



NEWSLETTER

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Latest News from the Director



Photo by Rich Clement

Staff from the Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic are keeping busy this summer as we launch new partnerships with state and local educators across the region. In this newsletter, we highlight a couple of these, describing partnerships that are getting started to promote educator diversity in New Jersey and improve school climate to better support students and staff in Pennsylvania. We also draw your attention to our latest blog posts: Principal David Kasyan describes what his school is doing to address the mental health challenges that have arisen in the wake of the pandemic, and I discuss how our new community of practice on accountability is helping states in the region refine and improve their measures of school performance as the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act return after two years of waivers. I hope you'll check out these resources, along with other activities described on our [website](#), as we continue our work to help state and local educators and policymakers improve decision making with rigorous research and data. And I hope you have a great summer!

Brian Gill
Director, REL Mid-Atlantic

On the RELevant Blog

Strategies to Address the Mental Health Crisis Facing Our Schools



Photo by Rich Clement

Our Governing Board member David Kasyan—principal of New Jersey’s Brick Township High School—provides [food for thought](#) to help school leaders address stress from the pandemic’s effect on students, families, teachers, and leaders. His suggestions, derived from his experience in leading a school through the pandemic, will help educators in confronting a daunting challenge: to manage the effects of trauma and set expectations for behavior and learning while building back a sense of community and belonging.

Even in a Pandemic, Data Can Be Better Used to Inform School Improvement

The COVID pandemic disrupted many aspects of school life, including state assessments used to measure student proficiency and growth and to identify low-performing schools for support and improvement. In a [blog post](#), REL Director Brian Gill describes how we’re partnering with Pennsylvania to refine some of its school performance measures to reduce random variation, and consequently increase confidence in its school improvement designations.

New Partnerships: Coming Together for Success

Addressing Teacher Diversity in New Jersey

In the 2018–2019 school year, 56 percent of New Jersey learners were students of color, versus only 16 percent of teachers, administrators, and other staff. We’re partnering with the New Jersey Department of Education to increase the number of teachers of color hired in the state. The ultimate goal: to improve student outcomes, because research suggests teachers of the same race as students may provide more culturally responsive instruction, improve reading skills and achievement, and reduce disciplinary incidents.



Supporting Equitable, Inclusive, and Supportive Learning Environments in Pennsylvania

Across the country, students’ mental health declined during the pandemic, adding to challenges youth already faced. The Pennsylvania Department of Education is developing a statewide strategy to foster supportive learning environments and support social-emotional wellness for students and staff. We’re helping ensure this strategy is rooted in evidence-based practices and provides a structure for building and strengthening supportive learning environments. The framework will address the role of school climate in promoting psychological, social, and emotional wellness.

News from the Field

Honoring Parents and Promoting Family Engagement



Parents are a child's first teachers and lay the foundation for skills needed throughout life. In honor of the Global Day of Parents, [check out these tips](#) to help districts and schools build strong partnerships and empower families to engage in and support teaching and learning. We've also got [suggestions](#) for helping young learners ease into kindergarten.

New Locale-Focused Resource Hub

Interested in knowing more about the condition of education in your locale? The National Center for Education Statistics recently released [Education Across America: Cities, Suburbs, Towns, and Rural Areas](#). This resource hub provides data by geographic locale—with rural areas highlighted first.

Out and About

During the past year, the critical role of assessment in our education system has taken center stage as educators work to support student learning after several years of disruption. At the [National Conference on Student Assessment](#) hosted by the Council of Chief State School Officers in June, we presented several sessions on meaningful assessment systems to drive student learning. We discussed how to extend growth measures to achievement in grades K–3, graduation and postsecondary outcomes, and social-emotional learning. We also looked at projects that expand the definition of accountability in education policy.

We also participated in a session at the [Annual Policy and Practice conference](#) hosted by the University of Delaware's Academy for School Leadership in June, where we walked participants through key steps in the research development process.

In July, at the annual forum of the [National Network of Education Research to Practice Partnerships](#), we'll be leading a roundtable on how two large urban school districts are using data and evidence to improve equitable practices and outcomes for students. And August will find us talking about some of the school performance measurement work we're doing in our [accountability community of practice](#), for the [National Center for Education Statistics summer data conference](#).

Connect with Us

Please reach out anytime at RELmidatlantic@mathematica-mpr.com to share your ideas about important issues the REL Mid-Atlantic could address, request free technical assistance, or ask questions about how we can help you in your work.



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!](#)