



NEWS

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NEWSLETTER

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Latest News from the Director



The dramatic changes in our schools and the larger world make it feel like a million years have passed since our last quarterly newsletter. With school buildings closed across the region and the nation, we know that educators and administrators have been working overtime to ensure that students' basic needs are met and to help them keep learning any way they can. Meanwhile, REL Mid-Atlantic is up and running, looking for ways to provide research-based resources on remote learning to state education agencies, districts, and schools. As you will see, these include a series of webinars and blog posts that identify promising practices while school buildings are closed.

Moreover, we are closely collaborating with the other RELs across the country and the [Regional Comprehensive Centers](#) to coordinate resources and make them available to you, regardless of which REL originated them. Be sure to take a look at the [cross-REL COVID-19 website](#) to find webinars and other resources to support distance learning.

Meanwhile, most of our existing projects continue, as we aim to provide analytic and research support for the long-term needs of mid-Atlantic educators and policymakers. We produced a new tool (described below) that enables districts to examine how the demographics of their student populations compare with the demographics of their teachers and to explore key points in the teacher pipeline that could contribute to demographic disparities. And we examined and summarized the research on using play as a teaching strategy in early grades.

Members of our Governing Board have been active as well, and you can see some of their contributions highlighted below—including a science experiment that students and parents can do at home! And, of course, we've got lots more in our own pipeline, including upcoming products related to addressing the challenges of the next school year.

As usual, we are happy to hear from you. If there are ways we can help with research and analysis to support your work in this crazy time, please get in touch. And stay safe, everyone.

Brian Gill

Director, REL Mid-Atlantic

RElevant Blog



[Using Transparency to Create Accountability When School Buildings Are Closed and Tests Are Cancelled](#)

Schools across the country have cancelled their end-of-the-year tests because of the COVID-19 pandemic. These tests promote accountability for improving teaching and learning. In this new blog post, REL Mid-Atlantic Director Brian Gill describes the ways that schools and districts can make themselves accountable through transparency even in the absence of traditional standardized testing. He subsequently spoke about the issue in an interview for the *Education Next* podcast, which you can find [here](#).

[Using Culturally Responsive Practices to Foster Learning During School Closures: Challenges and Opportunities for Equity](#)

Learn about promising culturally responsive practices that can be applied to remote learning to increase the connection between schools and families.

Remote Learning



Learn New Strategies to Support Students with Remote Learning

Looking for tools and guidance to better support students with remote learning? Check out these recorded webinars that highlight evidence-based practices to promote effective learning and address equity during school closures.

[Refining Your Remote Learning Strategies Using a Data-Driven Approach: The Evidence to Insights Coach](#)

This webinar features REL Mid-Atlantic researcher Mikia Manley, who introduces the Evidence to Insights Coach, a free tool that districts and schools can use to test and identify—in real time—which online learning approaches work best for their students.

[Learning Remotely in the Age of COVID-19: Lessons from Evidence and Concerns for Equity](#)

This webinar features Steven Malick and Felicia Hurwitz, REL Mid-Atlantic researchers, as well as Heather Bennett, director of School Equity Services at the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. Together, they discuss promising remote learning strategies and equity concerns that arise from school closures.

[Teaching Young Learners in a Pandemic: Supporting Children Pre-K – Grade 3 and their Learning Partners at Home](#)

Learn about research-based strategies and practical steps for remotely teaching young children in pre-kindergarten to grade 3. A unique feature of learning remotely for young children is that a parent, guardian, or other adult in the home has to be involved to support learning. The webinar also addresses ways state and local education agencies can strengthen support for remote learning over the longer term.

If you have attended a webinar and would like to receive a certificate of attendance, please email us at RELMidatlantic@mathematica-mpr.com.

New Insights



[Teacher Diversity Tool to Support Districts in Identifying Gaps in the Diversity of Their Teacher Workforces](#)

Are you concerned about the possibility of diversity gaps in your school district's teaching workforce relative to the students you serve? If so, check out this new tool to generate district reports that provide the racial and ethnic makeup of a district's student and teacher populations. The tool helps districts understand their diversity and identify points in the teacher pipeline that might contribute to diversity gaps.



[Play as a Teaching Strategy for Children in Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 3: Findings from the Evidence Review](#)

Read about the findings from a new evidence review we conducted on play as a teaching strategy for children in pre-kindergarten to grade 3 for the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning.



COVID-19 Resources for Educators

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Department of Education and its partners, the 10 RELs and the Comprehensive Center Network, have developed webpages with evidence-based resources on how educators can support families and students in remote learning environments. Check out these resources for strategies and guidance on COVID-19-related topics:

- <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/covid-19/>
- <https://www.compcenternetwork.org/covid-19>
- <https://www.ed.gov/coronavirus>

Governing Board News

The [REL Mid-Atlantic Governing Board](#) has exciting news and insight to share! In this round-up of blog posts and videos, board members offer insights about how schools and teachers can learn from each other during this pandemic, how research-based resources improve attendance in early grades and accelerate student achievement, and how to create a fun and interactive virtual science lesson!

- [During Challenging Times, How Can Schools Learn From Each Other?](#)
Principal and board member Edward Cosentino shares how teachers, principals, and schools can continue to learn from each other and have access to evidence-based resources during the pandemic.
- [The Value of the Go-Learn-Grow Toolkit on Improving Absenteeism in the Early Grades](#)
Principal and board member Dr. Robin Moore discusses the value of resources co-developed by the REL and the New Jersey Department of Education for helping educators and families understand the importance of attendance in early grades.

- [The Importance of REL Mid-Atlantic in Using Evidence to Accelerate Student Achievement](#)
CEO of the Center for Black Educator Development and board member Sharif El-Mekki discusses the importance of the REL in providing educators and school administrators with evidence-based findings to prepare students for success.
- [Explosive Science!](#)
Scientist and board member Maria DeBruin demonstrates a science lesson for students in grades 3 to 6 as part of NJTV Learning Live, a unique on-air instructional series developed with the New Jersey Education Association and the New Jersey Department of Education.

Coming Up

In the next quarterly REL newsletter, stay tuned for the following new evidence-based resources:

- A fact sheet offering tips on continuity of learning strategies and guidance on how schools can address lost instructional time, particularly in school communities most impacted by the digital divide
- New reports on the School District of Philadelphia's efforts to better understand students' access to effective teaching, factors related to teacher turnover, and the role of turnover in the equitable distribution of effective teachers as well as the efforts of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, to use school and child welfare agency data to identify students at academic risk
- A blog post on what research says about effective virtual strategies to support students with learning differences
- A blog post on trauma-informed planning and social-emotional learning strategies for the transition back to school in the fall
- A webinar (and follow-on fact sheet) on prospective accountability measures in 2021 and ways to address the gap in data from 2020
- "Parent and caregiver tips" on supporting elementary students in learning writing skills

In the meantime, for more frequent updates from us and our nine REL partners across the country, and to receive the latest research updates from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, please follow us on Twitter [@RELMidAtlantic!](#)



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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