

NEWSLETTER

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Director Updates



Greetings, Mid-Atlantic educators! Lots going on at your Regional Educational Laboratory, as you'll see in the pages below. We have a new partnership on improving school discipline in Delaware, a report on school climate in Pennsylvania, several "Ask an Expert" memos responding to your questions, and a bunch of presentations at professional conferences.

But right now, I want to talk about basketball. If you're a fan like me, you've probably heard coaches talk in postgame interviews about "making the right play." Over the past couple of decades, data analytics have helped teams figure out what the right play is—the one that is most likely to help them win the game. Sometimes, however, a team makes the right play and loses anyway.

What does this have to do with schools? Research has learned a thing or two about the right play at the school and classroom levels for improving student outcomes. State and local agencies can therefore hold schools accountable for making the right play in the form of good professional practice. Take a look at my [latest blog](#) post about how accountability for process and practice can complement accountability for outcomes and impacts.

Brian Gill
Director, REL Mid-Atlantic

New partnership!

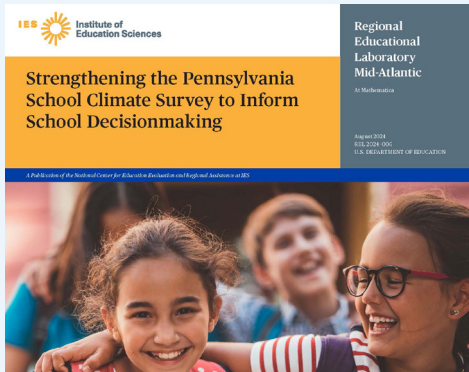
Improving school discipline practices in Delaware



We're [partnering](#) with the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) to improve the accuracy and quality of school discipline data in support of informed decisionmaking. By providing technical support at the state, district, and school levels, this partnership will help DDOE address the disproportionate impacts of suspensions on disadvantaged student groups. The partnership aims to reduce the disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline, foster more supportive learning environments, and positively impact student academic outcomes and long-term success.

New report!

Strengthening the Pennsylvania School Climate Survey to inform decisionmaking



We're partnering with the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Office for Safe Schools to make its school climate survey more useful and actionable. The survey, available voluntarily to any school in the state, offers a way for schools to better understand the perceptions of students, educators, and staff about school climate and to identify aspects of school climate in need of improvement. Our [latest study](#) assessed differences in school climate perceptions across groups of students and schools. We also assessed approaches to scoring and defining performance categories and the validity and reliability of the climate survey for elementary students

Key findings include:

- Students' school climate perceptions tended to be less positive than those of classroom teachers or other school staff.
- Students from lower grade levels tended to report more favorable school climate than students from higher grade levels.
- Within schools, boys had more favorable perceptions of school climate than girls, but perceptions among White, Black, and Hispanic students were similar.

Read the [snapshot](#) for a summary of all key findings

New summaries!

Ask an Expert: Summarizing research to answer your questions

We compile evidence in response to our partners' research-based education questions through our "Ask an Expert" service. We've recently added three new summaries to our website, with more coming later this year. Contact us to learn more about this offering.

- [Considerations and Best Practices for Focus Group Data Collection](#)
- [How Publicly Reporting Safe Schools Data Affects the Accuracy of the Reports](#)
- [Legislative History of Safe Schools Data](#)

New blog and presentations!

Out and about discussing the educator workforce crisis, research-practice partnerships, and school climate findings

Collaborative approaches to the educator workforce crisis



Alongside a team from the Maryland State Department of Education, the REL's Jenny Fitzsimons attended a regional convening hosted by the U.S. Department of Education to support state actions toward addressing the educator workforce crisis.

Read our [latest blog](#) to learn what states and RELs are doing to address educator workforce challenges.

Advancing district initiatives through collective action in a research-practice partnership

REL staff members Katie Gleason and Margaret Sanderson joined Joseph Lewis, director of multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) at the District of Columbia Public Schools, at the annual forum of the National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships. They [presented](#) our work to advance the district's MTSS framework. This interactive presentation encouraged participants to share their own experiences forging collective action to implement district or school-level initiatives.



Safe and supportive learning environments at the Northeastern Pennsylvania Safe Schools Symposium



Elisa Steele from the REL connected with district and school leaders at the Northeastern Pennsylvania Safe Schools Symposium on August 15. There, she worked with Jim McDonald and Scott Kuren from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to share an [action planning guide](#) that can help create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments for all students and staff. [Learn more](#) about our research-practice partnership with PDE—and feel free to use the action planning guide in your own school or district!

School climate findings at the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness

REL researcher Whitney Kozakowski shared insights from our [study](#) that assessed how school climate changed during the COVID-19 pandemic in a sample of Pennsylvania schools. The [symposium](#) also featured three additional papers examining school surveys of students and staff from Chicago, Cleveland, and Maryland that measured school climate and other dimensions of school functioning before, during, and after the pandemic. Interestingly, three of the four papers found evidence that some school climate ratings by students and school staff temporarily improved during pandemic-related school disruptions.

Changes in school climate during COVID-19 in a sample of Pennsylvania schools

Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic

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