

NEWSLETTER

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Director Updates



As the summer begins, I hope all of our readers have some time to relax and rejuvenate in the wake of another challenging school year. During that year, REL Mid-Atlantic staff have worked with our partners in state and local agencies around the region, providing analytic support for their efforts to improve a wide range of student outcomes. In this newsletter, we highlight several partnerships and projects working in different ways to promote equity: by improving post-high school transitions for students with disabilities; addressing racial inequities in district operations; increasing diversity in the educator workforce; and developing improved measures of school performance for English-language proficiency and for historically underserved student subgroups. I've personally had the privilege of working with agencies in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and DC on measuring school performance, and I hope you'll be interested in how we have used state-of-the-art statistical methods to develop measures that simultaneously promote accuracy and equity. Prior to this work, state accountability plans have needed to make a difficult tradeoff between the accuracy of subgroup measures and the desire to promote equity by including historically underserved subgroups in calculations. (For details, take a look at [my blog post here](#), discussing "minimum n-size.") Working with Pennsylvania and New Jersey, we've developed an approach that successfully stabilizes performance measures for small subgroups of students—thereby giving state agencies the opportunity to bypass the hard tradeoff, improving the accuracy of measures even for small subgroups of students who should be included for equity reasons. If you know an agency that would like to pursue this, get in touch!

Have a great summer, everyone!

Brian Gill
Director, REL Mid-Atlantic

Partnership Updates

Partnership teams are sharing findings with national audiences. On June 26, REL team members were honored to partner with John Iko (New Jersey Department of Education) and Abby Rose (Pennsylvania Department of Education) to present at the 2023 National Conference on Student Assessment. The session focused on improving the reliability of school and subgroup indicators and shared findings from the REL's [2023 final report](#) on stabilizing subgroup accountability measures for Pennsylvania schools. State education officials from across the country were able to learn how stabilizing school performance measures can simultaneously improve the accuracy of the measures and promote equity by shining a light on historically underserved student subgroups. For more on stabilization for accuracy and equity, take a look at our [blog post on the issue](#).

As the work of our new partnership in Maryland begins this summer, several other projects—including three from our [accountability community of practice](#)—will wrap up. Highlights include the following:

Maryland

Improving Post-High School Transition Outcomes for Students with Disabilities in Maryland



Working with the Maryland Department of Disabilities, University of Maryland, Maryland State Department of Education, Region 4 Comprehensive Center, and Charles County Public Schools, we're exploring the development of a transition linkage tool that will promote data sharing, communication, and collaboration across agencies, schools, and families to connect students to services and opportunities after they complete high school. [Learn more](#).

Pennsylvania

Promoting Racial Equity in the School District of Philadelphia: Equity Fellows



The School District of Philadelphia's Equity Partners Fellowship is a program designed to identify, train, and support SDP staff to be equity leaders in their schools. We provided a series of coaching sessions to help SDP synthesize lessons learned from the first cohort of the fellowship to improve the design of later cohort models. Upcoming efforts will build the capacity of future Equity Fellows to conduct impact research projects. [Learn more about the SDP partnership](#).

District of Columbia

Supporting Revisions to DC Public Charter School Board's Accountability Framework



To help the DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB) improve its accountability framework and promote equity, we provided four technical support sessions. We examined whether particular accountability measures pose potential concerns related to reliability, validity, or robustness; explored potential solutions to these concerns; and explored implications of different approaches for combining and weighting the measures, with particular attention to subgroup measures. [Learn more](#).

New Jersey

Coaching to Increase Teacher Diversity in New Jersey



Through six coaching sessions, we worked collaboratively with staff from NJDOE and ten local districts to increase their knowledge and capacity to analyze teacher workforce data, conduct root cause analyses, use evidence-based strategies, and implement continuous improvement processes to increase the hiring of teachers of color. This increased capacity will help districts incorporate immediate changes into their 2023/24 hiring processes while building the foundation for long-term success. Partnership work will continue and expand on the coaching series through a train-the-trainer project and an applied research study.

[Learn more.](#)

Stabilizing School Performance Measures in New Jersey

Through a series of training and technical support sessions, we helped NJDOE learn to improve the reliability of its school accountability measures—especially when applied to smaller schools and subgroups—by applying a Bayesian stabilization statistical technique based on our previous work in Pennsylvania. This project ended with a communication coaching session focused on helping NJDOE staff communicate the concepts behind and benefits of Bayesian stabilization to educators across the state. Check out the new [infographic](#) and [blog post](#) shared below to learn more about these methods. [Learn more.](#)

Improving School-Level English-Language Proficiency (ELP) Measures

Wanting to ensure that the measures of school ELP used in its accountability are reliable and valid, NJDOE staff participated in seven coaching sessions designed to help them identify an appropriate approach to measuring schoolwide ELP growth and incorporating it in an overall accountability metric. Discussions focused on approaches for a sliding weight scale and a landscape analysis of other states' methods. [Learn more.](#)

Understanding and Improving School Performance

The newest resources from REL Mid-Atlantic can help states and districts implement improved measurement strategies—for diagnostic purposes as well as accountability purposes. The first of these describes a general framework for organizing and making sense of various ways to measure school performance. The second and third resources focus specifically on improving the reliability of measures through stabilization, which can help agencies better identify and understand schools' and students' needs and promote more equitable educational outcomes.



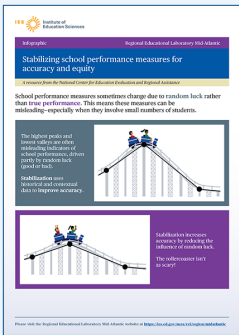
[Outcomes, Impacts, and Processes: A Framework for Understanding School Performance](#)

To make equitable and informed decisions, education decisionmakers need a comprehensive, accurate, and understandable view of school performance. This infographic presents examples from across the country and offers a comprehensive and coherent measurement strategy states and districts can implement to answer three critical questions: 1. How are students doing? 2. How much does the school contribute to how students are doing? and 3. What is happening in the school?

[Illuminating School Performance Measures: Building a Brighter Flashlight](#)

Highlighting the reliability concerns of data involving small groups of students, this blog post explains how a statistical technique can help stabilize subgroup performance measures to serve both accuracy and equity. Stabilization can help schools and districts shine a brighter light on student groups that might need additional support.





[Stabilizing Subgroup Performance Measures for Accuracy and Equity](#)

A high-level, visual introduction to the issue and solution presented in the previous blog post, and designed with the broader education community in mind, states and districts can use this infographic to communicate how data on small student groups can be unreliable and how statistical stabilization can help.

Thank you, REL Mid-Atlantic Governing Board!



REL Mid-Atlantic receives support from a Governing Board that helps prioritize the education needs of our region. We appreciate the diverse expertise and experience of our board members and the strategic guidance they offer. Visit our recently [updated website](#) to learn more about this valued group of individuals.

Connect with Us

Please reach out anytime at RELMidatlantic@mathematica-mpr.com to share your ideas about important issues REL Mid-Atlantic could address 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!](https://twitter.com/RELMidAtlantic)