RI VIRTUAL LEARNING

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE REPORT - JANUARY 2014

Empowering Students to Succeed in the 21st Century

Contents

Overview

Blended learning is a "formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path and/or pace," according to the Innosight Institute.[1] Blended learning, sometimes referred to as hybrid learning, is different from fully online learning environments because students learn "at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home." Blended learning provides flexibility in scheduling allowing time for teachers to provide more personalized and focused instruction to small groups. Learning in multiple modalities yields more and better data that creates an integrated and customizable learning experience. Blended learning requires rethinking how class is structured, how time is used, and how resources are allocated

Educators across the nation recognize the potential for blended learning to transform education productivity and the potential for technology to be a multiplying force in the transformation. Promising early results from initial adoptions of blended learning models across the nation suggest that schools can be organized in ways that produce higher levels of achievement for students and improved instructional environments for teachers.

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

2013 VIRTUAL LEARNING HIGHLIGHTS

Several noteworthy events occurred in 2013 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 EdChat sessions. Business leaders shared funding strategies for working within budgets. Legislators continued regular meetings exploring the impact of blended learning.

The Village Green and Nowell Leadership Academy, two new blended learning charter schools, opened in Providence and Central Falls. Pleasant View Elementary School, Rhode Island's first blended model school, entered their first full year of implementation and transformation realizing great gains in student achievement. Wakefield Hills Elementary School was awarded the second RI Model School grant and began their implementation strategies. Districts began receiving funding to install wireless infrastructure in all classrooms.

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[1] Heather Staker and Michael Horn, Classifying K-12 Blended Learning (Innosight Institute, May 2012)

And, in October, over 700 educators, students, family members, start-up companies, vendors, and national blended-learning leaders convened for the second 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.

LOOKING AHEAD

Rhode Island's regulatory framework supports personalized education through the following key strategies: (1) proficiency-based learning and graduation, (2) multiple and flexible pathways, and (3) the use of digital learning as an essential tool and resource. The simultaneous implementation of these strategies ensures that student learning will be academically challenging and equitable and result in preparing all students for college, careers, and thoughtful citizenship.

Specific proficiency-based learning (PBL) initiatives include partnerships with the New England Secondary School Consortium (NESSC), Achieve, The Learning Accelerator (TLA) and Rhode Island's Highlander Institute. The work with NESSC will lead to the support of several high schools in Rhode Island through a Gates NextGen Personalized Learning Pathway grant. Achieve is facilitating RI's statewide planning to ensure that all students have access to proficiency-based learning pathways. The Learning Accelerator, in partnership with RIDE and the Highlander Institute, will support the development of leadership and professional development for furthering implementation of blended learning across the state.

Rhode Island is moving toward becoming a national model for how blended learning accelerates 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.

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.

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.

- 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.

OF NOTE:

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

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)

- **Total Number of Online Course Offerings[2]:** 235 course[3] offerings
  - **Number of Online <u>Math</u> Course Offerings:** 25 math course offerings with **316 enrollments (Average number of students per course offering = 12)**
  - **Number of Online <u>English Language Arts</u> (ELA) Course Offerings:** 32 ELA course offerings with **216 enrollments (Average number of students per course offering = 7)**
  - **Number of Online <u>Science</u> Courses Offerings:** 52 science course offerings with **218 enrollments (Average number of students per course offering = 4)**
  - **Number of Online <u>Social Studies/History</u> 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.

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[2] Reported courses are offered through either Virtual High School or Virtual Learning Academy
[3] 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:

- o **Secondary charter schools** – Village Green and Nowell Leadership Academy both fully blended learning high schools
- o **Providence** - Model School - Pleasant View Elementary School
  Content Providers - Compass Learning, DreamBox, Raz-Kids, Renzulli Learning
- o **Pawtucket** - Alternative Learning Program
  Content Provider - Apex Learning
- o **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 in needed to support districts in accurate reporting related to blended and online learning.

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.

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

FY2012
- LEAs Reporting Virtual Classroom Expenditures: 16 LEAs
  (Barrington, Central Falls, Chariho, Cranston, Exeter W. Greenwich, Foster Golcester, 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 Glocester, Lincoln, Middletown, Smithfield, Westerly)
- Total Statewide Expenditures: $40,000

While seven (7) new LEAs added Virtual Classroom (VC) options for their students in FY2013, five (5) LEAs decreased and three (3) LEAs eliminated Virtual Classroom expenditures. (Smithfield, Woonsocket, MET).

VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPENDITURES

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, Edginuity, etc.

There is also a steady increase in the number of LEAs utilizing third party vendors for web-based programs as demonstrated in expenditure data below. While five (5) LEAs added supplemental instructional programs to their instructional content, seven (7) LEAs decreased expenditures in this area slightly by an average of $4,300. Two (2) LEAs, North Kingstown and Pawtucket, decreased 53222 expenditures significantly by an average of $70,000. Both North Kingstown and Pawtucket attribute the decrease in expenditures in this area to changes in programming and shifting to different content providers.

OF NOTE:

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

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

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

Little Compton and the MET eliminated expenditures in FY2013 in this area by an average of $2,000.
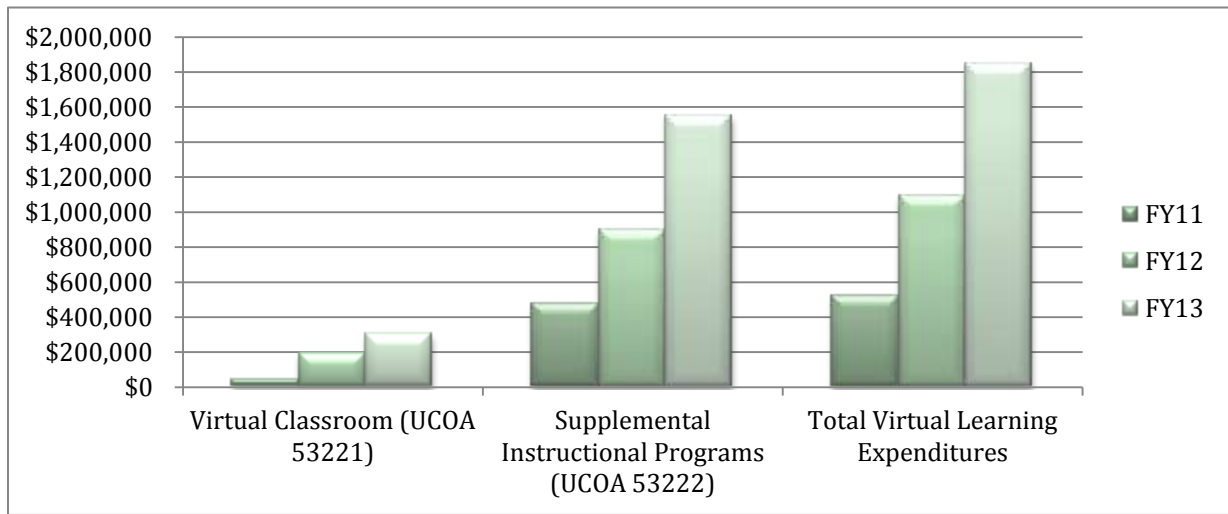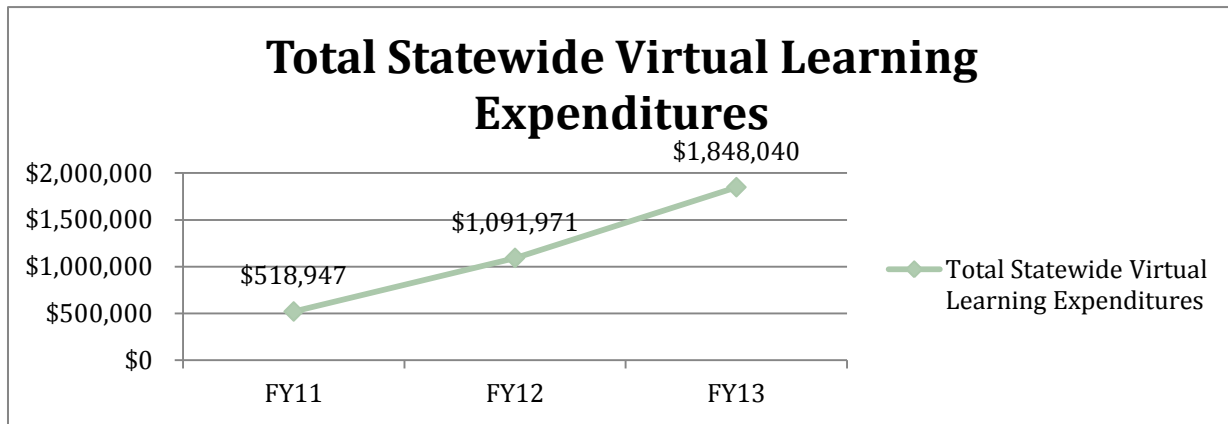
VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPENDITURES

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.

OF NOTE:

The increase in expenditures related to Virtual Learning may represent 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.

Total Statewide Virtual Learning Expenditures

$1,848,040

$1,091,971

$518,947

Total Statewide Virtual Learning Expenditures

FY11   FY12   FY13

Virtual Classroom (UCOA 53221) | Supplemental Instructional Programs (UCOA 53222) | Total Virtual Learning Expenditures

FY11
FY12
FY13

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 expects to capture a more complete picture during the 2013/14 school year through the new Teacher / Course / Student (TCS) data collection item and the fully developed, robust data systems. Additionally, the release of 2013 NECAP assessment data coincided with the completion of this report. A detailed analysis is not available at this time.

Additional Virtual Learning Information

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.

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.

One and a half years into the implementation, Pleasant View Elementary School has already seen successes, including increases in student attendance and engagement and decreases in student behavior incidents. Significant student achievement gains are evident in local and statewide assessment scores.

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.

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. 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 intervention. The individual-rotational blended learning model, described in the Christensen Institute's Classifying K-12 Blended Learning, closely resembles Carpe Diem's blended learning model with some differences.

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.

ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

Infrastructure

Just a couple of years ago, in 2012, only 23.8 percent of the classrooms had wireless access to the Internet. The Technology Infrastructure Bond was passed in funding complete site surveys in all RI schools and classrooms determining the specific needs of each community. The bond will also fund 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.

The Wireless Classroom Initiative is well under way with 100% of the site surveys completed. 65% of districts have selected vendors and 32% have received award letters. A detailed Wireless Classroom Initiative implementation report will be available in the spring of 2014.

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. Several districts, including Chariho, Lincoln, East Greenwich, Exeter-West Greenwich, and West Warwick, 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. This program will need to be examined closely and adjusted to support the investments in the infrastructure and number of devices competing for bandwidth to the Internet.

ADDITIONAL VIRTUAL LEARNING INFORMATION

INNOVATION POWERED BY TECHNOLOGY SECOND CONFERENCE

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist was joined by national and local leaders in digital and blended learning, as well as over 700 educators, school leaders, students, parents and interested members of the public for the second annual Innovation Powered by Technology Conference on Saturday, October 5, 2013 at the Rhode Island Convention Center. Presenters shared ideas, strategies and resources around the use of technology and:

- Professional Learning
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Use of Time
- Data and Assessment
- Academic Supports
- Technology and Infrastructure
- Budget and Resources

Additionally, a host of exhibitors, sponsors and start-up companies shared resources with the conference attendees. The event was free to all participants. Information about the conference is available on the RIDE website.

Guest **presenters** included:

- Bob Wise, former Governor of West Virginia and President of the Alliance for Excellent Education
- Susan Patrick, President and CEO of iNACOL
- Dr. Mark Edwards, National Superintendent of the Year (Morrisville, N.C.)
- Travis Allen, founder of the iSchool Initiative; and
- Over 100 local educators and students!

It was an exciting day of discovery and learning for all involved. There were many first-hand reports from RI educators taking the lead in using technology as a tool to improve teaching and personalize learning.

TECHNOLOGY READINESS TOOL

RIDE has continued working closely with the PARCC consortium to understand our readiness to implement online assessments. In 2013, Rhode Island local education agencies (LEAs) utilized the online Technology Readiness Tool to document their progress toward technology readiness. The Technology Readiness Tool was supplemented by tutorials, webinars, and guidance documents that allowed districts and schools to model various use and testing scenarios at the school and/or grade level. LEAs used this information to inform planning and action steps for technology purchasing for instructional technology use as well as for
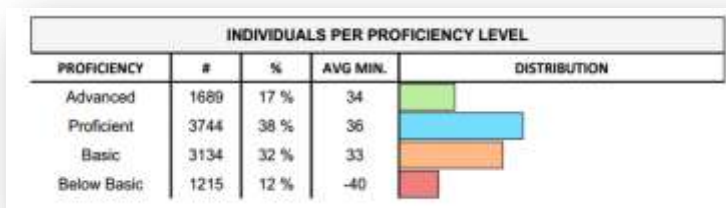
the upcoming Spring 2014 PARCC Field Test and planning for next year's 2014-2015 full operational PARCC assessments.
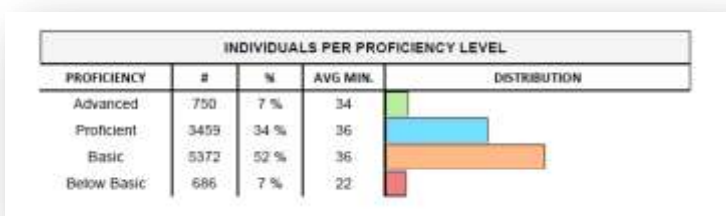
EIGHTH GRADE TECHNOLOGY LITERACY

RIDE annually assesses all 8th grade public school students using the 21st Century Skills Assessment. The 21st Century Skills Assessment indicates whether a student is likely to possess the basic skills and knowledge necessary to use technology successfully in core coursework and in preparation for life in the 21st century. The 21st Century Skills Assessment uses a psychometrically validated blend of interactive, performance-based questions that allow students to authentically perform complex tasks in simulated applications, and multiple choice, knowledge-based questions. The assessment is designed to be completed in the classroom, computer lab or on Internet-connected computer within two class periods. It is aligned with all twenty four standards in the six strands of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) National Educational Technology Standards for Students (NETS-S). Because it is an online assessment, timely reports with valuable data including score averages, assessment numbers, and proficiency levels are available at the state, district, school, class and student levels.

2012-13 reports indicate that 55% of the 9,782 eighth grade students state-wide demonstrated skills at the level of proficient or advanced. This is a significant 14% increase from last year's scores.

INDIVIDUALS PER PROFICIENCY LEVEL				
PROFICIENCY	#	%	AVG MIN.	DISTRIBUTION
Advanced	1689	17 %	34	
Proficient	3744	38 %	36	
Basic	3134	32 %	33	
Below Basic	1215	12 %	-40	

2011-12 reports indicate that 41% of the 8th grade students state-wide demonstrated skills at the level of proficient or advanced. 52% of the 8th grade students demonstrated basic levels of proficiency.

INDIVIDUALS PER PROFICIENCY LEVEL				
PROFICIENCY	#	%	AVG MIN.	DISTRIBUTION
Advanced	750	7 %	34	
Proficient	3459	34 %	36	
Basic	5372	52 %	36	
Below Basic	686	7 %	22	

ADDITIONAL VIRTUAL LEARNING INFORMATION

91% of the students state-wide reported access to a computer at home that can connect to the Internet. 80% of the students in Providence reported access to a computer at home that can connect to the Internet.

The 21st Century Skills Assessment Data is available on the RIDE web site at: http://www.ride.ri.gov/TechnologyAssessmentData.

Contact Information

DEBORAH A. GIST COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION	SHARON LEE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF MULTIPLE PATHWAYS	HOLLY WALSH E-LEARNING AND INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY
Tel 401-222-8700 Deborah.Gist@ride.ri.gov	**Tel** 401-222-8484 Sharon.Lee@ride.ri.gov	**Tel** 401-222-8457 Holly.Walsh@ride.ri.gov

Rhode Island Department of Education

255 Westminster Street

Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Tel 401-222-4600

http://www.ride.ri.gov