



# NEWS

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# NEWSLETTER

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## Latest News from the Director



Dear Colleagues:

With spring around the corner, we at REL Mid-Atlantic have a lot to tell you about how we've been engaging with education stakeholders throughout the region on applied research, technical support and coaching, and dissemination over the winter months. In addition, we have some upcoming activities that we hope you'll join!

As you'll see below, our collaborative research alliances have been working on various projects. The first article describes how our career readiness alliance created an easy-to-read infographic sharing research evidence on the soft skills that employers are looking for, as one element of our larger initiative to work with educators in western Pennsylvania is to improve students' preparation for long-term career success.

We're also co-sponsoring two upcoming conferences for educators and policymakers in the region—one with the Maryland State Department of Education and one with the School District of Philadelphia. We hope that those of you with an interest in key education issues in Maryland or in Philadelphia will join us for these. Finally, for anyone unable to join our events in person, we provide information on a couple of recent REL webinars—one on blended learning and one on dropout prevention—with free archived recordings available for all to view.

These activities are only a small part of our ongoing and upcoming work. As educators and policymakers across the region prepare to implement the plans that states created under the Every Student Succeeds Act—all five of which have been approved by the U.S. Department of Education—REL Mid-Atlantic will be working alongside them. In future months, we look forward to telling you about additional activities related to accountability, school support and improvement, early childhood education, and family engagement.

As always, an important part of our work involves listening to needs and gathering input from many sources around the region. So I'll reiterate my request from last time: *Let us hear from you* about your work and ways REL Mid-Atlantic might be able to help.

**Brian Gill, Ph.D.**

Director, REL Mid-Atlantic

Senior Fellow, Mathematica Policy Research

# You're Hired! Reviewing What Employers Want—and How We Talk About—Soft Skills



Many schools find themselves addressing concerns from employers about the need for soft skills, in addition to academic and technical skills, in new graduates. This *infographic* from the *career readiness alliance* reviews research on what employers are looking for and why soft skills matter. A related *RELevant blog* from the alliance's facilitator Jan Anderson reviews the need for a consistent, simplified language for talking about workplace competencies, how to prepare students with the skills required to succeed, and how the alliance is helping. Have blog ideas? Send them to us [here](#).

## What's New? What's Next?

### Call for Proposals: Maryland Data Summit

An expansion in longitudinal data collection, combined with high quality research studies, has strengthened the role of data in improving teaching and learning. The Maryland State Department of Education and the REL Mid-Atlantic are hosting the Maryland Connections Summit to bring together local, state, and national leaders to share ideas for using data in ways that lead to positive outcomes for students. Education professionals are invited to submit proposals to present at the summit on June 6 and 7, 2018, in Towson, Maryland, to share implementation experiences, research, and local initiatives that lead to positive student outcomes. Although the summit provides a showcase for Maryland initiatives, many of our collaborators and stakeholders in the region also conduct work with implications for Maryland and beyond.

If you are interested in presenting at the summit, please submit a proposal to the *Maryland Connections Summit* by **March 19**. Review the *call for proposals* for details on how to submit through the *submission form*. Notifications will be sent out in early April. Registration is **free**, but participants must register to attend. Registration will open in March. If you have questions, please contact [RELMidatlantic@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:RELMidatlantic@mathematica-mpr.com).



### Call for Proposals: 2018 School District of Philadelphia Research, Policy and Practice Conference

The School District of Philadelphia (SDP), in collaboration with REL Mid-Atlantic, invites education professionals to submit proposals to present at the SDP Research, Policy and Practice (R2P) conference on May 21, 2018, in Philadelphia. The conference will bring together experts in education research, practice, and policy from within and outside Philadelphia to share

information about their latest research activities, lessons learned, and challenges. There will be opportunities via concurrent breakout sessions and a poster networking session to learn from researchers focused on common topics, including early literacy, dropout prevention, school climate, and use of evidence to inform decision making.

If you are interested in submitting a proposal for a presentation or poster, please visit the [SDP R2P website](#) for details on how to submit a proposal through the [submission form](#) by **March 23**. If you have questions, please contact [RELMidatlantic@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:RELMidatlantic@mathematica-mpr.com).

[Registration](#) is now open. Registration is **free**, but participants must register to attend.

### **Webinars You Don't Want to Miss!**

Part of our job at the REL Mid-Atlantic is to take what we're learning and make sure that others working on similar topics throughout the education field know about it and can apply it to common problems in their region. Our webinar series helps us get the word out on key issues our staff and partners are examining. Check out these recent webinar recordings:

- **[Blended learning](#)**. School districts use blended learning, which combines online and face-to-face instruction, to personalize learning and build on their technology resources. This webinar reviews what blended learning is—and isn't. Panelists discuss research evidence on its effectiveness in improving student outcomes as well as their experiences implementing blended learning in schools.
- **[Dropout prevention \(coming soon\)](#)**. Students who do not complete high school face economic and social challenges throughout their lifetimes. Our panel of experts examines four evidence-based recommendations from the What Works Clearinghouse to reduce dropout rates in middle and high schools and improve high school graduation rates.



### **Governing Board Moves Priorities Forward**

The [Governing Board](#) met in Philadelphia in February to continue its work on strategic directions for the REL Mid-Atlantic. The board heard updates about current projects that the REL is leading, and discussed planned activities for each of the research alliances.

### **Ask A REL at Your Service**

Do you have research questions about education policies, programs, and practices? [Ask A REL](#) is here to help with free resources. Simply complete this [form](#). To date we have responded to more than 30 inquiries from stakeholders across our region. We look forward to hearing from you on how we can help.

## Connect with Us on Social Media

Are you following @RELMidAtlantic on Twitter? Every week we post links to new work from our researchers and others, plus a wide range of resources for educators.

REL Mid-Atlantic on Twitter is also the place to go for information about upcoming REL Mid-Atlantic events—and to see the photos, materials, and videos from our events and meetings.

We're using social media as way to not only disseminate our work, but to connect in real time with a wide world of education news.

Thanks for following @RELMidAtlantic. See you on Twitter!



Interested in **joining us** or **learning more**? **Contact us.**

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Please reach out anytime to [RELMidatlantic@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:RELMidatlantic@mathematica-mpr.com) to share your ideas about important issues the REL Mid-Atlantic could address; request free training, coaching, or technical support; or ask questions about how we can help you in your work.



Follow us on Twitter for the latest updates.

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