



NEWS

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NEWSLETTER

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Latest News from the Director

As summer comes to an end, we're sharing some back-to-school resources in this newsletter. Ensuring a successful return to the classroom has never been more urgent, so we hope you find these ideas useful during the school year.

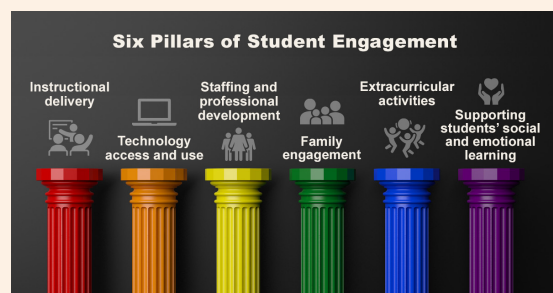
We learned a lot about connecting with students and their families during the pandemic. Check out some ideas for engaging our youngest learners as well as working with their parents and caregivers to make a smooth transition into the school year. We also have suggestions for assessing how students, staff, and parents view their teachers and schools, as well as measuring social-emotional competencies, which can influence children's life trajectories in important ways.

Brian Gill
Director, REL Mid-Atlantic

Back-to-School Highlights

Preparing for the New Year: Three Ways to Ease Transitions for Little Learners

Schools returning to in-person instruction after an unusual and challenging year need to make special efforts to engage young learners. [Read about three ways](#) that states, districts, and schools can promote successful early-grade transitions. A [new fact sheet](#) lays out ways to engage families in learning and development during these critical early years.



Infusing Lessons from Remote and Hybrid Instruction to Boost Student Engagement

During the COVID-19 pandemic, educators, schools, and districts found innovative ways to engage students that remain useful when school buildings are fully open for in-person instruction. Read more about these lessons in this [blog post](#) and review six foundational pillars in this [short video](#).

Building a Safe and Supportive School Climate

School climate can influence students' academic achievement, healthy development, and school success. It can also be key to violence prevention and teacher retention. Many states, local education agencies, and schools include climate measures in their improvement initiatives. [Learn about](#) how a school climate index can provide an objective measure of student, staff, and parent perceptions of the quality, character, and health of the learning environment. Check out the related [fact sheet](#).



New Jersey Produces Reliable School Performance Measures with Shorter Tests

In 2019, well before the pandemic, the New Jersey Department of Education collaborated with the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium to create a new and shorter test, based on the same academic standards and using a common set of test questions. This change reduced testing times by 25 to 33 percent per test, freeing up more time for instruction. The state partnered with REL Mid-Atlantic to understand the effects of this change, and the results are encouraging, with a high degree of reliability across most measures the researchers examined. Read the [blog post](#) and [report](#).



Measuring Social and Emotional Learning Is a Step Toward Improving Life Outcomes

Many educators wonder how to get started in measuring students' social-emotional competencies, which can influence educational attainment, health, earnings, and employment. A [new report](#) can help chart the course.

Using School Report Cards for Decision Making: Design Choices Matter

Report cards on school performance are an important source of information about schools for families and community members. Report cards must provide key information clearly and concisely so families can make informed decisions about their students' schooling. A new [infographic](#) and [report](#) show how we tested reactions to different designs to identify the ones that performed best for specific groups of users.



Teacher Surveys Can Inform Principal Evaluations

Evaluating school principals is difficult because their jobs are varied and responsibilities change from day to day. [Read about](#) how teacher surveys examining a school's leadership, culture, and climate can provide a unique perspective on the principal's performance from the staff who interact with the principal every day.

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