



# NEWSLETTER

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## Latest News from the Director



Dear Colleagues:

This spring, REL Mid-Atlantic staff have been busy collaborating with state and local stakeholders all over the region. Here are some of our latest activities:

- Working with the Delaware Department of Education to support school turnaround efforts
- Helping the Maryland State Department of Education as it creates school climate surveys for use statewide
- Assisting the School District of Philadelphia in acquiring better data on new teachers
- Planning a study of home visiting programs in the District of Columbia Public Schools
- Welcoming New Jersey's new Commissioner of Education and learning more about high priority needs in the state

These are only a few examples of REL Mid-Atlantic projects across the region that are promoting the use of research and data in educational decision making. There are more under way and even more in the pipeline to start over the next year.

Below you can read about two data conferences REL Mid-Atlantic has supported: Philadelphia's Research, Policy, and Practice (R2P) conference, which hosted close to 200 participants on May 21, and the Maryland Connections Summit, coming up this week in Towson, Maryland. We're delighted to be supporting efforts like these to disseminate research findings and allow educators and policymakers to learn from one another as well as from national experts. At the Maryland Connections Summit, I'll talk about ways to make sure that we are driven by data rather than drowning in data. I'm also looking forward to participating in a convening hosted by the Pittsburgh Personalized Learning Network at the end of June. I hope I'll have a chance to meet many of you in Towson or Pittsburgh!

Even if you can't make it to one of our meetings, there are many other ways to follow our work. The RElevant blog has ramped up with several new posts, on issues such as chronic absenteeism and programs that support home visits by teachers. We also have a growing library of short videos, including one described below on our work with the School District of Philadelphia to better understand the characteristics of its novice teachers.

REL Mid-Atlantic exists to support the capacity of state and local stakeholders to identify, analyze, and apply evidence to improving student outcomes, so I hope you'll connect with us, and keep us informed about any way we can support your evidence-related needs.

**Brian Gill, Ph.D.**

Director, REL Mid-Atlantic

Senior Fellow, Mathematica Policy Research

## Highlights

### R2P Conference a Success!

The School District of Philadelphia and REL Mid-Atlantic co-sponsored the fourth annual Research, Policy, and Practice Conference on May 21. This one-day event gave a diverse set



of researchers, practitioners, and policymakers a chance to learn about the latest research using district data and focused on improving literacy from pre-K through grade 3, reducing the risk of dropping out, creating a positive school climate, and using research and data to inform evidence-based decision making. From left in the photo, presenters Diana McCallum and Felicia Hurwitz join conference organizer and REL Mid-Atlantic deputy director Cheryl Behany to greet attendees. Videos and slides from many presentations will be coming soon to our website.

### Free Data Summit Coming Up

REL Mid-Atlantic is collaborating with the Maryland State Department of Education to host the 2018 Maryland Connections Summit on June 6 and 7, 2018. Come discuss the role data play in education decision making in your state, district, or school. Visit [this website](#) and register to attend this free conference.



### Preventing Dropout in Secondary Schools: Recommendations from a Recent WWC Practice Guide

[This fact sheet](#) answers your questions about how to use the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) practice guide on preventing dropout in secondary schools. In addition to reviewing the recommendations, the fact sheet offers a quick overview of the guide. The complete WWC practice guide, released in September 2017, offers school educators and administrators four evidence-based recommendations for reducing dropout rates in middle and high schools and improving high school graduation rates. Each recommendation provides specific, actionable strategies; examples of how to implement the recommended practices in schools; advice on how to overcome potential obstacles; and a description of the supporting evidence.

[Find the fact sheet here.](#)

[Watch a recording](#) of a REL webinar on preventing dropout in secondary schools.

## RElevant Series Focuses on Chronic Absenteeism—and Its Prevalence for Our Youngest Children



Chronic absenteeism can have long-term negative effects on children’s learning. A series of posts this quarter focused on the startling prevalence of this problem among our nation’s youngest children—those in pre-K and kindergarten—as well as strategies to address the problem across the grade continuum.

### **Missing School and the Risk of Falling Behind: Chronic Absenteeism in the Early Grades (Part 1)**

Across the country and in the mid-Atlantic region, chronic absenteeism is a problem for students, particularly in pre-K and kindergarten. [This blog](#) identifies common reasons students may be missing school and what members of REL Mid-Atlantic’s alliance on [strengthening the early education continuum](#) have done to better understand the problem. [Read more.](#)

### **Measure and Learn: Combatting Chronic Absenteeism in the Early Grades (Part 2)**

Schools use a number of approaches to tackle chronic absenteeism, but research on effective methods of improving attendance is scarce, especially for pre-K and kindergarten students. [This blog](#) notes that, with a little bit of planning, school districts can develop and test the effectiveness of their attendance strategies. For example, REL Mid-Atlantic and the School District of Philadelphia worked together to test the strategy of sending parents a postcard to encourage them to improve their children’s attendance. [Read more.](#)

### **At School, On Time, and Every Day: What Research Tells Us About Reducing Chronic Absenteeism**

The school support and improvement research alliance at REL Mid-Atlantic held a workshop, developed in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, for educators on chronic absenteeism: what it is, how to measure it, and what research says about addressing it. [This blog](#) summarizes what was learned, including the latest findings showing that chronic absenteeism has long-term negative consequences for students, a five-pronged strategy to address attendance challenges, and the personal experience of a former principal in reducing chronic absenteeism in his school. [Read more.](#)

## Other RElevant Blog Posts

### **Family Matters: The Role of Home Visits in Children’s Learning**

Children’s academic performance hinges largely on parents’ involvement and engagement with their children’s education. Visits by teachers to children’s homes to meet with parents enable teachers and parents to create connections that can help foster parent involvement in their children’s education. [Read about](#) how REL Mid-Atlantic and the District of Columbia Public Schools are teaming up to study the impacts of home visits conducted by district teachers to build relationships with parents. [Read more.](#)



## What's New, What's Next

### New Video: Training and Supporting Excellent Educators Research Alliance



A [new video](#) about REL Mid-Atlantic's [training and supporting excellent educators research alliance](#) provides an overview of how the alliance is working with stakeholders to improve the recruitment, support, and retention of teachers in the region. Early activities focus on accumulating and assessing data to understand trends on new teachers and support for and evaluation of principals and school leaders. [Watch the video.](#)

### Upcoming Events: Personalized Learning Leadership – Moving from Theory to Action

The Pittsburgh Personalized Learning Network is hosting a collaborative and interactive workshop to discuss specific strategies on how to implement and scale personalized learning. The all-day conference is Tuesday, June 26, 2018, at Montour High School in McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania. The conference is free for educators and nonprofit participants. [Register here.](#)

### 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 45 inquiries from stakeholders across our region. We look forward to hearing from you on how we can help.

## Connect with Us on Social Media

Thank you to everyone who's following [@RELMidAtlantic](#) on Twitter! We're expanding our Twitter presence every day, and we couldn't do it without the many education professionals helping us grow the education Twitter community.

If you're using social media and haven't yet followed us, we hope you'll check out [@RELMidAtlantic](#). There you'll find links to new work from REL researchers, information on upcoming events, blog posts, conference photos, instructional videos, and updates from our vibrant network of regional partners.

This month we shared real-time news as it unfolded during conferences in Pennsylvania, previewed upcoming events in Maryland, and highlighted both research and opinion on a wide range of issues important to educators across the country—from hiring talented new teachers to developing senior school leadership.

Did our tweets help you with your work? Tweet us [@RELMidAtlantic](#) and let us know how we're doing.





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.



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