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[From the Director](#) | [Highlights](#) | [RElevant Blog](#) | [News from the Governing Board](#) | [Connect with Us](#)

Latest News from the Director



As the most unusual school year in memory concludes, I hope you all have an opportunity to catch your breath even as you're getting ready to welcome students back in the fall—or, for many of them, in the summer, as they seek to catch up on unfinished learning. I am in awe of the efforts of educators to keep their students engaged and learning during this pandemic-ravaged year. Here at the REL, we've been doing what we can to support your work with research-based guidance. Some of the changes to education that the pandemic induced are likely to continue in one form or another, so I feel sure that our pandemic-related research (for example, on supporting student engagement in remote settings—see below) will remain relevant even when school buildings are fully open to students. I hope you'll find some of these materials useful in your work, and I hope you have a great summer.

Brian Gill
Director, REL Mid-Atlantic

Highlights

[Six Pillars for Supporting Student Engagement in Remote and Hybrid Learning](#)

Most schools moved to fully or partially remote instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, and educators have had to consider how to keep students engaged in this new environment. A new infographic identified [six pillars for supporting engagement](#) in remote and hybrid learning. Listen to a [free webinar recording](#) that reviews the collaboration between REL Mid-Atlantic and the New Jersey Department of Education to better understand the challenges of and promising practices for promoting student engagement. This work should be of continuing interest to educators because even after the pandemic, remote learning is likely to remain part of the educational experience for many students.



Attention Parents and Caregivers!

The What Works Clearinghouse provides great tips on teaching [fractions](#) and [algebra](#) at home. For example, you can measure water using two different-sized cups to demonstrate how to use fractions to measure quantities, or you can help kids learn practical skills by calculating the 15 percent gratuity on a restaurant bill. These tips build on the information presented in [Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic at Home](#).



Supporting School Transitions for Young Learners

Transitioning to school is just one of many milestones to celebrate and prepare for in a child's life. A new [fact sheet](#) highlights promising practices and research-informed strategies that districts and schools can use to successfully and equitably transition young learners who are experiencing full-time, all-day schooling for the first time. It covers strategies applicable in the COVID-19 era and beyond.

Extending Access to Advanced Placement

Advanced Placement courses prepare students for college-level work while they're still in high school. The dramatic growth of Advanced Placement classes over the last several decades reflects efforts by the College Board, the federal government, states, districts, and foundations to increase access to these courses, particularly for students who are underserved and from families with low income. A new [report](#) describes efforts in the District of Columbia Public Schools to expand access to Advanced Placement courses and exams.

New on the RELevant Blog



American Rescue Plan Funds May Help Kids with Chronic Health Conditions Such As Asthma

Chronic health conditions such as asthma make it harder for students to learn. And differences by gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status in the prevalence of these conditions raise [issues of equity](#). A [new blog](#) post describes educational outcomes for students with chronic health conditions in District of Columbia Public Schools, where asthma rates are several times higher

than national averages and disproportionately affect students of color. Revised guidance and funding from the federal government could improve the process of addressing these issues for students across the country. Read the related [infographic](#) and [report](#).

[A Tool to Help Districts Make Progress on Teacher Diversity](#)

A new [tool](#) can help school districts identify gaps in the diversity of their teacher workforces. The [Automated Teacher Diversity District Tool](#) generates reports showing the racial and ethnic makeup of each district's student and teacher populations as well as districts' teacher populations and retention rates by race and ethnicity. It can also generate retention rates for teachers with effective evaluation ratings who might have more ability to improve students' outcomes and may be especially important for districts to retain.

Helping Kids Become Better Writers

REL Mid-Atlantic Board member Marilyn Pryle, a grade 10 English teacher at Abington Heights High School in Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania, [wrote a blog post](#) on the importance of incorporating choice, authenticity, and real-world audiences into the writing curriculum, especially during the pandemic. Letting students choose their topics and genres gives them a sense of ownership because they must look within to decide what they want to write about. This is also true for younger students. To start out with a sense of voice, younger students can write letters, reviews, stories, and journal entries to bolster their skills. [Read tips](#) for teaching early writers gleaned from the What Works Clearinghouse practice guide, [Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers](#).



News from the Governing Board



The [Governing Board](#) welcomed Richard M. Gordon IV to the team in March. An award-winning educator, Gordon has been the principal of Paul Robeson High School in Philadelphia for seven years. His innovative leadership transformed the school and led to its recognition as the most improved high school in the city in 2017. In 2019, the Pennsylvania State Department of Education recognized Paul Robeson as a "High Progress" school, and Gordon was named National Principal of the Year by the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 2020–2021.



Interested in **joining us** or **learning more?** [Contact us.](#)



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