

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

March 16, 2015

Dear Members of the General Assembly,

As part of our ongoing work toward making Rhode Island schools America's best, we continue to welcome technology into the classroom – not just as a tool or resource but as an essential element in the process of teaching and learning. Thanks to your leadership in and support through the Wireless Classroom Initiative, the Statewide Virtual Education Act, and the Joint Legislative Commission to Study the Use of E-Textbooks, Rhode Island school leaders and teachers are embracing technology and digital learning.

To further our partnership in this initiative, I am pleased to provide you with our annual legislative report, "RI Virtual Learning." This report shows us how virtual learning and online instruction are transforming the way all of us think about schools, classrooms, teaching, and learning. In our Innovation Powered by Technology model schools – Pleasant View Elementary School, in Providence, and Wakefield Hills Elementary School, in West Warwick – students and teachers are creating learning environments that others are emulating. In many schools and districts across the state we see teachers and school leaders rethinking the student learning experience. We see teachers and students who are working in small teams and one on one, using technology to create and collaborate to meet the individual learning needs of every student.

Among our accomplishments over the past year, as this report documents, twelve districts have implemented large scale plans providing every student access to computer devices. Approximately nine to ten districts are deep in the planning stages. And all districts are working hard to create the conditions for a successful personalized learning experience for their students utilizing digital tools and blended learning strategies. Thanks to the Wireless Classroom Initiatives that you have funded, all classrooms now have wireless access to the Internet.

The digital transition is just beginning, but even at this early stage, we can see the vast opportunities technology, wireless access, and blended learning strategies offers for our students, teachers and families. Let's continue our commitment to transforming education and empowering students through the use of technology.

Sincerely,

Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner



RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE REPORT - MARCH 2015

Empowering Students to Succeed in the 21st Century

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OVERVIEW

Overview

RI schools are changing the way that they support teachers and students to prepare our students for success in the 21st century. Many school leaders, educators, students, professional organizations, community based organizations, legislators, and industry leaders have been working hard over recent years to create and coordinate the conditions for success in Rhode Island.

There is a shared vision among key stakeholders that all RI students will pursue flexible, student-centered, proficiency-based pathways in a digitally rich environment. Through the use of blended learning and other technology programming and tools students are empowered to take ownership of their learning and advance at their own pace to ensure success in college, careers and life. According to Horn and Staker, 2014, personalized and [proficiency-based learning], implemented well and jointly, form the basis of a student-centered learning system.

Rhode Island is at the forefront of implementing and ensuring access to blended learning and technology in all schools. Access to these digital learning tools and blended learning models in all RI schools enables students to learn in a student-centered system.

This report examines the digital transition occurring in Rhode Island, noting progress and trends, and asking questions leading to continuous improvement.

2014 VIRTUAL LEARNING HIGHLIGHTS

Several noteworthy events occurred in 2014 as educators and state leaders strived to create the necessary conditions for success for all Rhode Island students.

Professional associations and organizations facilitated deep conversations about improving college and career readiness by employing various technology strategies to create more personalized, deeper learning opportunities. School leaders and educators gathered weekly for online #EdChatRI sessions. Business leaders shared funding strategies to find resources for technology within budgets. Legislators continued regular meetings exploring the impact of blended learning.



Access to technology within schools continues to increase at remarkable rates. Wireless infrastructure installation funded by the Wireless Classroom Technology bond was completed bringing Internet access to all classrooms throughout Rhode Island. Many districts worked to reimagine the student and teacher experiences and implemented large scale plans increasing access to technology devices by putting computers in the hands of each student and teacher. Others teamed with the Highlander Institute opening their doors to Fuse RI Fellows who are supporting systemic plans for implementing blended learning. Still others are part of an ongoing cross-state professional learning community committed to educational equity, student-centered learning, and ongoing improvement. Several within that professional learning community

OVERVIEW

self-selected to participate in the Gates Foundation NextGen Initiative, planning for a launch of fully personalized, student-centered learning environments in fall 2015.

The Village Green and Nowell Leadership Academy, two blended learning charter schools, completed their first year. Blackstone Valley Prep Charter expanded to the high school level implementing various blended learning strategies. Pleasant View Elementary School, Rhode Island's first blended model school, continues to realize great gains in student achievement. Wakefield Hills Elementary School, in West Warwick was awarded the second RI Model School grant in September 2013 which quickly expanded to a district-wide 1:1 plan equipping all students with Chromebooks.

In October, over 850 educators, students, family members, start-up companies, vendors, and national blended-learning leaders convened for the third annual Innovation Powered by Technology Conference at the Rhode Island Convention Center. This was an opportunity for educators to connect on systemic planning around the effective use of technology and digital learning.

Rhode Island is positioned as a national model for how blended learning accelerates the implementation of proficiency-based learning through the following initiatives:

- Rhode Island's Virtual Learning Policy framework
- Model schools and blended-learning charter schools as proof points
- Significant investments in infrastructure
- Organic excitement and energy of the educational community
- RI's Innovation Powered by Technology Conferences.



LOOKING AHEAD

While the innovative Education **Strategic Plan** is in the developmental stages, Rhode

Islanders have already stated that they value customized learning to maximize the individual potential for every student's success. Technology access and digital learning are the engines necessary to realize a proficiency-based learning system ensuring that students advance upon demonstration of their mastery of content and skills; educators have access to tools and resources allowing students to receive rapid, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs; and parents and families have access to student progression data and information. At its core, digital and blended learning is the effective use of education technology to transform the learning experience for students.



OVERVIEW



The **Future Ready Schools Initiative** is a bold new national effort to maximize digital learning opportunities and help school districts move quickly toward preparing students for success in college, a career, and citizenship.

The initiative provides districts with resources and support to ensure that local technology and digital learning plans align with instructional best practices, are implemented by highly trained teachers, and lead to personalized learning experiences for all students, particularly those from traditionally under-served communities.

The U.S. Department of Education and The Alliance for Excellent Education are leading this initiative with the support of the Leading Education by Advancing Digital (LEAD) Commission and a vast coalition of organizations. At the center of the initiative is a series of regional summits where district teams will develop action plans and metrics to measure their progress in using digital tools to improve teaching and student learning outcomes. The summits will focus on a comprehensive set of issues that drive student learning, will highlight the experiences of districts in each region, and will offer district leaders tangible ways to build capacity among their teams and throughout their districts.

Due to the extensive work going on in Rhode Island and several well established relationships, a New England Future Ready regional summit will be hosted in Rhode Island at the West Warwick High School during the April 2015 school vacation. Future Ready Regional Summits focus on a comprehensive set of issues that drive student learning. These issues include: curriculum, instruction, and assessment; professional learning; technology, networks, and hardware; budget and resources; data and privacy; use of time; and community partnerships.

VIRTUAL COURSE PARTICIPATION RATES

Virtual Course Participation Rates

As part of the strategic plan and Race to the Top work, RIDE is working to create robust user-friendly data systems. These systems or platforms are designed to support increased use of cross-domain data for RIDE, districts, researchers and the public. Teacher / Course / Student (TCS) data will enable RIDE to determine which educators teach specific courses and which students are in those courses.

The TCS data was new last year and districts worked to adjust and incorporate this element into reporting. This information can be found on the RIDE web site.

- TCS Guidance: <http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Teachers-and-Administrators-Excellent-Educators/Educator-Evaluation/RI-Model/TCS-Guidance.pdf>
- Virtual Learning Reporting Technical Assistance: <http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/EducationPrograms/VirtualLearning/tabid/171/LiveTabId/12220/Default.aspx>

A portion of the TCS data collection addresses the environment in which the course is being taught - traditional classroom setting, a hybrid or blended learning setting, or fully online setting. The available TCS data is currently capturing information about Virtual Learning at the high school level. Historically, elementary schools have not collected this type of information so they must make a concerted effort to understand and incorporate the requirement into daily processes.

The current TCS data are starting to inform us about expenditures for online and hybrid learning. Next steps to ensure the most accurate picture are to provide further guidance and clarification to assist district data managers.

FULL ONLINE SETTING - FY2014

Instruction and content are delivered primarily online with an instructor in a location other than the supervised brick-and-mortar location.

- **LEAs reporting Online Course offerings in a full online setting:** 12 LEAs (Block Island, Bristol Warren, Coventry, Cumberland, Middletown, Newport, North Kingstown, North Providence, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Providence, and Westerly)



OF NOTE:

While the Virtual Learning participation rates are increasing, **a small portion of the overall student population is taking advantage of online course offerings** in Rhode Island Schools.



OF NOTE:

Further guidance and technical assistance have been created for district data managers to ensure accurate data collections related to Virtual Learning.

VIRTUAL COURSE PARTICIPATION RATES

- **Total Number of Online Course Offerings¹:** 235 course² offerings
 - **Number of Online Math Course Offerings:** 25 math course offerings with **316 enrollments (Average number of students per course offering = 12)**
 - **Number of Online English Language Arts (ELA) Course Offerings:** 32 ELA course offerings with **216 enrollments (Average number of students per course offering = 7)**
 - **Number of Online Science Courses Offerings:** 52 science course offerings with **218 enrollments (Average number of students per course offering = 4)**
 - **Number of Online Social Studies/History Course Offerings:** 29 social studies offerings with **77 enrollments (Average number of students per course offering = 3)**

HYBRID OR BLENDED LEARNING SETTING

Hybrid learning, often referred to as **blended learning**, is any time a student learns **at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar** location away from home and **at least in part through online delivery** with **some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace**. The difference from supplemental online content is that in a blended learning situation the online content is an integrated component of instruction.

- **LEAs reporting course offerings in Hybrid setting:** 4 LEAs
- **Total Number of Hybrid Course Offerings:** 6 course offerings
 - **Bristol Warren - Mt. Hope High School**
Credit Recovery Program
ELA, Math, Life and Physical Science, Social Studies/History, Misc. - 62 students
 - **Newport - Rogers High School**
ELA, Math, Life and Physical Science, Social Studies/History, Misc. - 87 students
 - **North Kingstown High School - Intervention Program**
Independent Study
 - **Tiverton - Course/Teacher using hybrid model**
Art - Piano Lab - 12 students

Challenges Ahead

Ensuring that the data collected is keeping pace with the various ways that hybrid and blended learning models being implemented will continue to be a challenge. Currently the data relating to Virtual Learning in Rhode Island is limited as districts adjust to new reporting requirements. New Hybrid and blended learning models are emerging daily as teachers work to customize learning for their students.

¹ Reported courses are offered through either Virtual High School or Virtual Learning Academy

² Courses are a semester in length.

VIRTUAL COURSE PARTICIPATION RATES

LEAs with known hybrid programs and offerings that are currently not reported through TCS data:

- **Secondary charter schools** – Village Green and Nowell Leadership Academy both fully blended learning high schools
- **Providence** - Model School - Pleasant View Elementary School
Content Providers - Compass Learning, DreamBox, Raz-Kids, Renzulli Learning
- **Pawtucket** - Alternative Learning Program
Content Provider - Apex Learning
- **Woonsocket** - Virtual Learning Academy
Content Providers - NovaNet, Rosetta Stone

Virtual High School and Virtual Learning Academy are the two main providers of fully delivered online courses in Rhode Island.

An ever increasing number of LEAs are instituting hybrid and blended learning programs. The emerging blended learning models are being implemented in individual classrooms, larger programs, and school-wide. Various content providers are being utilized in the programming. Increased guidance and technical assistance is needed to support districts in accurate reporting related to blended and online learning.

VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPENDITURES

Virtual Learning Expenditures

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

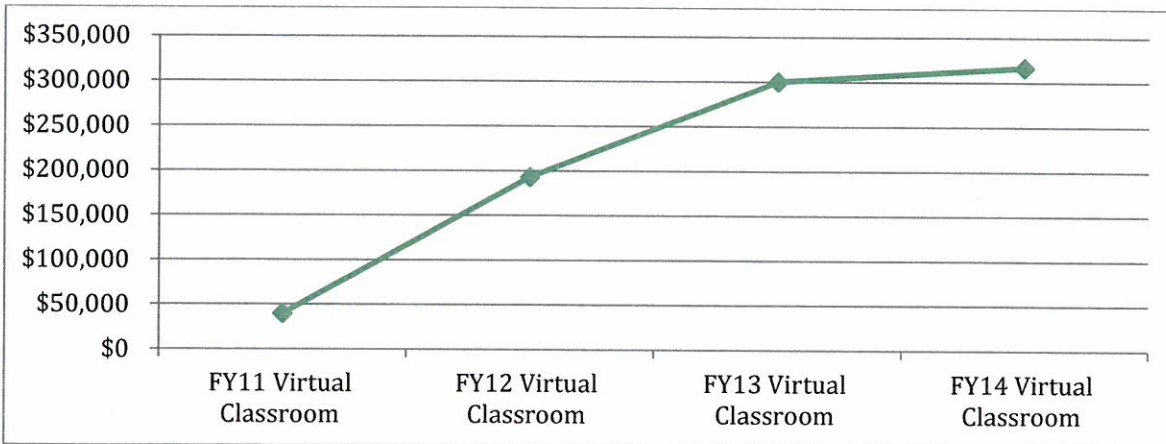
Many statewide and local investments have been made supporting technology access in Rhode Island schools. For the purposes of this report, two elements captured in the Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA) are examined. Data related to “Virtual Classroom” and “Supplemental Instructional Programs” indicate an increase in expenditures over the past three years.



VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

This UCOA element is described as “Fees paid to third party vendors for “Virtual Classrooms” that provide instructional programs via the Internet. It includes instruction provided via the Internet in lieu of face-to-face instruction time.” Examples include: Online courses provided through organizations such as Virtual High School and Virtual Learning Academy. There is a steady increase in the number of LEAs investing in Virtual Learning options for their students.

Figure 1 - Virtual Classroom Expenditures



FY2014

- LEAs Reporting Virtual Classroom Expenditures: 21 LEAs (Barrington, Coventry, Cumberland, East Greenwich, East Providence, Johnston, Lincoln, Middletown, Narragansett, Newport, New Shoreham, North Kingstown, North Providence, North Smithfield, Westerly, RI School for the Deaf, Paul Cuffee, Beacon Charter, Bristol/Warren, Chariho, Foster/Glocester)
- Total Statewide Expenditures: \$317,000

VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPENDITURES



FY2013

- LEAs Reporting Virtual Classroom Expenditures: 21 LEAs (Barrington, Bristol-Warren, Central Falls, Chariho, Coventry, Cranston, East Greenwich, EWG, Foster-Glocester, Jamestown, Johnston, Lincoln, Middletown, Narragansett, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, Tiverton, Westerly, Paul Cuffee Charter, New England Laborers)
- Total Statewide Expenditures: \$300,000

OF NOTE:

The majority of the Virtual Learning expenditures in the last four fiscal years support supplemental instructional programs delivered in a **Hybrid or Blended Learning environment** rather than fully online or virtual instruction.

FY2012

- LEAs Reporting Virtual Classroom Expenditures: 16 LEAs (Barrington, Central Falls, Chariho, Cranston, Exeter W. Greenwich, Foster Gloucester, Jamestown, Johnston, Lincoln, Middletown, Narragansett, Providence, Smithfield, Westerly, Woonsocket, MET)
- Total Statewide Expenditures: \$192,000

FY2011

- LEAs Reporting Virtual Classroom Expenditures: 6 LEAs (Chariho, Foster Gloucester, Lincoln, Middletown, Smithfield, Westerly)
- Total Statewide Expenditures: \$40,000

Seven (7) new LEAs added Virtual Classroom (VC) options for their students in FY2014 (Cumberland, East Providence, New Shoreham, North Kingstown, North Providence, North Smithfield, and RI School for the Deaf.) Three (3) LEAs decreased and nine (9) LEAs eliminated Virtual Classroom expenditures. (Central Falls, Cranston, Exeter-W. Greenwich, Jamestown, Pawtucket, Providence, Tiverton, New England Laborers, and Trinity).

SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

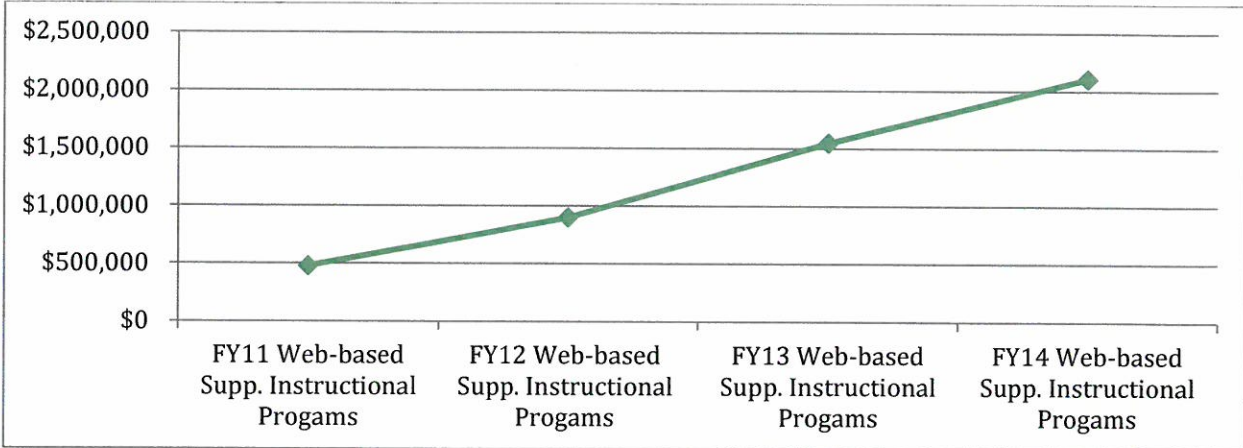
This UCOA element is described as “Fees paid to third party vendors for web-based programs that are a supplement to instruction (not in lieu).” Examples include: Content used in a Hybrid or blended learning environment such as Read180, DreamBox, Raz-Kids, Compass Learning, NovaNet, Edgenuity, etc.

There is a steady increase in the number of LEAs utilizing third party vendors for web-based programs as demonstrated in expenditure data below. Seven (7) LEAs added supplemental instructional programs to their instructional content. Four (4) LEAs (Central Falls, Coventry, Pawtucket and Providence) significantly

VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPENDITURES

increased the purchase of supplemental digital content by an average of \$126,000. Twelve (12) LEAs decreased expenditures in this area slightly by an average of \$7,900.

Figure 2 - Web-based Supplemental Instructional Program Expenditures



FY2014

- LEAs Reporting 53221 Expenditures: 37 LEAs (Barrington, Bristol-Warren, Burrillville, Central Falls, Chariho, Coventry, Cranston, Cumberland, East Greenwich, East Providence, Exeter-W. Greenwich, Foster-Glocester, Johnston, Lincoln, Little Compton, Middletown, Narragansett, Newport, North Kingstown, North Providence, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Portsmouth, Providence, Smithfield, Tiverton, Westerly, Woonsocket, Beacon Charter, Blackstone Academy, Cuffee, Davies, Green, Kingston Hill, New England Laborers, Village Green Charter, East Bay Collaborative)
- Total Statewide Expenditures: \$2,107,000



OF NOTE:

The increase in expenditures related to Virtual Learning suggests a trend and shift in the use of resources by LEAs. The increase *may also* be attributed to familiarity and understanding of the reporting element.

FY2013

- LEAs Reporting 53221 Expenditures: 31 LEAs (Barrington, Bristol-Warren, Burrillville, Central Falls, Chariho, Coventry, Cranston, Cumberland, East Greenwich, East Providence, Exeter W. Greenwich, Jamestown, Johnston, Lincoln, Middletown, Newport, North Kingstown, North Smithfield, Pawtucket, Providence, Smithfield, Tiverton, Westerly, Woonsocket, Blackstone Academy, Cuffee, Davies, Green, Kingston Hill, New England Laborers, East Bay Collaborative)
- Total Statewide Expenditures: \$1,550,000

VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPENDITURES

FY2012

- LEAs Reporting 53221 Expenditures: 26 LEAs
(Barrington, Bristol Warren, Burrillville, Central Falls, Chariho, Coventry, Cranston, Cumberland, Exeter W. Greenwich, Johnston, Lincoln, Little Compton, Middletown, Newport, North Kingstown, Pawtucket, Providence, Smithfield, Tiverton, Westerly, Woonsocket, Blackstone Academy, Cuffee, Davies, Green, Kingston Hill, MET)
- Total Statewide Expenditures: \$899,000

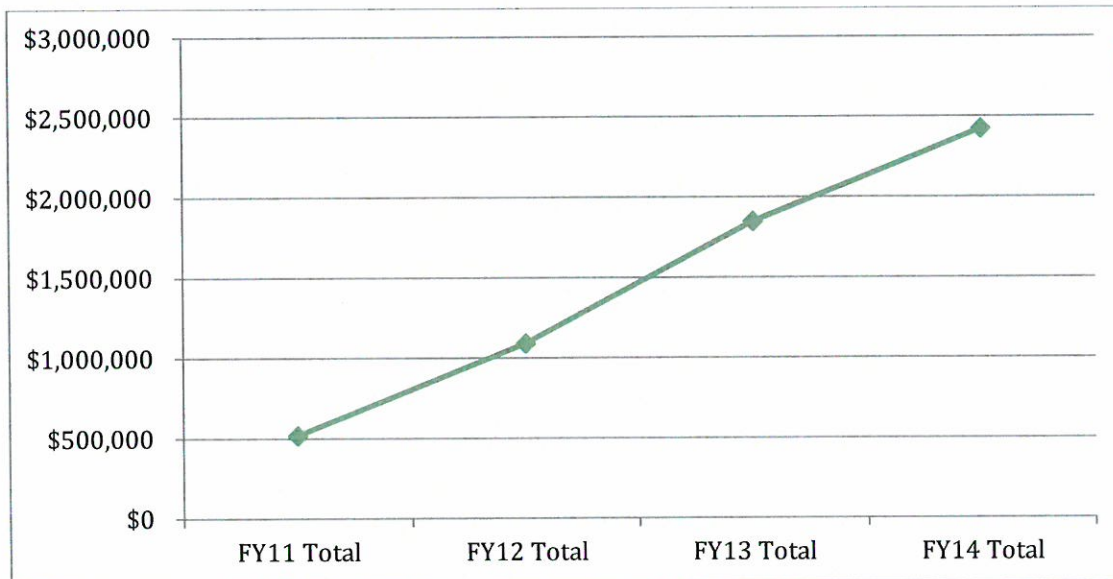
FY2011

- LEAs Reporting 53221 Expenditures: 19 LEAs
(Barrington, Burrillville, Chariho, Coventry, Cranston, Cumberland, Exeter W. Greenwich, Johnston, Lincoln, Little Compton, Middletown, North Kingstown, Pawtucket, Providence, Smithfield, Westerly, Woonsocket, Davies, and the Green School)
- Total Statewide Expenditures: \$479,000

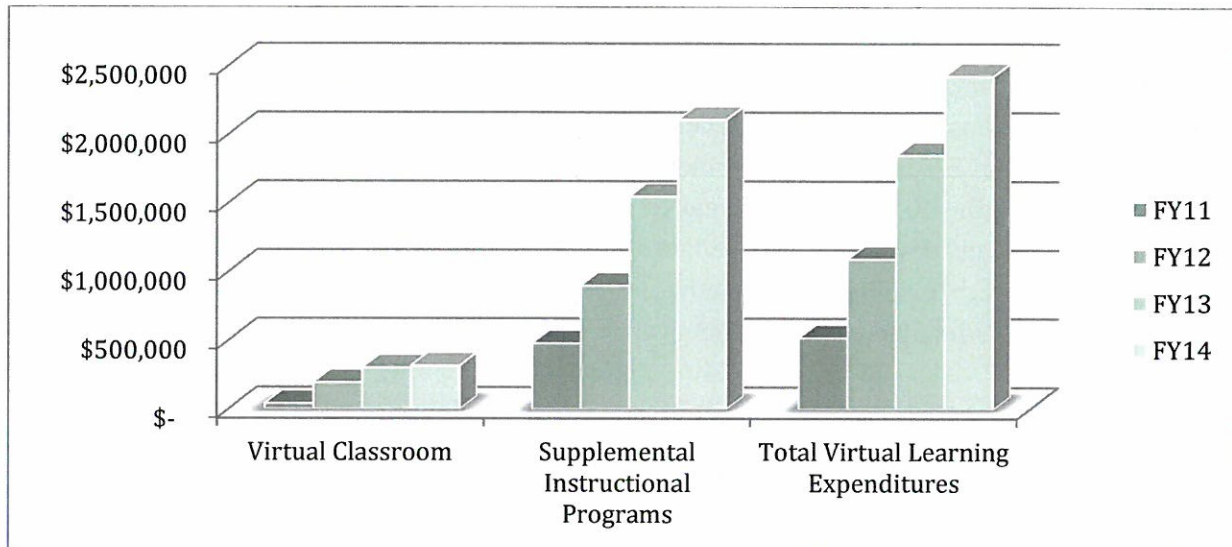
TOTAL INCREASE IN VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPENDITURES

Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the LEAs in Rhode Island now report Virtual Learning related expenditures. These Virtual Learning expenditures providing students learning opportunities in both “Online” and “Hybrid/blended learning” environments increased by 72% statewide over a three year period. The majority of the Virtual Learning expenditures in all three fiscal years support supplemental instructional programs delivered in a Hybrid or Blended Learning environment.

Figure 3 - Total Virtual Learning Expenditures



VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPENDITURES



Student Assessment Data

ASSESSMENT DATA FOR STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN VIRTUAL EDUCATION

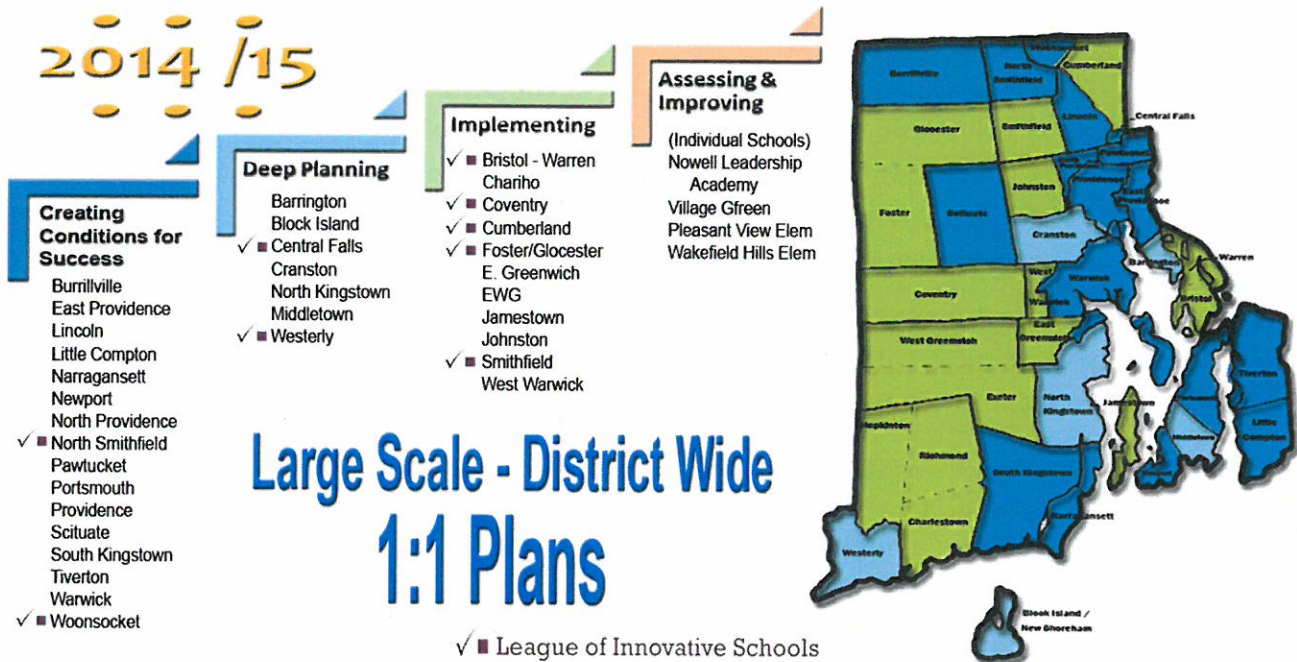
RIDE is unable to report on the link between student assessment data and virtual learning at this time as the enterprise data systems and platforms are currently in development. Additionally, there is data training in process to ensure that LEA data is accurate and complete. RIDE hopes to be able to capture a more complete picture during the 2014/15 school year through the Teacher / Course / Student (TCS) data collection item and the fully developed, robust data systems. Additionally, the transition to the PARCC assessment limits access to meaningful summative assessment data that correlates with blended or online instructional practices. A detailed analysis is not available at this time.

ADDITIONAL VIRTUAL LEARNING INFORMATION

Additional Virtual Learning Information

DISTRICT PROGRESS IN PROVIDING STUDENT ACCESS TO DIGITALLY RICH ENVIRONMENTS:

All RI districts have been working diligently to create the necessary conditions for personalized and proficiency-based learning environments in their schools. Districts are at various stages in the implementation of digitally rich environments and the adoption of blended learning strategies. Several RI schools are implementing one-to-one (1:1) programs in which each student has access to a personal computing device.



MODEL BLENDED SCHOOLS:

In spring of 2012, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) announced a program designed to transform how teaching and learning takes place in the state. The Innovation Powered by Technology One-to-One Model School Grant program sought to fund a pilot school that would use technology as a catalyst for transformation and that would share its experiences with schools across the state. The awarded applicant would create a technology-rich learning environment that would fundamentally rethink and restructure teaching and learning through initiatives such as digital curriculum, virtual learning environments, flexible scheduling, and 1:1 computing.

ADDITIONAL VIRTUAL LEARNING INFORMATION

In May 2012, **Pleasant View Elementary School** (PVES) was selected to serve as the model school for blended learning and proof point site for public education across Rhode Island. As a result of this award, PVES has redesigned much of its instructional model and learning environment with the help of partners at the Business Innovation Factory, The Capital Good Fund, Education Elements, the Highlander Institute, the University of Connecticut, and the University of Rhode Island.

Pleasant View has successfully moved from a transformation school in priority to rising status by reaching 100% of the targets set by RIDE over the past 2 years. They reached all 16 targets in 2012-13, and all 18 targets in 2013-14, including improved attendance, statistically significant gains on the NECAP standardized test in math and reading, and increased family and community engagement.

The **Wakefield Hills Elementary School** (WHES) was selected as the second Rhode Island Model School and awarded a grant of \$80,000 providing Chromebook laptops to all adults and students in the building. WHES began their implementation in September 2013. Students are able to take their Chromebooks home and parents have the opportunity to use them. In addition, the school is providing professional development to staff members and the community. WHES is creating a culture in which communication, collaboration and content creation are cornerstones to all learning activities.

The RI Model School award to Wakefield Hills Elementary School served as a catalyst in West Warwick which expanded to a district wide 1:1 project. As of September 2014, all K-12 West Warwick students are able to use their Chromebooks both at school and at home.

Wakefield Hills has been working to establish 1:1 computing as a cultural norm for the community and taking on the related hurdles, barriers and successes. There have been and continue to be conversations around safety and "netiquette" for both home and school. Systems for damage control, repair and replacement continue to be analyzed and improved. The school and district leadership continue to modify and improve systems need to seamlessly support the technology tools. With a vision centered on "create, collaborate and communicate"... educators continue to move forward with updating and modifying curriculum to match this vision.

BLENDED LEARNING CHARTER SCHOOLS:

The Village Green and the **Nowell Leadership Academy** charter schools both opened their doors in September 2013.

The Village Green is a high school located in the heart of downtown Providence using a blend of online curriculum and in-classroom teaching commonly referred to as a Flex Blended Learning model. They serve a diverse population of students from 16 sending cities and districts with the majority of students from Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls. Students are in class working with teachers about 40% of the time and online or in advisory and reading groups the other 60%. Students learn at their own pace in a very technology rich environment supported by teachers who specialize in data analysis and skill gap

ADDITIONAL VIRTUAL LEARNING INFORMATION

intervention. In addition to the academic skills gained, The Village Green reports their students are in “as close to an adult work environment” that can be provided in a school setting. They also report the 21st century “soft skills” are a natural by-product of the model.

The roles of the teacher and student have changed. The model advances collegiality between adult learners and young adult learners. The teachers have become “data analysts and skill gap interventionists” shifting the student/teacher dynamic. Teachers are coaches and facilitators empowering students in the control of learning. There is great flexibility in the interventions that teachers use to address skill gaps. There is continual differentiation with both online and face to face tools. Acceleration and remediation often occur at the same time with the same student. Workshop instruction is always targeted and based on short cycle data analysis as it is tied to assessment and proficiency. The words “I am bored; I am not learning anything; the teacher doesn’t like me; or I have a personality conflict with that teacher” are not heard. .

The Nowell Leadership Academy’s two locations are nestled in the Onlyville neighborhood of Providence and in the city of Central Falls. The school aims to provide a blend of support to at-risk high school students - especially teenagers who are young mothers and fathers. The school offers a different kind of pathway to 160 students including 85 students who are either pregnant or parenting. The school was designed to accommodate students who can benefit from a flexible schedule, rigorous academic standards and some special wrap-around services.

The multi-tiered system supports students experiencing academic, and/or social-emotional challenges. Ongoing professional development supports for team members address obstacles and transitions of pregnant and newly parenting students. All students are continually monitored and supported through individualized learning plans with goal setting in areas of college, career and family responsibilities.

Twenty three over-age and under-credited students graduated in the class of 2014 from the Nowell Leadership Academy. Of those students, fourteen were teen mothers, four were teen fathers, and there were two parenting couples.

The Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy located in Cumberland and serving students from the surrounding communities expanded to include a high school during the 2014/15 school year. The school provides a blended learning environment in which all students and teachers are utilizing blended learning strategies to communicate and collaborate on a daily basis.

ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

Infrastructure

Just a few short years ago, in 2012, only 23.8 percent of the classrooms had wireless access to the Internet. Today, 100 percent of RI schools and classrooms have



ADDITIONAL VIRTUAL LEARNING INFORMATION

wireless access to the internet. The Technology Infrastructure Bond funded wireless access points for each classroom, as well as the necessary switches, wiring, and network controllers to bring wireless access to every school and every classroom in RI.

Devices

Students, teachers, and other friends of education across RI are enthusiastic about the possibilities that technology offers for improving instruction and advancing achievement. Most districts have recognized the need to increase the number of devices available to students and educators alike. Various strategies have been implemented to increase the number of devices in each building. Some have implemented Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) strategies coupled with the purchase of the laptops, Chromebooks, tablets and n-computing stations. Fourteen LEAs or districts are in the midst of implementing large scale plans moving toward 1:1 access for all.



Bandwidth

The **Rhode Island Telecommunications Access Fund (RITEAF)** program is a legislative commitment to ensure that Internet Access is available and affordable for all private and public K-12 schools and all public libraries. The RITEAF program supplements the federal E-Rate program. The federal E-Rate program was updated in the Fall of 2014 with several significant changes. The recently formed Broadband Commission is meeting to determine the impact of the changes to E-RATE and how these changes will impact schools in Rhode Island.



INNOVATION POWERED BY TECHNOLOGY THIRD CONFERENCE

Each year, RIDE hosts the Innovation Powered by Technology conference providing an opportunity for educators and school leaders to connect and share systemic planning strategies around the effective use of technology and digital learning in schools. It allows all in attendance to collaborate and be inspired by RI educators and students and national experts all willing to share ideas, resources and implementation strategies.

On Saturday, October 25, 2014 RIDE hosted the third and largest annual Innovation Powered by Technology Conference at the Rhode Island Convention Center. Attendance has steadily increased over the years with over 800 educators, school leaders, students, business leaders, community members, and legislators were in attendance this year. The day consisted of powerful presentations including a showcase of student work, a student panel, a panel of business leaders, a superintendents' panel, and presentations by many Rhode Island educators from 13 of our school districts as well as from several charter public schools.



ADDITIONAL VIRTUAL LEARNING INFORMATION

Two years ago, at our first technology conference, experts in digital learning traveled to Rhode Island to help us understand what we could accomplish through smart use of technology. This year, national experts joined us at the conference to see what we're doing in Rhode Island. One of the keynote speakers, Tom Murray from the Alliance for Excellent Education, recognized and commend Rhode Island as a leading state when it comes to using technology in the classroom for personalized instruction and learning.

PARTNERSHIPS

Establishing Strong Partnerships and Learning Networks

In August, 2014 – [The Learning Accelerator](#) (TLA), a nonprofit organization supporting the implementation of high-quality blended learning in school districts and states across the U.S., and the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) announced an ambitious initiative to make Rhode Island the first fully “blended-learning state” in the nation. The announcement coincided with the release of TLA’s [Framework for Cultivating High-Quality Blended Learning at the State Level](#), which outlines steps states can take to catalyze blended learning.



TLA’s unique combination of thought partnership and investments, coupled with RIDE’S pioneering leadership in personalized and proficiency-based learning in a digitally rich environment, allows the pair to quickly turn the ideas found in the TLA framework into actions that accelerate high-quality blended learning in Rhode Island.

The Learning Accelerator’s initial grant to RIDE funds two primary areas of work including accelerating blended learning opportunities through the 5 year strategic planning and the creation of a communications campaign intended to fully accelerate blended learning throughout the state. Both RIDE and TLA envision this project to be a multi-year agreement supporting identified action items in the strategic planning process.

Highlander Institute - Fuse RI Project

Fuse RI grew from a need to fill the current blended learning scalability void by providing a statewide system for sharing, implementing blended learning in schools across Rhode Island. The 3-year Fuse RI project was created by the Highlander Institute, with the support of RIDE, RISTE, and several professional organizations, and was also funded by The Learning Accelerator in 2014.

The Joint Commission to Study the Use of E-Textbooks

The fifteen-member Commission, chaired by Senator Edward J. O’Neill (District-17, Lincoln, North Providence, Pawtucket) and Representative Joy Hearn (District- 66 Barrington, East Providence) were authorized in 2011 to make a comprehensive study of the use of textbooks in the public schools, and in the

ADDITIONAL VIRTUAL LEARNING INFORMATION

use and exploitation of electronic media in the classroom, to explore the possible advantages and disadvantages of the “paperless classroom”, and the possible cost savings arising there from. The Commission has continued its work and completed extensive environmental scans of strategies used both locally and nationally. RIDE has been actively involved in the committee work since its inception.

Future Ready Schools Initiative

The Future Ready Schools Initiative is a bold new effort to maximize digital learning opportunities and help school districts move quickly toward preparing students for success in college, a career, and citizenship. The initiative provides districts with resources and support to ensure that local technology and digital learning plans align with instructional best practices, are implemented by highly trained teachers, and lead to personalized learning experiences for all students, particularly those from traditionally under-served communities.

The [Alliance for Excellent Education](#) and the [U.S. Department of Education](#) are leading this initiative with the support of the Leading Education by Advancing Digital (LEAD) Commission and a vast coalition of organizations.

At the center of the initiative is a series of regional summits where district teams will develop action plans and metrics to measure their progress in using digital tools to improve teaching and student learning outcomes. The summits will focus on a comprehensive set of issues that drive student learning, will highlight the experiences of districts in each region, and will offer district leaders tangible ways to build capacity among their teams and throughout their districts.

A New England Future Ready regional summit will be hosted at West Warwick High School during the April 2015 school vacation. Future Ready Regional Summits focus on a comprehensive set of issues that drive student learning. These issues include:

- curriculum, instruction, and assessment;
- professional learning;
- technology, networks, and hardware;
- budget and resources;
- data and privacy;
- use of time; and
- community partnerships.

EIGHTH GRADE TECHNOLOGY LITERACY

Each year, students in the eighth grade take the 21st Century Skills Assessment to determine technology proficiency. The 21st Century Skills Assessment uses a psychometrically validated blend of interactive, performance-based questions that



ADDITIONAL VIRTUAL LEARNING INFORMATION

allow students to authentically perform complex tasks in simulated applications, and multiple choice, knowledge-based questions.

All 21st Century Skills Assessment reports provide proficiency data across four levels (Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, Advanced) not only for overall proficiency, but also for each of the NETS-S 2007 strands, and for each standard measured by the project.

The assessment is aligned to the ISTE NETS-Standards in the following six strands:

- Creativity and Innovation
- Communication and Collaboration
- Research and Information Fluency
- Critical Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making
- Digital Citizenship
- Technology Operations and Concepts

Results and data is available on the RIDE web site - <http://goo.gl/sZyFjU>

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