions constituting the partnership - Charlottesville, Harrisonburg, Staunton, Waynesboro, and Winchester - attended the event. REL AP staff engaged the participants in reviewing research findings on the importance of algebra in preparing students for on-time completion of high school and life after high school. Throughout the day participants completed hands-on mathematical tasks to actively apply strategies for teaching proportion and ratio skills using visual representations and strategies to support the development of mathematical vocabulary and discourse to support all students, including English learners. Access materials from the bridge event [here](#).



Participants worked on how to apply research-based visual representation strategies in real mathematics tasks.

Tennessee Early Literacy Partnership



Children who struggle with reading in the early elementary grades often continue to fall behind. Tennessee state leadership is facing this challenge by establishing a statewide response to instruction and intervention (RTI²) framework that focuses on intervening early to prevent reading problems from escalating. REL AP is working with partners at the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) to build educators' capacity to implement the RTI² framework so that all students can gain the literacy skills they need. Staff from REL AP and the TDOE met in Nashville on December 20, 2017. The goal was twofold: to discuss different implementation measurement tool options and to assist TDOE staff in selecting features of a tool and approach that best meet TDOE's needs for measuring RTI² implementation practices in Tennessee schools. Programmatic and research staff members from TDOE as well as interventionists from Tennessee Centers of Regional Excellence (CORE) shared their experiences measuring RTI² implementation and using implementation measurement tools. This discussion helped identify the intended purpose for the RTI² implementation assessment tool, as well as important features that TDOE staff members and CORE interventionists valued in such a tool. This process identified several needs for the RTI² implementation assessment tool, including:

- the need for a screening tool to reduce respondent burden,
- the need for staff training, and
- the need for operational definitions and established thresholds.

Moving forward, REL AP and TDOE staff will continue collaborating to create a possible assessment tool that will be responsive to school, district, and state needs.

STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

Meet a Member of the REL AP Team

Dr. Ryoko Yamaguchi, Research Lead Virginia Student Success in Mathematics Partnership

Dr. Ryoko Yamaguchi has more than 25 years of experience in K-12 education as a practitioner and researcher. She specializes in utilizing, explaining, and communicating research, data, and the junction of policy, practice, and research, and she has taken part in multiple practitioner-researcher partnerships on school improvement and college and career readiness. She serves as the REL AP research lead for the Virginia Student Success in Mathematics partnership. The partnership with five school districts in Virginia - Harrisonburg, Charlottesville, Staunton, Winchester, and Waynesboro - focuses on improving mathematics outcomes especially for English learners and economically disadvantaged students.

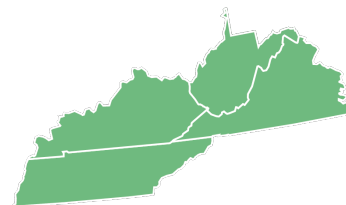


COMING SOON...

from REL Appalachia

Governing Board Meeting

REL AP staff members are holding the first Governing Board meeting of 2018 in Nashville, Tennessee, on March 20. During the daylong meeting, board members will have the opportunity to share their feedback on new projects as well as lessons learned about communicating data across the Appalachia region and implementing statewide initiatives. The Tennessee Department of Education will host the meeting and present information on the "reset" of its response to intervention program and data dashboard. We are excited to gather input from our board members to guide new work as well as implementation of current projects. Look for more information after the event in a blog that will be posted on our website!



REL Appalachia

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