



NEWS

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NEWSLETTER

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Latest News from the Director



REL Mid-Atlantic Director Brian Gill. Photo by Rich Clement.

Welcome back to school, everyone! The REL's work doesn't slow down in the summer, so we've got plenty to report in this newsletter. Here, you can learn about our collaborative work with states and districts measuring chronic absenteeism in Pennsylvania, assessing principal performance in the District of Columbia, and reducing disparities in school discipline in Maryland. Check out our [recent infographic](#) on the advantages of computer-adaptive testing and [our blog post](#) on how the RELs support research–practice partnerships. You can [sign up for an upcoming webinar series](#) on making your teaching culturally responsive to students of diverse backgrounds. And finally, check out the bios of seven educators who we welcomed to our region-wide Governing Board in July. We have a stellar group of new board members, and we're excited that several of the new members are award-winning school-based educators, including two principals and three teachers. We're delighted to add their perspectives to the board and honored that they were willing to join.

Highlights

Sign Up for a Free Four-Part Webinar Series on Culturally Responsive Teaching

Dates: September 17, October 2, October 15, October 30

Time: 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. EST

Looking for ideas on how to use students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds as resources to support learning?

[Join our free upcoming webinar series](#) on culturally

responsive practice. We've been partnering with the Departments of Education for New Jersey and Delaware, which provide culturally responsive training for teachers and administrators. The series will examine factors that enhance educational equity. Each webinar will feature an expert discussing key aspects of this student-centered approach to learning. You can [register](#) for one



Photo by Rich Clement.

webinar or the entire series. *Improving Educational Equity Through Cultural Responsiveness in Schools and Educator Preparation Programs: A Virtual Workshop Series* will cover the following:

- September 17, 2019: Understanding educational equity, defining culturally responsive pedagogy, and describing how culturally responsive pedagogy can be embedded in broader efforts
- October 2, 2019: Reviewing the research on culturally responsive pedagogy and how to implement it
- October 15, 2019: Implementing culturally responsive pedagogy in pre-service training programs for teachers and administrators
- October 30, 2019: Implementing culturally responsive pedagogy in schools

New Educator Perspectives on the Governing Board

Earlier this summer, REL Mid-Atlantic welcomed seven new members to the Governing Board. They represent the interests of the diverse student population in the region, reflect a variety of expertise and perspectives, and strategically guide REL Mid-Atlantic's activities and plans to address high-priority issues.



Edward Cosentino, principal of Clemens Crossing Elementary School in Columbia, Maryland; president-elect of the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals. He received the National Distinguished Principals award from the National Association of Elementary School Principals and is coauthor of *7 Steps to Sharing Your School's Story on Social Media*.



Maria DeBruin, national award-winning STEM educator, curriculum developer, and Advanced Placement chemistry teacher at Brick Memorial High School in New Jersey. A recipient of the national Milken Educator Award for the 2017–2018 school year, she is an adjunct professor in chemistry at Monmouth University and an e-learning consultant.



Dr. Alaina Harper, dean of the Relay Graduate School of Education's Philadelphia and Camden campuses. Relay offers degree programs, professional development, and unique learning experiences for teachers, principals, college students, and the public. Before Relay, Dr. Harper worked with the school leadership team at KIPP Academy Charter School in the Bronx.



Donald Martin, executive director of Intermediate Unit 1, a regional educational agency in Pennsylvania. He began his career as an elementary school teacher and has served as an administrator in districts in California and Pennsylvania.



Dr. Robin Moore, principal of Roland Rogers Elementary School in Galloway, New Jersey; vice president of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association. She has served for more than 20 years as a teacher and administrator in elementary, secondary, and higher education.



Marilyn Pryle, National Board Certified teacher in secondary English and reading instruction; Pennsylvania's 2019 Teacher of the Year. She has written several books about teaching reading and writing, including *Teaching Students to Write Effective Essays and Reading with Presence*.



Dr. Richard Warren, an eighth-grade STEM teacher at Somerset County's Crisfield High School and Academy; Maryland's 2019 Teacher of the Year. He leads the academy's first-ever STEM applications program.

What's New, What's Next



New Alliance Addresses Discipline Disparities

Across the nation, students of color and students with disabilities are disproportionately subjected to exclusionary discipline practices, such as suspension and expulsion. Students who aren't in school lose opportunities to learn. Our new [school discipline alliance](#) is a partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education to support efforts to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, discipline disparities. We are working with the department to [analyze the state's school discipline data](#) and plan to release a public report discussing the results soon.

Measuring Up: Infographic Reviews Considerations for Adopting Computerized Adaptive Testing

Computerized adaptive testing (CAT) seeks to produce a more precise measure of learning by supplying test questions to students based on their answers to previous questions. For example, if a student answers a question correctly, the next question is more difficult. Conversely, if a student answers a question incorrectly, the next question is easier. In principle, CAT can produce better measures of each student's knowledge with a smaller number of questions; this can help to differentiate students who are especially high or low scoring. Although some states (including those that are part of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) have transitioned to using CAT for statewide assessments, many have not. [This new infographic](#), created based on a request from the New Jersey Department of Education, highlights the advantages and disadvantages of implementing CAT.

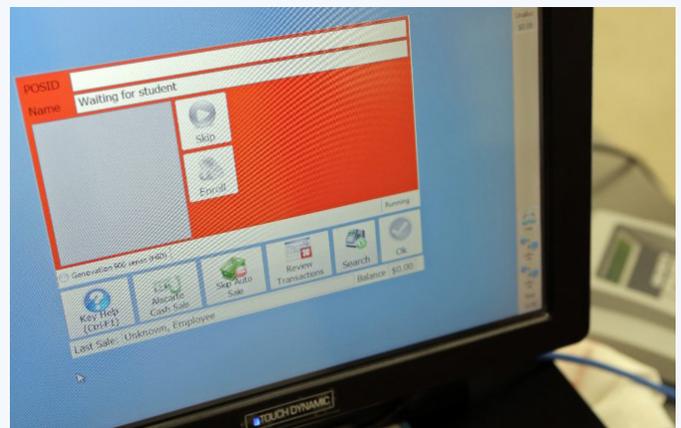


Photo by Rich Clement.

Helping Districts Evaluate School Principals

In our last newsletter, we talked about how teacher surveys can inform the evaluation of school principals. Districts and states have also been trying to incorporate student achievement into principal evaluations. This is harder to do than it might seem. Recognizing the challenges associated with measuring principals' effects on student achievement, the District of Columbia Public Schools asked us to analyze its data on school leaders. We helped examine the reliability and fairness of the district's measures of principals' contributions to student achievement, potentially informing future revisions to its evaluation calculations.

Measuring Chronic Absenteeism Under ESSA

State accountability regimes have broadened under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to include indicators of school quality or student success that go beyond test scores. An accountability indicator adopted by more than half the states in the wake of ESSA is the fraction of students who are chronically absent from school. The Pennsylvania Department of Education wanted to understand how well its measure differentiates schools and how school performance ratings might change with different rules for calculating chronic absenteeism. We are analyzing Pennsylvania's data to address these questions and working with the state to build capacity to conduct similar analyses in the future.

New on the RELevant Blog

Supporting Research–Practice Partnerships Through the REL Program

During the past seven years, the RELs have taken research–practice partnerships to scale in communities around the country. Although the intensity and structure of these partnerships vary, they help researchers and practitioners combine their expertise to chart the path to progress. [This blog post](#) describes how REL Mid-Atlantic facilitates research–practice partnerships and engages a broader network to share what we learn.

In Case You Missed It

Video Highlights from the Research, Policy and Practice (R2P) Conference

We were proud to co-sponsor the fifth annual [R2P conference](#) this past May with the School District of Philadelphia. The conference convened experts to share information about their latest activities, lessons, and challenges. The conference themes included (1) preparing students to be college and career ready, (2) supporting high quality instruction, (3) contributing to positive school climate, and (4) connecting and using data to make decisions. If you couldn't attend the conference in person, you can still [review this year's poster presentations here](#). And be sure to watch a recording of REL Mid-Atlantic's [Jan Anderson discussing](#) how to use data to assess and advance students' soft skills.

Ask A REL: A Free Reference Desk at Your Service

Do you have research questions about education policies, programs, and practices? We're here to help. Simply submit an inquiry [here](#), and our team will respond to your question; providing references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research-based education questions. Most recently, we responded to a question on [how to alleviate chronic absenteeism](#).

We're Social!



Are you following us on Twitter? [@RELMidAtlantic](#) is where you can plug into our work, news from our nine REL partners across the country, and the latest research from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences.



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

Please reach out anytime to 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.



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