

Transforming Education in Rhode Island



The Race to the Top Opportunity

Race to the Top Implementation Update – Key Accomplishments

Year Four, Quarter One: September 1 – November 30, 2013

❑ Administration and Progress Monitoring:

- SEA Performance Monitoring: Rhode Island submitted the Annual Performance Report to the U.S. Department of Education. RIDE continued to monitor the progress and quality of implementation of all projects, using the EdStat process. To date, 24 out of 27 of the Race to the Top Scope of Work projects are on track in meeting their goals. There are, however, timeline delays with three projects: the interim assessment system, educator evaluation, and the instructional management system. Project teams are developing options to resolve the timeline delays.
- LEA Performance Monitoring: Year Four LEA Scope of Work appendices, as well as Year Three Stocktaking reports which indicate end-of-year progress against the Scope of Work tasks and student achievement targets, were distributed to all 52 LEAs. Overall, the majority of LEAs are meeting their Scope of Work commitments and are on track for completing the activities identified for each system of support. The first set of quarterly Collaborative Learning for Outcomes (CLOs) meetings were conducted and completed with all 52 LEAs from October 2013 through November 2013. The CLO meeting topical discussions were based on participants' feedback, and each focused on one of these topics: tools to assess readiness of schools to transition to the Common Core State Standards; using evidence to determine differentiated professional development needs for teachers and administrators; fostering bold and creative leadership approaches to existing challenges; and using effective levers to engage school committees, parents, boards, or other stakeholders in inspiring change in practices and/or policies.
- Budgeting and Spending: The RIDE finance team continued to work with all LEAs to help them submit budget amendments for allocating funds for Year Four. Project leads reached out individually to LEAs to discuss plans for Year Four spending, and LEA spending has increased as a result of this increased engagement. RIDE will continue to work with individual LEAs to ensure that funds will be expended by the end of the grant. SEA spending is on track.

- Engagement: The Race to the Top Steering Committee first quarterly meeting for Year Four was held on November 18, 2013. Steering members engaged in a panel discussion with staff and LEA leaders on “Turnaround Schools in Rhode Island.” Further updates were provided on progress being made in the implementation of the major project initiatives. Additionally, the Professional Learning Community (PLC) mini-grant recipients came together at a statewide networking conference on October 26, 2013, where they presented their work as PLCs.

□ Year Four Projects

- Standards and Curriculum: RIDE continued to support LEAs in their transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the PARCC assessment. Rhode Island continues to provide professional development sessions to educators across the state on key instructional shifts in the common core state standards. These sessions have been attended by more than 320 educators, and are also available on the RIDE website. Through professional development on assessment literacy, RIDE continues to work with districts to develop strategies for assessing student mastery of instructional content on an interim basis. Finally, RIDE supported a statewide conference, “*Cut to the Core*,” developed by the Commissioner’s Educators in Action cabinet, which focused on alignment of curriculum to the CCSS.
- Data Systems and Online Tools for Educators:
 - The *Instructional Management System (IMS)*, which encompasses curriculum, assessments, professional development, and Response to Intervention support, has been used to varying degrees by 47 LEAs. During the implementation of the IMS, a number of technical functionality issues emerged which impacts optimal use by LEAs and to date, the vendor has not resolved these issues. With the technical assistance of the Reform Support Network (RSN), a RIDE team met with the Georgia Race to the Top instructional management team to determine whether its system software and modules could be adopted by Rhode Island. The recommendations provided by the RSN hold promise for a longer-term solution beyond the grant period.
 - As of November 2013, 49 LEAs have accessed the *formative assessment online professional development modules* to some extent. All five modules are now posted and available via RIDEmap, and RIDE is working with the vendor to finalize a Closed Captioned version of the course for the hearing-impaired. RIDE provided technical assistance and personalized the program for LEAs that expressed difficulty in meeting the commitments in the current school year.
 - The fall fixed-form *interim assessment* test window opened, and new items in English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies were added to the Test Construction Tool item bank. Approximately 100 educators attended training on the Interim Assessments. The test construction tool (TCT) is available to LEAs.
 - The *Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS)* continued to be used by LEAs to support evaluator and teacher communication regarding components of the evaluations, as well as for scheduling and entering notes on classroom observations. RIDE assisted LEAs in set-up for year two of the EPSS, including the gradual implementation of the Support Professionals Evaluation and Support System.

- All LEAs participating in *data use professional development* in the current school year have completed day five of training. RIDE surveyed School Data Leadership Team members who participated in the 2012-13 school year, and initial feedback showed positive results: 81 percent of survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the Data Use Professional Development Series improved the data practices at their schools, while 92 percent of survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “I am confident in my ability to support my colleagues in further developing their data practices.”
- Educator Evaluation: RIDE developed a complete and detailed report on the implementation and results of the educator evaluation system in its first year of full implementation. The LEA-level results are available on the RIDE website, and include the distribution of Final Effectiveness Ratings that were reported to RIDE. To help district and charter-school leaders reflect on year one of full implementation, RIDE facilitated a series of regional meetings throughout October. RIDE shared with superintendents, charter directors, and other administrative staff, an analysis of the statewide results, with a focus on three main criteria: completion, accuracy, and development. The key messages delivered were that completion is high, but Rhode Island still has considerable room to grow in both accuracy and development.
- Beginning Teacher Induction: Thirteen Induction Coaches have begun coaching beginning teachers for the current school year. We learned that coaching is valued in Rhode Island, as evidenced by the number of requests we have had for support of both first- and second-year beginning teachers. The pilot involving the teacher preparation program, where cooperating teachers and supervisors are trained in coaching beginning teachers, has had a positive start. Universities and cooperating teachers are seeking ways to maximize their time with student teachers. Twenty-two district/Institution of Higher Education coaches have begun to implement the New Teacher Center (NTC) training. Finally, the sustainability committee met for the second time, in October, to consider post-RTT options.
- School Transformation: The Academy for Transformative Leadership Aspiring Turnaround Leaders Program was granted a two-year new-program approval from the Office of Educator Quality, allowing program participants to apply for alternative certification as building administrators. All aspiring leaders have been matched with one-on-one coaches, all of whom are active principals or assistant principals in turnaround environments. In addition, one (1) is principal of the state-run Rhode Island School for the Deaf. Additionally, administrator in our focus and priority schools participated in the Academy’s Summer Institute in either 2012 or 2013, and continue to receive ongoing coaching around implementation of their school reform plans.
- Virtual Learning Math Modules: LEAs are using Virtual Learning Math Modules (VLMM) as one of the strategies for providing math support to 11th grade students who have not met the required NECAP proficiency level, with more than 2,700 students enrolled. Five high schools (Burrillville, Davies Career and Technical Academy, Johnston, Lincoln, and Westerly) are utilizing face-to-face tutoring, and they are looking to expand the use of tutors to sophomore students who are struggling. Internal discussions around moving the VLMM in-house to a RIDE-supported platform have begun. Additionally, RIDE has appointed an intern from Brown University to evaluate the effectiveness of the VLMM through the NECAP score reports, due February 2014.

- High-Performing Charter Schools: Achievement First Providence Mayoral Academy and Village Green Virtual Charter School opened their doors in August of 2013. Achievement First opened with 176 students in grades K & 1, and RTT planning funds have been used to plan program and curriculum, develop financial management systems, conduct student and community outreach, and plan school operations. Village Green is a “bricks and mortar” blended-learning program that offers independent, student-directed learning opportunities through a 1-to-1 workstation environment, coupled with small-group, skills-based workshops. Village Green has used its RTTT planning funds for financial management and community-engagement work during startup, as well as student-use supplies, equipment, and software to support the blended-learning model. RIDE continues to monitor all grantees, including the expansion grants for International Charter School (growing from a K-5 to a K-8 program) and the Paul Cuffee School (growing from a K-8 to a K-12 program).