

# Transforming Education in Rhode Island



## The Race to the Top Opportunity

### Race to the Top Steering Committee Quarterly Meeting Notes

Monday, May 7, 2012, 4:30-6:30 p.m.  
The Rhode Island Foundation

- I. Welcome & Objectives
  - a. Welcome, *Colleen Jermain & Neil Steinberg, Co-Chairs*
  - b. Objectives of Today's Meeting, *Colleen Jermain*
    - i. Receive an update on the collaborative work being done by leaders who attended the U.S. Department of Education RTT meeting in Washington, DC, in January.
    - ii. Gain a deeper understanding of Rhode Island's work on virtual learning and how it will impact our schools.
    - iii. Leave today's meeting with the information needed to talk about Race to the Top progress with your colleagues and networks.
- II. Report-Out on "Moving Forward" Teamwork  
*Co-Chairs*
- III. Report-Out on U.S. Dept. of Education RTT Site Visit  
*Commissioner Gist*
- IV. Spotlight on Virtual Learning
  - a. Presentation, *RIDE*
  - b. LEA Perspectives
  - c. Questions and Answers, *Steering Committee Members*
  - How many schools in Rhode Island have technology access?
    - There is a proposed Technology Bond to provide wireless in every school across the state. The all inclusive device solution will make the technology devices themselves more affordable for schools. In addition, many schools are working with community-based organizations to help support students after-school and on weekends.

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- Is there a target for how many students the virtual learning math modules (VLMM) will reach?
  - The math modules will be available to any student who would like to access them. The research on virtual learning shows that when implemented well, the VLMM will be effective for most students. The RI Department of Education (RIDE) will have options for group and one-on-one online tutoring for students.
  - Districts are encouraged to set their own targets for their student populations and to use the VLMM as a tool to boost student achievement in math.
- How are districts using the VLMM tool?
  - Barbara Morse, Mathematics department chair at North Kingstown High School, shared the use of the VLMM in their summer school program.
  - This year, North Kingstown is piloting the VLMM as part of the summer school program. The modules will allow summer school to be a true learning opportunity that connects a diagnosis to students' own needs. At first, online tutoring hours will be restricted. North Kingstown will offer morning and evening math labs to provide flexible options for students.
- Will North Kingstown be teaching different problem solving methods with the VLMM?
  - North Kingstown wanted to use a blended learning model (both virtual and on-site support) because the research indicated that it is critical to have someone onsite to work with students. North Kingstown has chosen their very best teachers that adapt to student learning styles to teach summer school.
- Are the VLMM expected to be implemented outside of the school day?
  - No, during the pilot phase we will learn via surveys from students and educators what the best time to use the VLMM is. Some schools will want to implement during the school day while others may want to use the modules in addition to the traditional school day.
  - RIDE will work with districts to figure out what the best time period will be to conduct the VLMM – generally it is between 1:00 – 9:00 PM for available online tutor support.
- Will the success of the VLMM be based on student mastery or seat time?
  - Success will be based on student mastery of the math content.
- As you researched to develop this tool, were you able to identify a small group of root causes to the issue of low math performance?
  - In many schools, there is not alignment in the sequencing of math courses. Students who fall behind are then offered double math blocks where they are supported, but never allowed the opportunity to catch up. There is a need to start

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intervention earlier with a cohesive and connected system of math curriculum and math support.

- Are low math scores a problem across the country or prevalent just Rhode Island?
  - Math proficiency is an issue across the country. While there is still a long way to go, Rhode Island has made progress in recent years. On the NAEP exam, RI was one of 4 states that made progress in math in the last year and one of only 2 states that made progress over the last two years.
  - Numbers and operations skills are the biggest areas of need for students.
- The VLMM is being piloted in high schools, when will we begin to use it as a preventative measure?
  - The Innovation Powered by Technology Model School grant will allow schools to maximize resources with the use of technology.
  - Congratulations to the winner of the grant, Dr. Gara Field, Principal of Pleasant View Elementary School! Pleasant View Elementary will use the grant to challenge the typical assumption of what school looks like. The school aims to spend 50% of in school time engaging in technology learning.

## V. Wrap-Up, *Neil Steinberg*