



# COMMUNITY FORUMS: PROVIDENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS REVIEW

*Commissioner Infante-Green*



**RIDE** Rhode Island  
Department  
of Education

# OBJECTIVES:



- Current State of Providence Public Schools.
- Review and Process for the Johns Hopkins Report.
- Primary findings in the report.
- Community Engagement.

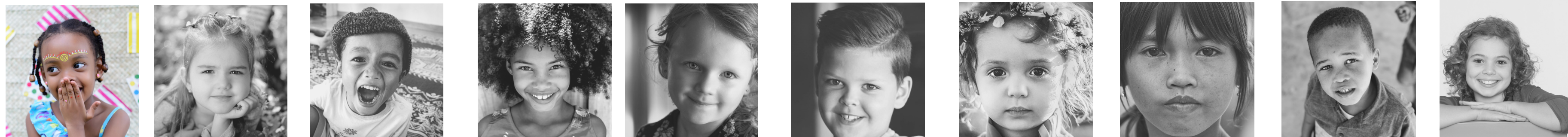
“My mother made it her mission to befriend this woman. It got me into the better school. That changed my life. That’s why I do this work.”

-Angélica Infante-Green



# WHY THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY REPORT?

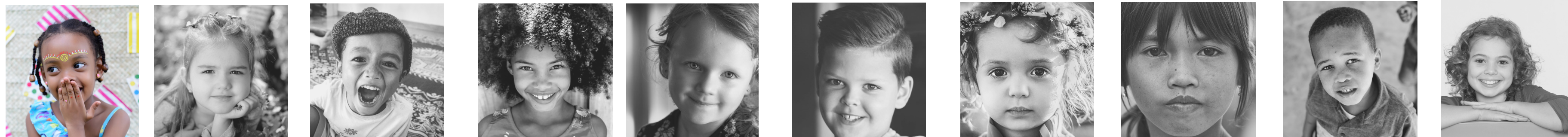
**10%** of students are performing at or above grade level in Math.



**90%** of students in Providence cannot perform at or above grade level in Math.

# WHY THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY REPORT?

**14%** of students are performing at or above grade level in English Language Arts.



**86%** of students in Providence cannot perform at or above grade level in English Language Arts.

# OVERVIEW OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS REVIEW PROCESS

- This review was initiated by the Rhode Island Department of Education, in collaboration with and at the joint request of Governor Gina Raimondo and Mayor Jorge Elorza.
- In May 2019, Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy with the support of 20 local and national experts lead a series of site visits to 12 schools and focus groups and interviews with hundreds of stakeholders to compile the final report of the Providence Public School District.
- The review aimed to determine Providence's capacity to provide equitable access to high-quality teaching and learning for all students.

# KEY TAKEAWAY: THE SYSTEM IS BROKEN.

“Providence Public School District is overburdened with multiple, overlapping sources of governance and bureaucracy with no clear domains of authority and very little scope for transformative change. The resulting structures paralyze action, stifle innovation, and create dysfunction and inconsistency across the district. In the face of the current governance structure, stakeholders understandably expressed little to no hope for serious reform.”

“

**“We are in a crisis and we don’t seem to be able to figure it out.”**

-PROVIDENCE COUNCIL MEMBER



# A Broken System has Led to:

- 1 Low level of academic instruction and expectations.
- 2 Parents feel powerless.
- 3 Teachers and staff are demoralized and disenfranchised.
- 4 Principals and school leaders have no authority.
- 5 Schools are unsafe and crumbling all across the city.



# KEY THEME #1: Low Level of Academic Instruction and Expectations



## Review teams takeaway:

- Little visible student learning in all of classrooms visited.
- Incoherent use of high-quality curriculum across schools.
- Meaningful gaps in supports for students – especially for multi-lingual learners and differently abled students.
- Technology used more for classroom management rather than meaningful instruction.
- Students know we are failing them.
- They want to be challenged, they want to be encouraged.

*"Not much direction with curriculum -- we are given resources and told to figure it out."*

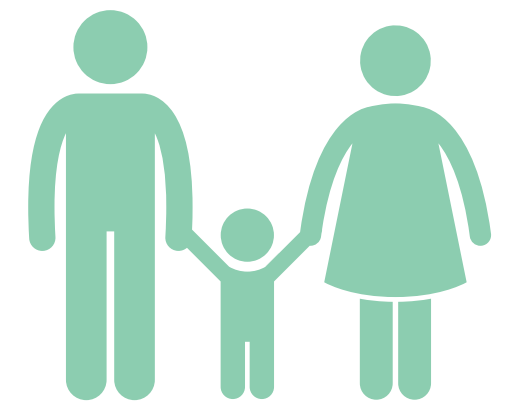
-Providence Teacher

“

“I CAME HERE FROM THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, AND I’VE BEEN HERE FOR THREE YEARS. IN THE D.R., SCHOOL WAS MORE SERIOUS, AND WE GOT MORE HOMEWORK.”

**Providence Student**

## KEY THEME #2: Parents Feel Powerless



### Review teams takeaway:

- Parents feel that there is an absence of parent-teacher conferences at the school level, and they struggle to obtain even an annual report.
- Parents cited that the reason for their perceived lack of engagement is because of the feeling that it is difficult to advocate for their child.

*“Because of language barriers and work schedules, if you are not linked up with outside supports or advocacy groups, there is no one standing up for you.”*

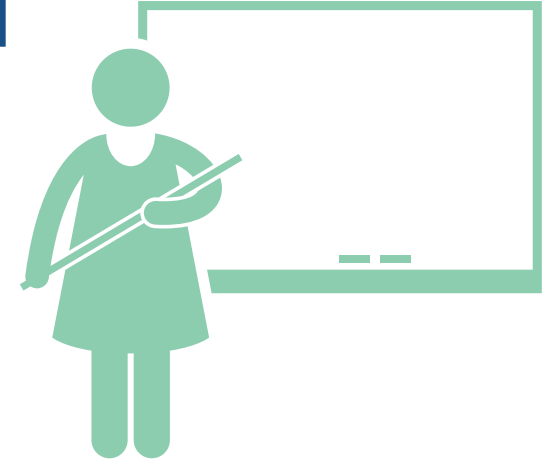
*– Community Member*

“YOU HAVE TO  
JUMP THROUGH  
A LOT OF  
HOOPS. YOU  
MAY NEVER BE  
ABLE TO GET  
THROUGH THE  
FINISH LINE.”

–PROVIDENCE SCHOOL  
BOARD MEMBER



# KEY THEME #3: Teachers and staff are demoralized and disenfranchised



## Review teams takeaway:

- Teachers feel underappreciated and unsupported.
- Lack of input into decisions at their schools and classrooms.
- Lack of professional development.
- Too few ELL-certified teachers and special education staff.
- Too many substitute teachers.

*“Frequent changes in principal, in curriculum, in testing and standards; having little time for collaboration; and huge challenges with SPED, ELL and have worn them down.”*

-Providence Teacher

# KEY THEME #4 : Principals and school leaders have no authority.



## Review teams takeaway:

- Principals and school leaders reported that they are held accountable for results, yet they have no resources or ability to influence.
- The collective bargaining agreement impedes their ability to exercise leadership and oversight of their schools, especially regarding staffing.
- Principals and school leaders feel overwhelmed and are not set up for success.

*"The Collective Bargaining Agreement is a "thick" teachers' contract which gives a green light for grievances on "almost anything" and funds only one PD day per year."*

*-Departing Superintendent Christopher Maher*



“IN ONE INTERVIEW WITH 15 TEACHERS, SOME WERE OPENLY CRYING ABOUT WHAT THEIR STUDENTS AND THEY HAD TO DEAL WITH: NO DISCIPLINE, EXPECTATIONS OR SUPPORT TO MAINTAIN BEHAVIORAL NORMS.”

-JOHNS HOPKINS REPORT



# KEY THEME #5 : Schools are unsafe and crumbling all across the city



## Review teams takeaway:

- Widespread agreement that bullying, demeaning, and even physical violence are occurring within the school walls at very high levels, particularly at the middle and high school levels.
- Deplorable school facilities conditions that impact student and teacher culture.
- Teachers, students, and leaders reported multiple incidents of rodents, leaking ceilings and needing mouse traps.
- Overcrowded classrooms with students sitting on the floor.

*“Assaults have gotten “very violent,” with girls throwing other girls on the floor, and then surrounded by people kicking them. There are violent attacks on buses.”*

*-JOHNS HOPKINS REPORT*

6

**THEY ARE CRUMBLING,  
THERE'S MOLD, THERE'S  
WATER COMING INTO THE  
BUILDING; A PIPE  
ACTUALLY BROKE WHILE I  
WAS THERE AND WATER  
CAME FLOWING DOWN.**

-SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

# Despite the findings, we'll be able to do better for our students because...



We have devoted teachers and principals who go above and beyond.



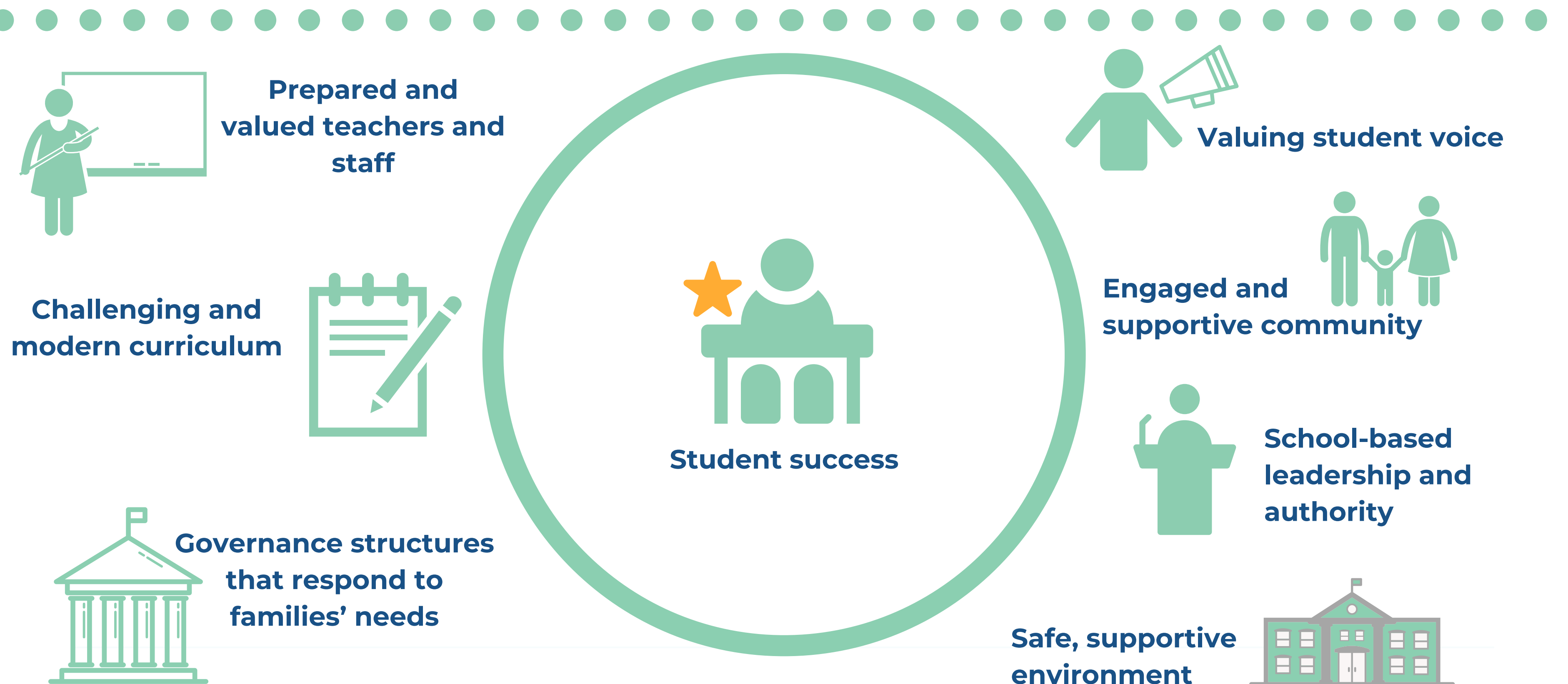
Our community knows they deserve better and they're ready to act.



Families have had enough and want a solution.

# The Path Forward, Together

In order to be successful, a high performing school system must have:



STAY  
CONNECTED  
IN THE  
PROCESS TO  
IMPROVE  
PROVIDENCE  
PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS.



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