



# NEWSLETTER

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## Latest News from the Director



Photo by Rich Clement

Two and a half years after the COVID-19 pandemic shut down schools across the country, evidence of the impact of the pandemic on students is sobering. Achievement is down, attendance has plummeted, graduation rates have declined, and mental health challenges are abundant. Moreover, many of the harms of the pandemic have been borne disproportionately by students who were already underserved. The challenge facing educators seeking to promote excellence and equity is even greater than usual.

Here at REL Mid-Atlantic, we are aiming to use research and analysis to support educators across the region in their efforts to produce an equitable pandemic recovery that involves both academic and social-emotional learning for all students. The partnerships we are developing with states and districts will provide this analytic support in various ways, across a range of different topics that our local partners identified as high priorities. In this newsletter you can learn about a few of our partnerships and projects, including work in support of the School District of Philadelphia's comprehensive initiative to promote racial equity; a partnership to improve the measurement of classroom instruction and the corresponding feedback provided to teachers in Delaware; and an infographic guiding states and districts on better use of measures of school performance. We look forward to telling you about additional partnerships and projects in future newsletters. In the meantime, we wish you the best at the beginning of another challenging school year—and we thank you for your service to the students of the Mid-Atlantic region.

**Brian Gill**  
Director, REL Mid-Atlantic

## On the RELevant Blog

### Strategies to Address Equity

How can we know if we're helping to improve educational equity? What needs to be in place for the work to be successful? A [new blog post](#) written in partnership with staff from REL Central explores these topics, focusing on our work with the School District of Philadelphia on racial equity (see more below) and REL Central's work with Denver Public Schools.

## New Partnerships: Coming Together for Success



### Addressing Equity in the School District of Philadelphia

REL Mid-Atlantic is helping the School District of Philadelphia [address inequitable practices](#). In 2021, after the district acknowledged persistent disparities in student outcomes and a history of structural racism, it launched an effort to examine and disrupt inequitable practices. We're helping the district use evidence to inform, monitor, and refine its equity initiatives to enable more equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students.

### Evidence to Refine a Teacher Evaluation System in Delaware

The Delaware Department of Education learned that school leaders and staff feel the current teacher evaluation system needs strengthening to help teachers improve their instructional practice and raise student achievement. We are working with the department to refine a revised teacher evaluation system, focused particularly on improving the rubric used for observing teacher practice so that it provides better feedback. The [partnership](#) includes technical support and applied research to refine evaluation tools and inform a statewide rollout of the revised system.

## Latest REL Publications and Presentations

### Interpreting and Using School Accountability Data: Dos and Don'ts for 2022 and Beyond

School accountability provisions are in effect for the first time since the pandemic shut down schools and halted annual student assessments in 2020. But disruptions of the pandemic may affect the measures used in accountability systems in ways that could lead decision makers astray. State agencies and school districts need to know what data they can trust in understanding school performance. When considering options for intervening in low-performing schools, keep in mind these [dos and don'ts](#).



## Out and About

Check out the slides on measuring school performance from our presentation with partners at the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) at the [National Center for Education Statistics summer data conference](#). In the presentation, we explain how we are partnering with NJDOE to refine and improve the state's measures of school performance, with the aim of enhancing their reliability and validity so they can usefully inform school improvement.

## Latest Department of Education Publications

### New Guide for Preschool Educators



Ensuring that all children are prepared for elementary school is a priority for parents, caregivers, guardians, and policymakers. The [What Works Clearinghouse](#) distilled recent research into recommendations for preschool educators to help prepare children for school. Read the [guide](#), which includes sample lessons, activities, and other resources. The authors also presented a series of [webinars](#) for educators to learn more about the recommendations. And check out some other [early childhood resources](#) from REL Mid-Atlantic.

### New Digest of Education Statistics Released



The National Center for Education Statistics recently released the latest [Digest of Education Statistics](#). Check out this treasure trove of data on American education, from early childhood through adult ed. The publication includes data on the number of schools and colleges, teachers, enrollments, and graduates, in addition to data on educational attainment, finances, federal funds for education, libraries, international comparisons, and more.

## Connect with Us

Please reach out anytime at [RELMidatlantic@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto: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!](#)